

Smackdown – January 17, 2017: It's No Big Deal Anymore

Smackdown

Date: January 17, 2017

Location: FedEx Forum, Memphis, Tennessee

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

I know I say this every week but it's a stacked show again with Alexa Bliss defending the Women's Title against Becky Lynch in a cage match to prevent interference from La Luchadora. Other than that we have the King's Court with Jerry Lawler and Shane McMahon opening the show with a major announcement. Let's get to it.

Quick preview of tonight's show.

Here's Shane to get us going with his major announcement. He gets straight to the point: in four weeks, the Smackdown World Title will be defended inside the Elimination Chamber with the winner going on to "Wrestlemania XXXIII" for the big title defense. This brings out champion AJ Styles to say that Shane is ruining Smackdown. Styles threatens to take the title back to Japan instead of fighting inside the Chamber but Shane brings up the idea that Cena will tie Ric Flair's record at the Rumble.

Cue Cena but Styles cuts him off because Cena doesn't get to say anything when his brother in law hands him title shots. This brings out the Miz and Maryse with Miz saying this is his time to kick 2017 off as only he can. Miz makes fun of the normal things people make fun of AJ for (Cena: "Sounds like he's trying to get to you AJ.") so Styles says Miz probably wrestles with a limp. AJ: "We can ask Maryse about that." Cena: "000000H!!!!" Cena gets them riled up enough to make the match happen next.

Back from a break with Shane running into Dean Ambrose, who wants in

the Chamber. They'll talk about that later though because Dean wants a new belt which doesn't smell like cocoa butter. Shane can't do that but he'll give Dean the opponent he wants tonight: Randy Orton.

AJ Styles vs. The Miz

Non-title with Cena on commentary. They actually fight over a test of strength to start until AJ does the drop down into the dropkick so he can pose at Cena. A knee to the ribs cuts AJ off but he gets in a low Phenomenal Forearm. Maryse offers a distraction though and AJ gets kicked to the floor as we take a break. Back with Miz escaping the Styles Clash and hitting a snap DDT for two. Styles heads to the floor and gets into it with Cena, drawing the DQ at 10:45.

Rating: B-. This was good while it lasted and the ending was just about the only way they could go. You can almost guarantee that all three will be inside the Chamber and that's a good thing. I'm not sure who comes out of the next three pay per views with the title but it could make for some interesting stories.

Cena lays both of them out and holds up the title.

Here's Nikki Bella to call out Natalya, who is in the crowd for some reason. Natalya has something for us to see and goes back through the curtain to a conveniently placed merchandise stand. Natalya rants about how Nikki and Cena's merchandise is next to each other. Why isn't there a Natalya shirt there when there's a Bret Hart shirt? It's appropriate though because Nikki and Bret are going to die old and alone. Nikki FINALLY gets back there for the pull apart brawl.

Alexa Bliss is ready for the cage match.

Kurt Angle Hall of Fame video.

Dean Ambrose vs. Randy Orton

Non-title. Dean starts fast and slugs Orton down to the floor, giving us the big staredown from the middle rope. Back in and Ambrose headlocks him down, only to get draped ribs first across the top rope. The Wyatts suggest keeping it at Orton's pace as he grabs

a chinlock to keep things slow. Orton gets bored of the slow pace and sends Dean outside for a trip over the announcers' table.

Back from a break with Ambrose fighting out of another chinlock and hitting a running forearm. Neither finisher can hit and the rebound lariat gets two for Dean. The elevated DDT is broken up so Dean can dive onto Harper but the distraction lets Orton get in the DDT. For reasons of storyline convenience, Harper gets on the apron and the distraction sets up the rollup pin on Orton at 13:42.

Rating: B. I'm looking forward to where this is going though I'm not sure who winds up turning out of all this. I can't imagine Harper as a face no matter what but I'm not sure where that leaves Wyatt and Orton, as you would expect to see them fight at Wrestlemania. You can almost guarantee they're both in the Chamber though and that's a fine way to go.

Post match Orton and Harper go at it with Bray trying to break it up. Luke lunges at Orton again and Bray hits Harper in the face. Bray tells Orton to bring it on and the fans want the RK0. That goes nowhere though as Harper walks away while pointing at Orton.

Becky Lynch knows she's never run from a fight and she knows who she is.

Here's Jerry Lawler for the King's Court. After saying he's glad to be back, here's Dolph Ziggler as his guest. Dolph doesn't say anything as Lawler asks about the recent change in personality. Ziggler is one of Lawler's favorites but the star is fading as much as the bleach in his hair. We see a clip of last week's loss to Kalisto and Dolph's subsequent attack with a chair. Ziggler still has nothing to say and starts to leave but Lawler wants to know what's going on.

Dolph wants to know why Lawler agreed to do this and has his own footage. This clip is the series of elbow drops that might have caused Lawler's heart attack back in September 2012. Ziggler says that was on purpose and if Lawler doesn't stop with the questions, he'll finish what he started. Lawler asks his last question: how does it feel to always be a loser? That earns him a superkick to the

chest and JBL actually gets in the ring to check on Jerry. Zigler turns down an offer to come back and fight Lawler.

Bray Wyatt says the entire Family is in the Royal Rumble. Next week though it's Orton vs. Harper and no matter who wins, the Family will be stronger.

Women's Title: Alexa Bliss vs. Becky Lynch

Lynch is challenging and this is inside a steel cage. They go at it to start with both of them climbing the cage at the same time. That goes nowhere so Bliss sends her into the steel a few times, only to have Becky drop her face first onto the top turnbuckle. We take a break and come back with Lynch in trouble as Alexa stomps her against the cage.

Bliss' charge hits the steel though and Becky gets to the top, only to have a quick charge make the save. That goes badly for the champ as well though as Becky gets in a super Bexploder for a very close two. Becky goes for the door but here's La Luchadora to block the way. A kick to the head sets up Bliss' DDT for the pin to retain at 9:43.

Rating: B-. Not great here but at least we had a good match in the process. The ending was pretty easy to guess but it's still really cool to see the women main event a show like it's no big deal anymore. In years past, this would be near the biggest moment ever in women's wrestling but instead it's just something that happened. Post match the beatdown continues until Becky fights back and unmasks La Luchadora as....Mickie James. There's nothing wrong with that.

