

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

Smackdown

Date: October 4, 2016

Location: Valley View Casino Center, San Diego, California

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

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

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

Bray Wyatt vs. Kane

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

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

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

up and a match is set up.

Post break, Bray is looking for Orton.

Alexa Bliss vs. Nikki Bella

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

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

Becky Lynch/Nikki Bella vs. Carmella/Alexa Bliss

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

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

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

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

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

Vaudevillains vs. Hype Bros

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

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

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

The Ascension point at the Hype Bros.

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

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

Hispanic Heritage Month video on Roberto Clemente.

Jey Uso vs. Jason Jordan

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jack Swagger vs. Baron Corbin

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Results

Kane b. Bray Wyatt via countout

Nikki Bella b. Alexa Bliss via DQ when Carmella interfered

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

Hype Bros b. Vaudevillains – Hype Ryder to English

Jason Jordan b. Jey Uso – Rollup

Jack Swagger b. Baron Corbin – Patriot Lock

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete 2014 Raw and Smackdown Reviews Part

I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01LY6766K#nav-subnav>

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

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

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

Smackdown

Date: September 20, 2016

Location: Legacy Arena, Birmingham, Alabama

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga. Mauro Ranallo

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

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

Daniel Bryan is in the ring for a contract signing for the Women's Title match at No Mercy. Becky Lynch comes out first and agrees to keep this civil. Alexa Bliss comes out and suggests Becky use moisturizer. Becky says she's here for a fight instead of a pageant. They go back and forth about how Becky doesn't belong here but she worked as hard as she could at jobs she hated to get to this point.

She wasn't born to be a champion but Alexa knows she was.

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

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

Usos vs. American Alpha

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

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

Rating: C+. The booking of American Alpha is really interesting as they came in so hot that there's no reason to believe any team can hang with them. WWE had to come up with something to slow them down so other teams could hang with them and this knee injury was as good as they were going to come up with. In theory this sets up the Usos winning the belts to set up the big showdown against Alpha down the line.

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

Baron Corbin vs. Apollo Crews

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

Corbin and Swagger have a staredown.

Curt Hawkins Face the Facts vignette.

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

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

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Dolph Ziggler

Miz is defending and we even get Big Match Intros. Ziggler takes it to the mat to start and Miz is in WAY over his head with the technical stuff. A clothesline on the floor takes Miz down again but he dropkicks Ziggler off the apron to take over. Back in and Miz does the YES Kicks but continues the tradition of missing the big one. Ziggler goes shoulder first into the post and gets kicked in the face for two.

A Stinger Splash has Miz in trouble but he misses another charge

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

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

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

Erick Rowan vs. Randy Orton

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

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

Nikki Bella/Naomi vs. Carmella/Natalya

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

seconds.

Naomi kicks Natalya in the head post match.

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

John Cena vs. Dean Ambrose

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

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

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

Overall Rating: A-. This show was fantastic and there's not much else that needs to be said about it. The wrestling was good, the angles were hot and the stories were advanced. Above all else, Bryan was only there when he was needed instead of running around every five minutes and interjecting himself where he wasn't needed. I had a blast watching this show and thought it was more fun than anything WWE has done in a very long time. Great stuff here and by far the

best episode of either show since the Brand Split and a long time before that.

Results

Usos b. American Alpha – Superfly splash to Jordan

Baron Corbin b. Apollo Crews – End of Days

The Miz b. Dolph Ziggler – Skull Crushing Finale

Randy Orton b. Erick Rowan – RKO

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

Dean Ambrose b. John Cena – Sunset flip

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete 2014 Raw and Smackdown Reviews Part I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01LY6766K#nav-subnav>

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

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

Smackdown – September 13, 2016: Plugging The Holes

Smackdown

Date: September 13, 2016

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Mauro Ranallo, David Otunga

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

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

Opening sequence.

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

Dean wants his title back but Cena cuts him off as well, saying that Dean didn't take AJ seriously enough. Maybe Steve Austin was right to call him out on the podcast. Ambrose doesn't take kindly to that and calls Cena a lazy part timer. Cena would be better off hosting award shows because he's not able to keep up with the new generation.

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

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

Connor's Cure video.

Usos vs. Hype Bros

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

Curt Hawkins talks about wolf cubs.

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

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

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

Apollo Crews vs. Baron Corbin

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

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

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

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

Again I'd like to point out that it's a really bad sign that every

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

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

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

Kane laughs at AJ for suggesting a partnership.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Joined in progress again with Miz kicking Cena in the face before it's off to Dean for some clotheslines on AJ. A quick Pele takes Dean down and we go to another break. Back with Miz ax handling Dean so it can be back to AJ. We hit a chinlock on Ambrose for a bit before he shoves AJ away and makes the hot tag off to Cena. Everything breaks down and Dean sends AJ to the floor, leaving Cena to AA Miz for the pin at 9:50.