Overall Rating: B-. I had a good time with this show even if it felt a little emptier than usual. Three matches isn't exactly a high amount but the key thing here is how important everything seems. No matter what is going on at the time, that is all that matters right then and there. It could be Nikki and Natalya arguing or something over the World Title but it's important and treated as such. That's SUCH a big difference over Raw and it helps to no end.

Results

AJ Styles b. The Miz via DQ when John Cena interfered

Dean Ambrose b. Randy Orton – Rollup

Alexa Bliss b. Becky Lynch – DDT

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Smackdown – January 10, 2017: Something About His Time Being Now

Smackdown

Date: January 10, 2017

Location: Raising Cane's River Center Arena, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

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

As is becoming the regular case around here, we've got a title match set up coming into the show. In this case it's the Tag Team Titles being defended as American Alpha put the titles on the line against the Wyatt Family. Other than that we have John Cena's first singles match in a long time as he faces Baron Corbin. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Miz vs. Dean Ambrose over the last few weeks, including all the slaps and without the new interviewer stumbling over her words.

Here's Ambrose for the Ambrose Asylum as hosted by the new Intercontinental Champion. Let's get this out of the way right now: he's in the Royal Rumble. Other than that, he's annoyed that they can't have a live alligator in the ring due to not having a permit. He does however have a plastic alligator head named Maryse, which brings him to his guest. That would of course be Miz and Maryse, who cut him off before their introductions.

Miz is in the Rumble as well but more importantly, he wants Ambrose to hand over the title that Miz should have retained due to outside interference. Dean agrees to give Miz something but it's the Participation Award from a few weeks back. The fight is on and Maryse slaps her husband by mistake, setting up Dirty Deeds to Miz. Maryse is handed the award as Dean leaves.

We recap Nikki Bella vs. Natalya to set up their match tonight.

Nikki is on her way to the ring when Natalya jumps her.

Nikki Bella vs. Natalya

Bella charges out to the ring without selling anything (because that would mean she's not FEARLESS) and it's a big brawl, meaning no match. Natalya takes out the bad leg and puts Nikki in the Sharpshooter on the floor.

Dolph Ziggler has nothing to say about what he did to Kalisto last week.

Kalisto vs. Dolph Ziggler

A very fast hurricanrana sends Ziggler outside to start so he opts for some technical wrestling to take Kalisto down instead. The masked man tries to speed things up but gets kicked in the head to put him on the floor as we take a break. Back with Kalisto being stuck in and then fighting out of a chinlock. Ziggler charges into an elbow in the corner and gets rolled up for the pin at 8:37.

Rating: D+. Dang that's not good. I'm sure this is part of a longer

form story though I'm not sure what Ziggler is going to do next. I like the idea of making Ziggler even angrier than he already was but I don't trust WWE to be able to follow up on this. Kalisto winning is cool though there's no secret to the fact that it's just a way to advance Ziggler's story.

Post match Ziggler lays Kalisto out and destroys him with a chair as CHILDREN are watching. Yes I say they're WATCHING THE SHOW IN FRONT OF THEM! THIS IS SO FREAKING INTERESTING! Apollo Crews comes out for the fight as Ziggler goes to leave, only to get chaired down as well.

American Alpha isn't underestimating the Wyatts but they know they can beat them.

John Cena wants to know who Baron Corbin thinks he is. Cena is the one who needs to make a statement and he's been called a lot of things in WWE. Last week, AJ Styles called him a has been and Corbin agreed with him. Tonight the lone wolf may be on the prowl tonight but his name is John Cena and his time is now.

The Wyatts say they'll win the titles back.

Tag Team Titles: Wyatt Family vs. American Alpha

Alpha is defending and it's Bray and Randy for the Wyatts. Bray takes Jordan down to start with Jason easily taking over on the mat. Randy comes in and gives up a blind tag to Gable, who armbars Bray over the top rope. Sister Abigail is countered into a rollup and Gable follows it up with a dive off the apron.

Back in and Bray just runs Gable over, allowing Orton to drop him back first onto the barricade. I heartily approve of anything that means a hot tag to Jordan. The chinlock doesn't work very well so Orton goes with a slingshot suplex for two. Gable finally gets up and makes the tag to Jordan so things can speed way up. It must be the straps coming down to slow down wind resistance. Harper grabs Jordan's leg though and Jason gets draped across the top rope, sending us to a break.

Back with Orton raking his boot over Jordan's eyes before handing it

back to Bray, who eats one heck of a clothesline. The real hot tag brings in Gable for some bad looking right hands on Wyatt. A top rope clothesline gets two on Orton but Harper gets on the apron, only to be knocked off when Orton goes for the elevated DDT. Harper gets back up and distracts Orton, allowing Gable to ram them together for an O'Connor roll on Orton to retain the titles at 15:32.

Rating: B-. This was a storyline loss for the Wyatts and I'm getting curious about where it's going. I'm actually not sure what Orton's endgame is here but if it sets up a bit match against Bray, so be it. Orton really could be on either side here and that makes things all the more interesting.

Post match Harper and Orton are about to fight with Bray trying to break it up. Harper throws a superkick but hits Bray by mistake. Bray looks at both of them as the fans chant Randy. Wyatt leaves on his own.

Corbin is ready for Cena.

Clips from Wrestlemania XXXIV press conference in New Orleans.

Becky Lynch asks Daniel Bryan who was the other La Luchadora. Alexa Bliss comes in and says she was about to find out who was under the mask when Lynch messed everything up. Bryan doesn't want to hear it and gives Becky a title match next week inside a steel cage.

Carmella vs. CJ Lunde

The jobber's last name is probably a rib as Lunde is Arn Anderson's real last name. Carmella runs her over a few times until Ellsworth grabs Lunde's leg. A hard left hand gets two for Carmella so Lunde goes outside to yell at James. Back in and a badly botched Downward Spiral sets up the Code of Silence for the tap out at 2:41.

We look back at Undertaker entering the Royal Rumble last night.

Carmella is going to take Ellsworth on a shopping spree next week.

Baron Corbin is ready to end Cena. AJ Styles comes in and tells Corbin to impersonate the champ and beat Cena up.

Baron Corbin vs. John Cena

Styles is on commentary. Corbin wastes no time in kicking Cena in the face to put him on the floor as we take an early break. Back with Cena not being able to hit the AA because someone under 300lbs is too heavy for him to lift. They head outside with Cena throwing him into the steps for his first breather of the match.

As Styles talks about how he wants Cena to lose because he just doesn't like John, Corbin gets in a powerslam for two. Deep Six gets the same so Baron opts to just squeeze Cena with a bearhug. That lasts as long as a bearhug is going to last before Cena fights out and grabs a tornado DDT. Back up and the ProtoBomb sets up the AA for the clean pin on Corbin at 11:02.

Rating: C+. This was just a match really and I'm ok with seeing Corbin lose clean here. He got to beat on Cena for a good while before going down to the biggest name in a long time. I'd have been fine with Styles causing the fall in there somehow but either way it's a fine way to have Cena come back and Corbin doesn't lose a ton of steam.

Overall Rating: B-. This one didn't have as much going for it as recent episodes but it's still far better than almost anything else WWE has been putting on as of late. Again, you can see the Ryan Ward influence here by setting up stuff for next week to keep you coming back. How many times have you seen a show completely wrapped up with nowhere to go next week? That's bad storytelling and thankfully you never see it on Smackdown anymore.

Results

Kalisto b. Dolph Ziggler – Rollup

American Alpha b. Wyatt Family – O'Connor roll to Orton

Carmella b. CJ Lunde – Code of Silence

John Cena b. Baron Corbin – Attitude Adjustment

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Smackdown – January 3, 2017: This is the New Bad

Smackdown

Date: January 3, 2016

Location: Jacksonville Veterans Memorial Auditorium, Jacksonville, Florida

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

It's the first show of the year and because this is Smackdown Live, they actually have something set up. In this case it's a double shot with Dean Ambrose challenging Miz for the Intercontinental Title and John Cena signing his contract for the Royal Rumble World Title match against AJ Styles. Let's get to it.

Here are Miz and Maryse to get things going as we look at a recap of Miz vs. Ambrose. Miz has a New Year's resolution and it's to be more forgiving. That's very appropriate because there is a certain woman who needs to come out here and apologize right now. Miz finds it interesting that he went after Renee Young and now Ambrose has a title shot. Cue Ambrose who gets slapped by Maryse. Dean says the hard part is over tonight because Maryse hits WAY harder than Miz.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Baron Corbin

Ziggler starts fast with a failed superkick before hamming away with right hands. Corbin will have none of a dropkick though and the slow beatdown begins. Some choking in the corner is followed by even more right hands before Ziggler is sent back first into the apron. Baron finally charges into an elbow and it's time for a break.

Back with JBL doing his very JBL-style over the top commentary about a clothesline from Corbin. Ziggler gets in his neckbreaker but the Fameasser is countered into another wicked clothesline. Now the Fameasser connects for two and CUT OUT THE STUPID REACTION SHOTS. Especially when it's just some woman smiling. The running DDT is countered but the Zig Zag scores for two. Back up and Ziggler charges straight into the End of Days for the pin at 13:42.

Rating: B-. The more I see of Corbin, the more I'm liking the heck out of him. They're pushing him as hard as they can right now and it's already starting to stick. The guy is getting the hang of this in a hurry and now he's winning matches to back it up. I'm digging the heck out of this push and that's a good thing.

Post match Corbin grabs a chair but Kalisto makes the save. Corbin bails so Ziggler superkicks Kalisto, saying he doesn't need any help from anyone.

Carmella is in the back when James Ellsworth comes up to offer her a shirt. She's impressed and calls him fabulous, which means he can accompany her to the ring tonight.

Apollo Crews tells Ziggler that wasn't cool and a brawl almost breaks out.

We look back at Alexa Bliss vs. Becky Lynch with La Luchadora costing Lynch the title.

Becky Lynch vs. La Luchadora

Lynch easily takes her to the mat and pounds away at the mask. The Bexploder makes it even worse as we hear about how bad Luchadora's costume is. As we hear about Los Conquistaroes, Luchadora slides under the ring and comes back out with one heck of a quick dye job. The now blonde Luchadora drops Becky and goes up for Twisted Bliss.

That's only good for a big crash though and the Disarm-Her makes Luchadora tap at 2:04.

The new Luchadora is unmasked as Alexa and the double beatdown ensues.

Here's Daniel Bryan for the Styles vs. Cena contract signing. The guys come out and Styles starts talking to Bryan, saying they're cut from the same cloth. They'll wrestle anyone, anywhere at any time but Cena is gone for four months and gets handed a title shot. Bryan goes into a speech about Smackdown winning the ratings battle against Raw last week and how it happened because of how the top stars were around last week.

Bryan leaves so AJ goes into a rant about how Bryan and Cena are basically brothers-in-law. Last year, Cena told AJ to get a big win or be a big indy guy. Now the tables are turned because if Cena loses, maybe he doesn't belong in AJ's company. A few years back, Cena was talking about how the Rock left the WWE high and dry and he was absolutely right. Now though, John Cena is the same as the Rock because he has been great for WWE. The two words that matter there are "has been".

What AJ thinks is bothering Cena is that he'll never be the movie star the Rock is and he'll never been AJ Styles in the ring. Cena finally gets the chance to reply and says part of being a man is pushing back when someone crosses the line. AJ just made the biggest mistake of his life when he ticked Cena off and now Cena has no respect for him. A lot of people have said something similar to him because they forget his passion.

Cena ripped his shoulder apart and was back in four months instead of a year. WWE tells Styles where to go but they have to tell Cena to stop doing so much. Everyone else is gone but Cena is still here because that's passion. There's already one signature on that contract and Cena is ready to sign because everyone needs this match. People try to say that Cena sucks but they realize on their best day, they can't be him.

Cena signs...and here's Baron Corbin. Baron says he won the Andre the

Giant Memorial Battle Royal on his first day and now he's going to be the first Smackdown star entered in the Royal Rumble. Cena is so glad that Corbin is out here because it means John might actually get a fight here. John is ready to go but AJ kicks him in the head. Corbin says Cena's time is up and walks away.

Maryse slaps Renee and tells her to never touch Miz again.

Carmella vs. Aliyah

Aliyah is from NXT and Ellsworth is at ringside. Carmella runs her over to start and sends Aliyah into the corner for the Bronco Buster. A chinlock goes nowhere and sets up Aliyah's comeback but Ellsworth offers a distraction. Carmella gets in a superkick and the Code of Silence is good for the submission at 2:57.

American Alpha vs. Breezango

Non-title. Grand Amplitude ends Breeze in 32 seconds due to Tyler offering Gable a ticket.