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

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

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

Results

Usos b. Hype Bros – Superfly splash to Rawley

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

Heath Slater/Rhyno b. Ascension – Gore to Viktor

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

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's WWE Grab Bag at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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

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

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

Backlash 2016: As Good As

It's Going To Get

Backlash 2016

Date: September 11, 2016

Location: Richmond Coliseum, Richmond, Virginia

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Mauro Ranallo, David Otunga

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

Pre-Show: Apollo Crews vs. Baron Corbin

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

Corbin talks a little trash and takes Apollo's head off with another clothesline. A running knee (because of course) puts Corbin down and the second jumping enziguri gets two. An Angle Slam of all things gets two more on Baron but he hits the Deep Six for the same. They actually head outside with Corbin going into the steps for a seven count. Back in and Crews charges into a knee (it's always the knee) to set up End of Days for the pin at 9:56.

Rating: C+. This was actually a lot better than I was expecting with some ice chemistry from the pair. Corbin winning is fine as he needs something to do but Crews needs to start winning people people stop caring about him. Above all else though: the pre-show had ONE match that ran about ten minutes and now we're almost ready to go with the regular show. Yes I said ONE MATCH instead of three with half an

hour between each one. I really don't think people are going to miss the other two and the fans might even be a bit less burned out later on. Imagine that.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Alabama Slam gets two on Carmella and Natalya comes back in for a Tower of Doom (a name they thankfully don't use tonight). Alexa

comes back in with a sunset flip out of the corner for two before Carmella sends everyone outside, leaving Naomi to dive onto all of them. Back in and Natalya loads up a powerbomb out of the corner with Naomi adding a Blockbuster to get rid of Bliss at 9:39.

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

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

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

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

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

Usos vs. Hype Bros

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

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

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

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

Connor's Cure video.

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

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

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Dolph Ziggler

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

It's off to a surfboard before Miz does the YES pose. Oh man they're

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

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

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

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

The pre-show panel has a chat.

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

Bray Wyatt vs. Kane

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

looks to set up a chokeslam but Bray takes it outside again.

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

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

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

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

Smackdown Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Rhino/Heath Slater

For the inaugural titles. Slater goes after Jey to start before it's off to Rhino for some power slots. Heath comes back in but is taken outside for a double suplex into the post (cool). Back in and Slater is slowly beaten down as the back work continues. The fans want Rhino but get a chinlock from Jey instead.

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

but Rhyno hits the Gore to give Slater the pin at 9:57.

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

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

Miz vs. Ziggler chicken deal.

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

Smackdown World Title: Dean Ambrose vs. AJ Styles

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

Dean comes up holding his nose but makes a comeback anyway by whipping AJ into the corner. That goes nowhere good either as Dean misses a charge into the post. They're going with the idea that Dean is doing his normal insane style but AJ knows exactly what he's going to do and is one step ahead. Dean is back up and tries a belly to back superplex but flips AJ over for a big crash to put both guys down.

AJ dives into a spinning Rock Bottom backbreaker of all things for two (makes sense as Dean used something new) and the standing elbow to the floor has AJ in even more trouble. They head inside again

with Dean getting suplexed into the corner (becoming a common move lately). Now it's AJ going after the leg with a standing Robinsdale Crunch out of the corner and the Calf Crusher is on.

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

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

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

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

Overall Rating: C+. This is a really weird one to grade as the ultra low expectations did it a lot of favors. Unfortunately it's a show that didn't need to exist and needed a lot of things dragged out to make it work as well as it did. Smackdown is dying for some midcard talent as they had one of the shortest pay per views in a long time and that only worked with a team working twice and the opening match not starting until over fifteen minutes into the show. I liked this as well as I could have given the circumstances but they really need to fix some big problems.

Results

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

Usos b. Hype Bros – Tequila Sunrise to Ryder

The Miz b. Dolph Ziggler – Skull Crushing Finale

Kane b. Bray Wyatt – Chokeslam

Rhyno/Heath Slater b. Usos – Gore to Jimmy

AJ Styles b. Dean Ambrose – Styles Clash

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's WWE Grab Bag at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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

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

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

Backlash 2016 Preview

Let's see: college football, first weekend of the NFL, see how the Cleveland Indians manager to screw up the division lead this year. Yeah it's kind of a bor.....Backlash? That's this weekend? Apparently it is despite feeling like it's lacking another two or three weeks worth of building. It probably doesn't help that we're only three weeks removed from the marathon that was Summerslam weekend and there's barely enough material for a pay per view.

There's no pre-show match announced yet so let's start with the precursor to the Tag Team Title match as the Usos are facing the Hype Bros in what you could kind of call the third semifinal match. American Alpha had advanced to the finals to face Heath Slater/Rhyno

for the titles but the Usos turned heel and then did so again after the match to injure Chad Gable's knee, leaving us with only one team for the tournament final. Therefore we'll be seeing the two teams that lost in the semifinals fight each other with the winners going to the title match.