Post match the Wyatts appear and say they're coming for the titles next week. Orton does the "run" line and Harper isn't pleased.

Here are Nikki Bella and Natalya with something to say. Nikki thinks it's interesting that Natalya complains about her getting everything because of Cena when Natalya copies everything from the Hart Family. We see a Tweet from Bret about how much he likes Nikki but Natalya suggests that she, shall we say, coerced him to say that. Once Nikki's looks fade, Cena is going to leave her and she'll die alone (a big plot point on Total Divas). Nikki lays her out with the forearm.

The new interviewer can barely ask Ambrose if he's ready for the Intercontinental Title shot but Dean cuts her off to say he's going to hurt Miz.

Next week it's Natalya vs. Nikki, Cena vs. Corbin and American Alpha vs. the Wyatts for the titles.

Intercontinental Title: Miz vs. Dean Ambrose

Miz is defending. Ambrose takes him down to start and it's already

time for a chase. That means a breather with Maryse on the floor as Ambrose is almost pacing back and forth to get his hands on Miz. Dean even turns his back on Miz and lets him get in a cheap shot, which earns Miz a trip over the announcers' table.

Back from a break with Miz being backdropped out to the floor and taken down with the standing elbow. Miz starts in on the leg but gets caught in a backbreaker for two. A superplex is broken up and the Skull Crushing Finale gets two for the champ. It's time for the YES Kicks but Dean sends him outside for the suicide dive.

Maryse slaps him and Dean actually talks the referee into not DQ'ing Miz. Instead Maryse is ejected, leaving Miz to hit Dean in the back with the belt for a VERY close two. You can hear the fans come back to life on the kickout. Back up and Dirty Deeds gives Ambrose the title at 14:04.

Rating: B-. This worked for one simple reason: we didn't sit around waiting for the title to change hands on the pay per view for the sake of waiting around on the pay per view. If you consider Ambrose's character, he should have been ready to take Miz's head off the second Miz started things with Renee. Waiting another month wouldn't have made sense and would have allowed the feud to cool off.

Miz can get the title back later if he has to but the key thing here is Dean won the match and the title when he should have instead of when the calendar says so. That's good storytelling and it's no surprise on Smackdown. Also well done on not having Young out here. It wouldn't fit for her to be there and it would have been so easy to go with the illogical move.

Overall Rating: B+. Normally I'd break down a lot of stuff here and go over why it was good or bad but what's the point? Practically EVERYTHING here is really good as they take such simple ideas and turn them into interesting points. The wrestling was good, the talking was good and somehow this was a downgrade over last week's classic. That says a lot because this was a heck of a great show.

Results

Baron Corbin b. Dolph Ziggler – End of Days

Becky Lynch b. La Luchadora – Disarm-Her

Carmella b. Aliyah – Code of Silence

American Alpha b. Breezango – Grand Amplitude to Breeze

Dean Ambrose b. Miz – Dirty Deeds

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Smackdown – December 27, 2016: Outstanding

Smackdown

Date: December 27, 2016

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

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

As usual, Smackdown has a stacked show with three title matches to close out the year, putting it a bit ahead of the World Champion losing to the midcard champion in a combination rematch/preview of the upcoming title match. On top of that, some guy named Cena is back tonight and probably opening the show. Let's get to it.

Here's Cena to get things going and the booing is so loud that Cena

says he can't even understand what they're chanting. Fans: "CM Punk!" Cena: "CENA SUCKS???" After getting the fans to argue with themselves about which Chicago baseball team is better, Cena talks about all the titles on the line tonight. The fans are WAY behind AJ for the main event and Cena says he's right there with them as a Styles fan.

With all the title matches tonight, what exactly is Cena doing here? The fans chant for Undertaker but Cena says that's why he's here: he's heard a lot of people trying to set up his career for him, including saying he's got one foot out the door and is on his way to Hollywood. The truth is he's still here and he's got a lot left to do. This is the MY TIME IS NOW Era and his name is John Cena.

Miz comes out of his own dressing room and says he'll only answer questions asked by Renee Young.

Tag Team Titles: Wyatt Family vs. Heath Slater/Rhyno vs. Usos vs. American Alpha

Elimination Rules with the Wyatts defending. Gable suplexes Rhyno to start with Jey tagging himself in to grab the cover. The Wyatts head to the floor and it's off to Slater to clean house. A top rope forearm has Jey staggered and a running neckbreaker gets two. Slater goes up top but slips off, leaving Jey to hit a quick superkick for the elimination at 4:17.

That was a pretty bad looking botch but really Slater just slipped off instead of diving into the superkick. It happens to everyone though and it was hardly the worst thing I've ever seen. Back with Harper and Orton on the apron for the first time and Gable coming in off the hot tag, meaning stereo belly to belly suplexes send the Usos flying. Gable rolls Jimmy up for the pin and an elimination at 10:12, leaving us with two teams.

The Usos decks Alpha before leaving to give the Wyatts an even bigger advantage. Orton takes over on Jordan with a hard whip into the corner and the snap powerslam for two. A dropkick allows the hot tag to Gable, who German suplexes Harper for a near fall of his own. Back with Harper holding Gable in a headlock because Heaven forbid

Alpha gets to show off. Orton takes Chad outside and throws him into the barricade and gets two off the slingshot suplex.

A Harper side slam gets two but the hot tag brings in Jordan to clean house. The shoulders in the corner and the rapid fire suplexes have the Wyatts in trouble with Harper and Orton colliding in the corner. Jason adds another shoulder and it's Grand Amplitude to Orton for the pin and the titles at 23:21.

Rating: B. They legitimately surprised me here as I would have bet on Bray coming in for the save at the end. I'm really glad they gave Alpha the belts and it's even better that they did it with the Wyatts basically coming in fresh for the final part of the match. This was a really nice surprise and a great way to make this show actually feel important. Good stuff here and I'm really pleased.

Bray breaks up a fight between Harper and Orton after the match.

We recap the end of last week's show with Corbin being added to the main event.

Dolph Ziggler is ready for the triple threat because it's finally his time.

James Ellsworth is all banged up but Carmella cuts off the interview to say she finds him attractive.

Women's Title: Becky Lynch vs. Alexa Bliss

Becky is challenging in her rematch and goes for the leg early on. We get a nice pinfall reversal sequence with both getting some near falls, capped off with Becky grabbing a cross armbreaker. The champ takes her down though and steps on Becky's back before hammering away with some forearms. More forearms and a posting on the floor have Becky reeling as we take a break.

Back with Becky getting in some uppercuts and clotheslines to take over before blocking a DDT. In shades of Pentagon Dark from Lucha Underground, Becky snaps the arm back and sends Bliss shoulder first into the post. A top rope dropkick knocks Bliss silly and here's La Luchadora (Becky's disguise from last week), allowing Bliss to get a rollup for two.

Luchadora takes the turnbuckle pad off but Twisted Bliss only gets two. The Disarm-Her doesn't work either as Bliss gets her foot in the ropes. Bliss' elbow appears to be COMPLETELY DISLOCATED but Luchadora slams Becky's head into the post. Alexa pops the arm back into socket and grabs a DDT to retain at 14:00.

Rating: B-. I love a good masked man (or woman in this case) angle and this one might have some legs. Maybe La Luchadora is working with Bliss and maybe she's not, but either way there's something interesting there because it makes you want to come back for more. I don't remember the last time I've felt that way about something on Raw but it happens multiple times a week around here.

We look at Renee slapping Miz last week.

Miz allows Renee to ask him some questions but tells security to leave. They do, but Dean Ambrose replaces one of them. We get the beating that should have happened last week until Dean beats up a guard and says all clear.

We look at Carmella saying Natalya attacked Nikki Bella.

We get the standard "I'm Nikki Bella and I'm AMAZING because I keep fighting against everything handed to me" speech. She'll say something to Natalya's face.

Corbin says the pressure is on the little guys in the match with him.

Smackdown World Title: Baron Corbin vs. Dolph Ziggler vs. AJ Styles

Styles is defending. Baron cleans a lot of house to start with some hard right hands to knock both smaller guys out to the floor. We take an early break and come back with Corbin shrugging off a fireman's carry attempt and blasting both guys with clotheslines. Styles has to break up End of Days on Ziggler but Baron gets in a hard clothesline on Dolph instead.

We take a break with Baron in full control and come back with Ziggler and Styles double teaming Corbin and clotheslining him outside in a smart move. They're not done yet though and take him outside, only to have Corbin shrug them off and load up the

announcers' table. That earns him a Phenomenal Forearm from the steps and a superkick onto the table.

Styles and Ziggler dive off the barricade to take Corbin out for good but all three are down. Ziggler Rock Bottoms AJ onto the apron and gets two off the jumping DDT back inside. The Styles Clash is broken up and Ziggler superkicks AJ out of the air to block the Phenomenal Forearm. One heck of a superkick gets two on AJ with Corbin almost getting back in to pull the referee away.

Deep Six gets two on Ziggler with AJ making a diving save. AJ's strike rush is broken up and it's the End of Days for AJ with Ziggler adding a Zig Zag on Corbin for a really close two. Another End of Days plants Ziggler but the Phenomenal Forearm knocks Corbin to the floor, allowing AJ to pin Ziggler to retain at 23:16.

Rating: A-. A few blown spots aside, this was a heck of a match and an awesome way to wrap up the year. It's also a star making performance from Corbin, who looked like a star the whole way through. The fact that it was his move that put Ziggler away is very important and should be brought up in the future. I dug the heck out of this match and it worked very well.

Cena comes out to offer Styles a handshake and Styles finally gives him one.

Neville tells us to watch 205 Live to end the show.

Overall Rating: A. I had a blast with this show and it shows you that quality is more important than quantity. Last night's Raw had three times the matches and almost none of them were all that interesting. This show had three distinct stories being told, all of which offer a reason to come back for more. That's in addition to the other stories and the angle advancement throughout the show. In other words, Smackdown knows how to treat its audience to a good show while Raw knows how to exist while its fans watch.

Results

American Alpha b. Usos, Heath Slater/Rhyno and Wyatt Family – Grand Amplitude to Orton

Alexa Bliss b. Becky Lynch – DDT

AJ Styles b. Baron Corbin and Dolph Ziggler – End of Days to Ziggler

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Smackdown – December 20, 2016: Merry Effort

Smackdown

Date: December 20, 2016

Location: Joe Louis Arena, Detroit, Michigan

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

We're in the home stretch of 2016 and Smackdown is going out with a bang. Tonight we have two title matches and a major match between Luke Harper and Dean Ambrose. It's unlikely that they're going to change either the Intercontinental or Smackdown World Title here but stranger things have happened. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Smackdown World Title: AJ Styles vs. James Ellsworth

Styles is defending and it looks like this match is actually happening for a change. An early attempt at No Chin Music earns

Ellsworth a strike rush for the pin at 43 seconds.

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

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

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Apollo Crews

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

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

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

Post match Renee Young asks Miz about his obsession with Dean

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

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

John Cena is back next week.

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

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

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

Dean Ambrose vs. Luke Harper

The rest of the Family is at ringside. An early Dirty Deeds attempt doesn't work and Harper catapults him throat first into the bottom rope. Back from an early break with Dean being thrown off the top and getting caught in a torture rack. That really should be someone's full time finisher. A superkick cuts off Dean's comeback bid and the sitout powerbomb gets two. Harper loads up what looks like another powerbomb and gets caught in la majistral for the pin at 7:48.

Rating: D+. Not much to see here and I'm really not a fan of that slip on a banana peel finish. Harper completely dominated this match until Ambrose caught him with a single rollup for the pin. If you

want to push Harper then push Harper by giving him some wins. Don't have him dominate like this and then lose over and over because it gets old in a hurry.

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

Alexa Bliss vs. La Luchadora

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

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

Of course it's Becky Lynch.

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

Mojo Rawley vs. Curt Hawkins

Phillippe is on commentary so hopefully this is short. Mojo runs him over to start as the announcers praise Phillippe and we hear a bit about Shooter. That shifts to a discussion of Otunga being married to Jennifer Hudson (rarely discussed in WWE) as Rawley hits some Stinger Splashes and the Pounce. A running right hand in the corner ends Hawkins at 2:28. Phillippe was fine here and seemed to be having a good time, which is all you can ask for from a celebrity.

Ellsworth, with almost every part of his body either in some kind of a bandage or wrapped in ice, can't speak. The annoying interviewer keeps asking questions anyway until Carmella of all people comes up

to say she'll take care of him. Well ok then.

Baron Corbin vs. Dolph Ziggler

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

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

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

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

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

Results

AJ Styles b. James Ellsworth – Backfist to the face

Miz b. Apollo Crews – Skull Crushing Finale

Dean Ambrose b. Luke Harper – La majistral

La Luchadora b. Alexa Bliss – Disarm-Her

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

Dolph Ziggler vs. Baron Corbin went to a double countout

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

Smackdown

Date: December 13, 2016

Location: Verizon Center, Washington D.C.

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

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

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

Opening sequence.

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

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

Carmella vs. Natalya

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

Rating: D+. So like did you know that Nikki and Natalya were the best friends EVER and would never ever stab each other in the back?

I need a camera to awkwardly stare into while I list off various emotions I'm feeling as I talk about this because it's one of the worse reality show stories they've done in a long time.

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

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

Tag Team Battle Royal

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

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

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

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

Rating: D. Battle royals almost always suck by definition and it certainly didn't help that the Hype Bros were built up as the next

challengers last week. At least they had to do more than beat Ascension and Breezango to get the shot though, making this somewhat of an effective way to crown new #1 contenders.

Baron Corbin video.

Alexa Bliss vs. Deonna Purrazzo

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rich Swann tells us to check out 205 Live.

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

Results

Carmella b. Natalya – Small package

Zack Ryder won a battle royal last eliminating Konor

Becky Lynch b. Alexa Bliss via countout

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

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

Smackdown

Date: December 6, 2016

Location: Toyota Center, Houston, Texas

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kalisto says speed kills.

Natalya vs. Carmella

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

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

Baron Corbin compares cruiserweights to flies.

Hype Bros vs. Ascension

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

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

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

Kalisto vs. Baron Corbin

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

Nikki meets singer Sophia Grace and they get along.

Chad Gable vs. Tyler Breeze

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

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

Opening segment recap.

Intercontinental Title: Miz vs. Dean Ambrose

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

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

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

more eye roll inducing than bad.

Ellsworth is upset to end the show.

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

Results

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

Hype Bros b. Ascension – Hype Ryder to Viktor

Baron Corbin b. Kalisto – End of Days

Chad Gable b. Tyler Breeze – Rolling Chaos Theory

Miz b. Dean Ambrose – Skull Crushing Finale

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Tables Ladders and Chairs

2016: The One With A Lot Of Crashes

Tables Ladders and Chairs 2016

Date: December 4, 2016

Location: American Airlines Center, Dallas, Texas

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

It's time for a big gimmick show with Smackdown Live presenting the show built around carnage. The main event will see AJ Styles defending the World Title against Dean Ambrose in the show's namesake match. Other than that we'll have a table match, a ladder match and a chairs match just to make sure all the bases are covered. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Apollo Crews/Hype Bros/American Alpha vs. Vaudevillains/Ascension/Curt Hawkins

Bonus match. Hawkins' intro is about how Captain Curt will lead his team where no team has gone before. Crews starts with Hawkins, whose tights look like an Icee machine. We start with some spot stealing as Crews does the AJ Styles drop down into a dropkick and it's off to Viktor vs. Ryder. That goes nowhere so we get Mojo Rawley and the Hammer Time dance. Alpha comes in to clean house on all of the villains (even the Vaude contingent) until everyone throws everyone else out.

Crews is the last man standing and it's a ten man staredown. The good guys clear the ring as we take a break. Back with Konnor grabbing a chinlock on Gable, followed by Viktor doing the same. Gable gets up for an attempt at a tag but Viktor's partners pull everyone else off the apron and Chad is back where he started. That only lasts a few seconds before it's off to Jordan as everything breaks down. Grand Amplitude ends Gotch at 12:03.

Rating: C. This was fine but I'm getting a little tired of watching American Alpha squash the Ascension and the Vaudevillains. We've

covered that time and time again now but there's no one else for them to beat up because the whole division is six teams and whoever else they can put together. That being said, this was how you should open a show: fast paced, energy and right before the show itself starts.

The opening video looks at various broken furniture before going into a regular hype video.

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

Bray Wyatt and Randy Orton are challenging after defeating American Alpha for the shot. Rhyno starts for the first time but his clothesline doesn't have much effect on Bray. JBL goes on a pretty ridiculous rant about how the Wyatts are a dream team in the vein of Brody and Hansen or the Brothers of Destruction.

It's off to Slater who is quickly dropped ribs first on the top rope. Slater tries to fight back with some right hands but a slingshot sends him into Orton's snap powerslam. The hot tag brings in Rhyno a few seconds later and everything breaks down. Rhyno loads up a Gore on Bray but gets distracted by the spider walk, setting up the RKO for the pin and the titles at 5:53. The title change gets a BIG face pop.

Rating: C. Not a great match but the exactly right booking. This should have been a squash and that's what we got as the monsters deflected everything Slater and Rhyno could throw at them to get Bray his first title. Of course the question now is how do you build on this as WWE has had a tendency to book Wyatt horribly over the years. This was the right idea though.

Dean Ambrose says AJ Styles is in for some hard times tonight because it's going to be violent.

AJ says the problem is keeping Dean down but some chairs, tables and ladders should do the trick.

Carmella vs. Nikki Bella

No DQ and Carmella is sporting a big black eye. Nikki spears her down to start but gets hurricanranaed into the steps to bang up her

knee. The referee starts counting even though the announcement before the match said this can only end by pin or submission. Back in and Carmella ties her into the Tree of Woe and fires off some kendo stick shots to the ribs.

The Cone of Silence is broken up with more stick shots because Nikki isn't tapping to that yet. Or at all most likely. Nikki gets back up and hits the Disaster Kick off the barricade (What bad knee?) before spraying Carmella with the fire extinguisher. The Rack Attack 2.0 finishes Carmella clean at 7:39.

Rating: D. This was another rather annoying instances of "Nikki Bella is amazing and you should all like her". Carmella did a bunch of stuff, had it all shrugged off, and lost clean to the reality star who isn't interesting as a wrestler or a character because Carmella is exactly right: Nikki has had things handed to her and didn't get over until the reality show started up. But now she's "famous" and has a stupid catchphrase so she's interesting right? Carmella says this doesn't even anything because it was Natalya who attacked Nikki at Survivor Series. That was ever in doubt?

IMMEDIATELY after that, here's a video of Natalya helping someone pick out a ring. You knew you were doing this and you couldn't have say, Becky do this vignette?

Video on the history of the Intercontinental Title to set up Dolph Ziggler vs. Miz in their final battle over the title.

Daniel Bryan puts Ziggler over when Miz comes up. They don't like each other you see and Miz wants to shove Bryan off a ladder.

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Dolph Ziggler

Miz is defending in a ladder match. Ziggler, in American flag tights for some reason, takes him down to start but neither can hit a finisher early on. They take turns sending each other into and hitting each other with a ladder before Ziggler pulls Miz into the post. A tornado DDT sends Miz face first (very slowly of course) into the ladder and both guys are down.

Ziggler loads up the ladder in the ring but Miz is right back up to

knock it down. Miz puts the ladder on the middle rope and goes up, only to get shoved off again. An elbow off the ladder (which didn't change much here) has Miz in trouble but he brings Ziggler off the ladder again. Back up and Miz tries the running dropkick in the corner, only to have Ziggler throw the ladder at him again. Miz starts in on the knee by crushing it between the ladder.

To change things up a bit, Miz puts on the Figure Four with the leg in the ladder. Cool idea, even though it doesn't change much. The Skull Crushing Finale onto the ladder lets Miz go for the belt but Ziggler shoves the ladder away, leaving Miz dangling in the air. That means a big crash and Miz comes up holding his knee.

Ziggler limps up the ladder but Miz, who is limping as well, pulls him down into a slingshot powerbomb onto the ladder in the corner. For some reason (likely a spot I'm guessing) Miz sets up another ladder and they slug it out on top. Ziggler knocks him down after some shots to the face but a low blow brings him down, allowing Miz to retain at 25:10.

Rating: C+. Ladder matches are all about the drama and that's not what we had here. This was all about doing spot after spot and that has to be done properly or it makes for a pretty uninteresting match. That's what we had here because most of this match was about going from one spot to another, which gets really tiresome. At least the right guy won though and he didn't have a bunch of people interfering to help him get there.

Post match Miz dedicates the win to Bryan, who motivated him by saying Miz didn't belong here. Ziggler can have a participation ribbon and like it. Ok, let's assume this isn't building to Bryan vs. Miz. WHAT THE HECK ARE THEY BUILDING TOWARDS THEN???

We recap Kalisto vs. Baron Corbin in your standard bully vs. small guy feud. Chairs are involved and that's your gimmick here.

Kalisto vs. Baron Corbin

Kalisto, debuting new trunks here, brings in a bunch of chairs but gets knocked outside by the monster. Corbin sends him into the

barricade and then into a pile of chairs for two back inside. More chairs are set up inside the ring with Corbin putting six of them together in the middle. He takes a bit too long setting them up though and it's Kalisto coming off the top with a seated senton through the chairs for two.

Kalisto tries again with a suicide dive but Corbin whips him around with a great looking Deep Six on the floor. Back in and Corbin piles up a bunch of chairs but stops to swing at Kalisto instead. That goes badly as Kalisto hurricanranas him off the barricade for a breather, followed by a moonsault into double knees to the chest for two more. Kalisto tries going up again but this time Corbin is ready for a chair to the head, knocking Kalisto out of the air in a good looking crash. End of Days onto the pile of chairs gives Baron the pin at 12:51.

Rating: C+. Kalisto was game here but again this was the right call. Corbin could move up the ladder very quickly on Smackdown and this needs to be the final match against Kalisto. Baron has been kind of floating around aimlessly in recent months so hopefully he can go somewhere more defined from here.

Natalya denies attacking Nikki.

We recap Becky Lynch vs. Alexa Bliss. Lynch beat her in Scotland but Bliss' foot was on the ropes, meaning it's time for a rematch. Bliss put her through a table on Smackdown and the gimmick was set.

Women's Title: Alexa Bliss vs. Becky Lynch

Lynch is defending and it's a tables match. The champ starts fast and goes for a table under the ring but Bliss shoves it back under. Becky is back up and knocking Bliss away but takes a long time setting up a table at ringside. It doesn't seem to matter much though as a springboard kick to the face almost knocks Bliss through.

Instead Alexa bites the fingers and chokes on the ropes for a bit. The bored fans start chanting for JBL but thankfully it doesn't catch on. Bliss sets up another table in front of the corner and

it's time for a fight on the corner but the table is turned over. Becky puts the table up in the corner and fires off some uppercuts. That goes nowhere though as Bliss elbows her in the face and hits Insult to Injury.

Now the table is turned upside down and Alexa hits a DDT onto the back, which thankfully doesn't bust Becky open. The Disarm-Her through the table legs has Bliss in trouble but Becky has to let it go because the hold means nothing. The table is set on the bottom rope but Becky kicks her to the floor, only to get powerbombed through the first table to give Bliss the title at 15:16.

Rating: C. The crowd really hurt this one but the wrestling actually wasn't bad. Bliss lasted a lot longer than I was expecting and looked good throughout, which is a really positive sign for her going forward. What isn't a positive sign is Nikki Bella, who is almost guaranteed to get the title in her first shot. Better than I was expecting here.

More of Natalya with the ring (as in engagement ring) stuff, this time with the proposal.

We recap the main event. Ambrose lost the title to Styles but before he could get his pay per view rematch, James Ellsworth got involved and basically took over the feud for a good while. Ambrose is finally getting his rematch (save for the one from like two months ago) and it's the show's namesake match.

Smackdown World Title: Dean Ambrose vs. AJ Styles

Ambrose is defending and it's a TLC match. An early backdrop puts the champ down but it's WAY too early to start climbing. They fight up to the set where there are a lot more toys available. Dean climbs a ladder but goes right back down after AJ gets off the table. Back in and Dean gets hit by a flying ladder, only to catapult AJ into one as well.

AJ crashes out to the floor and Dean throws the ladder onto him to make things even worse. It's still too early to climb though as AJ blasts Dean in the back with a chair. More chairs are set up in the

middle of the ring but Dean suplex drops Styles through them instead. The Rebound Lariat puts AJ down and it's time to go back outside.

Dean's suicide dive takes AJ down again and Ambrose loads up the announcers' tables. The big elbow off the ladder drives AJ through the table and it's time for the really slow climb. Styles comes back in (duh) and it's the big crash to the mat with both guys down. Dean heads outside and takes the moonsault into the reverse DDT for a bad headache. With Dean mostly out, AJ opts for a springboard 450 through a table instead.

Now THAT wakes the crowd up but not as much as James Ellsworth, who comes down in a neckbrace as AJ starts climbing the ladder. Dean saves his buddy from a Styles Clash and gives AJ Dirty Deeds on the steps. We get the big climb and even a bonus shove off the ladder to send Styles to the floor...and Ellsworth turns on Dean by shoving the ladder over. Styles gets back in and pulls down the title to retain at 30:58.

Rating: B+. They had to do something like this with Ellsworth and it can make sense if it's played right. Styles retaining is another good call and sets up something big at the Royal Rumble, especially if it's Undertaker getting the show. The spots worked really well here and I liked it as well as I expected to. Strong main event, as it was always going to be.

Ellsworth is elated to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. I liked the show well enough but it felt like it was under a thick ceiling. There was a certain energy lacking from it and that held it back a bit. It also doesn't help that a lot of the matches were predictable, but that doesn't mean they weren't entertaining. This was the kind of show you would expect and there's nothing wrong with that, though it doesn't matter much given the huge Rumble coming up.

Results

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

Nikki Bella b. Carmella – Rack Attack 2.0

Miz b. Dolph Ziggler – Miz pulled down the title

Baron Corbin b. Kalisto – End of Days onto a pile of chairs

Alexa Bliss b. Becky Lynch – Powerbomb through a table

AJ Styles b. Dean Ambrose – Styles pulled down the title

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Tables, Ladders and Chairs 2016 Preview

It's been long enough since the last pay per view right? I mean, two weeks is more than enough time to get ready for the next big show. This Sunday we have "Tables, Ladders and Chairs 2016" from "Smackdown Live", meaning it's time for the big gimmick based show with all the matches built around the name of the show. No I don't mean Survivor Series. Let's get to it.

To begin with, we have a match that has been built up for a few months despite both guys barely being in the same place. We'll start with the chairs match between Baron Corbin and Kalisto, which was recently enhanced by Corbin ruining Kalisto's Cruiserweight Title shot and therefore keeping the cruiserweights over on "Monday Night

Raw". Kalisto then attacked Corbin with a chair for the sake of having a chairs match on the pay per view.

There's really no reason to put Kalisto over here so I'll go with Corbin, who seemed to be ready for a push towards the main event but was thrown back into this for reasons that aren't clear. I'm sure Kalisto will get in some impressive offense but I can't imagine this ending with anything other than a big power move onto a chair with Corbin getting the pin.

We'll just to a title match now with Smackdown Women's Champion Becky Lynch defending against Alexa Bliss in a tables match. These two have feuded for months now but they've managed to only have one title match in that span. Yeah imagine that: building up a feud by means other than having them trade the title back and forth. On this occasion, we're having a tables match after Bliss pushed Lynch through one on "Smackdown Live" earlier this week.

On paper, this is the perfect way to put the title on Bliss but I think we're going to see Lynch retain the title in a surprise. They seem to be getting ready for the big showdown with Nikki Bella because that's just how things work on Tuesdays. Bliss has gotten a lot out of this feud but I don't think she's ready for the title just yet. I wouldn't be stunned if they change the title but I think Lynch retains here.

We'll stick with the title matches for now with the Wyatt Family (Bray Wyatt and Randy Orton) challenging Heath Slater and Rhyno for the Smackdown Tag Team Titles. Slater and Rhyno are the inaugural champions and have held the belts for a few months now, which really has surprised me after expecting them to fall apart in the span of their first feud.

That being said, if there is any reason for the Wyatts not to get the titles here, I have no idea what it could be. Somehow Wyatt has never won a title in WWE and Orton would seemed destined to turn on him eventually, so the title change here makes sense. Also it's not like Slater and Rhyno losing to one of the biggest stars ever and a top name like Wyatt is going to seem like an upset. They're playing

with the house's money here so the loss is fine. Give the Wyatts the belts they deserve and arguably need.

Before we get to the two big matches on the rest of the show, let's take a look at the grudge match between Nikki Bella and Carmella, who will be facing off in a No DQ match. This isn't the most interesting thing in the world but it's been built up well enough over time and I wouldn't mind watching it again. I mean, assuming Bella doesn't shrug off Carmella's finisher time after time again.

This time though I think I'm going to go with Carmella in an upset. The weapons are a nice way out and as much as I'm sure they want to push Bella as this unstoppable force, Carmella needs this win a lot more. Carmella could challenge Lynch down the line and while there's a very good chance this is the Bella show all over again (in addition to her two other shows), I'm going with Carmella in a surprise.

Now we get to the portion of the show involving climbing high objects, starting with Miz defending the Intercontinental Title in a ladder match against Dolph Ziggler. These two have feuded for what feels like forever and this is being billed as the big final fight. I didn't really need Miz losing the title in the first place as I could have gone with a big long title reign but Ziggler's win was great.

I'll go with Miz retaining here as Ziggler really doesn't need anything at this point. Unfortunately I have a bad feeling they're going to go with Ziggler getting the big win again because that's worked so well in the long term all those other times. Miz winning, hopefully without Spirit Squad interfering this time, sets up something bigger for him down the line while Ziggler can be built up for his latest "I JUST WANT ONE SHOT!!!" speech.

That leaves us with the main event with AJ Styles defending the Smackdown World Title against former champion Dean Ambrose in a TLC match. Styles won the title back in September and Ambrose has yet to get his one on one rematch. This is the kind of match that is fun almost by definition: take two talented people and have them beat

each other with various hard objects over and over again until one of them is done.

I'll take Styles retaining here as the word on the street is Undertaker vs. Styles for the belt in San Antonio. On top of that there's a pre-made story of Undertaker being mad at Ambrose for costing "Smackdown Live" the Survivor Series match. Even if Undertaker doesn't interfere, Styles winning makes the most sense and hopefully wraps up this feud for good.

Overall, Sunday's show is going to be the same as it always is: a lot of fun depending on the level of violence they're allowed to involve. I always look forward to this show and it's a great way to wrap up the year. No big storytelling moments, no technical wrestling exhibitions and no overly complicated gimmicks. Just a bunch of matches with people beating on each other with various metal objects.

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New Column: We Get It

Already

Looking at why Sasha vs. Charlotte is a horrible way to book a feud and why the blue women are that much better.

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