Save for an American Alpha run-in, I see no reason for the Usos to not win here and go on to face Slater/Rhyno. There isn't much else to say on this one as Slater/Rhyno already beat the Hype Bros earlier this week (making it even clearer that this match is filler) so the Usos are the only real option. So yeah, the Usos go on as is the only real option here.

That leaves us with the Usos vs. Slater/Rhyno for the titles and I'm really not sure where you go here. There's a very easy case for the Usos getting the belts to give them credibility (the announcers have made sure to mention that the Usos are the only team in the tournament to ever hold titles in WWE) and of course to set up the rematch with American Alpha, who beat them clean in less than a minute.

On the other hand I'm not sure how long they can string out the "Heath wants a job" angle until they have to give him something. Slater/Rhyno as the first champions would be just fine as American Alpha and the Usos can have a #1 contenders feud and then win the belts while the first champs do comedy. All that being said, the Usos are the logical pick here and I'll go with them, despite it being stupid to have heels wrestle twice in one night to win a title.

We'll stick with the title matches as it's off to Miz defending the Intercontinental Title against Dolph Ziggler. If you've been reading my stuff lately, you know I'm really not a fan of this feud and that hasn't changed. The story here works: they've built up Miz as a pretty good champion (if he holds the title another two weeks it's the longest reign in five years) who is enough of a veteran that he can be a bigger player on Smackdown, especially with what they were teasing with Bryan. Ziggler needs a big win (though remember: it's

DEFENDING the title that matters, not actually winning it) and this is suddenly a big enough deal.

That brings us to the problem: it's Dolph Ziggler vs. the Miz. These guys have fought a ton of times (four times on TV this year alone) and none of them have been exactly what you would call thrilling. The match will be fine but the buildup to it with both guys wanting to move up the ladder into serious contention should be calling for something special, not something we've seen several times before and said "eh not bad" much more often than not. I'll take Miz to retain the title here but Ziggler going over really wouldn't shock me as they're obsessed with pushing him for reasons I really don't buy.

We'll get to one of the bigger matches now with Randy Orton vs. Bray Wyatt and again I'm worried about what they're going to do here. Orton really, really needs a win after that debacle against Lesnar last month but Bray really needs a win.....well always because he hardly ever wins anything important.

The problem here is there's only a limited story aside from Wyatt's traditional "I choose to haunt you" idea which ran out of gas a long time ago. I'm sure it's going to be entertaining but this feels like a lot of going through the motions instead of giving us something that should be good. I'll go with Orton here but a no contest or countout/DQ ending would be the better option.

Next up is the Six Pack Challenge for the inaugural Smackdown Women's Title and I'll spare you the time by saying this should be Nikki Bella's to lose. Naomi is the athletic woman who probably won't win, Alexa Bliss and Carmella are miles away from being ready and Natalya has less charisma than even your average Canadian wrestler. That leaves Nikki and Becky Lynch as the only real options and you know full well that we need a good Bella comeback story after the neck injury that we all sat up crying over because we might never get to hear her call herself fearless again. So yeah, Nikki wins because it's all about the Bellas.

That leaves us with the main event and as is the case with almost anything else on the card, I really don't care. Dean Ambrose is

defending the Smackdown World Title against AJ Styles and that's about the extent of their issue. They've tried to force in the idea that Dean isn't taking this seriously and AJ is the uncrowned champion after pinning Cena and....yeah that's about it. Aside from a rematch, I really don't see a reason for AJ to not get the title here. He's the best on Smackdown and can hold the title for a few months until hopefully someone switches shows to mix things up a bit and give him a fresh challenger.

So that's Backlash and I'm lucky that I stayed awake while I wrote this up. No matter how you slice it, this show really isn't interesting and doesn't need to be a pay per view. The biggest thing here though is this doesn't feel like a three hour pay per view. We haven't seen a single brand show yet so maybe they'll speed things up a bit.

Let's say the main event and Orton vs. Wyatt eat up an hour combined (that's probably a big stretch even when you include entrances). A Six Pack Challenge, two tag matches and Miz vs. Ziggler isn't enough to fill in two hours. I'd be really surprised if this show runs three hours unless they add in some nothing matches like Baron Corbin vs. Kalisto (Is that still a thing?) or Kane squashing Breezango for reasons of general stupidity.

Length issues aside, I'm really not interested in this show and I haven't seen many who are. Smackdown has been the better of the two shows but they're a long way away from being able to pull off a three hour pay per view with just the stuff they have. Just let the show run a little shorter and people will be a lot happier. I don't think the Network subscriptions are going to plummet if one of the seven bonus pay per views a year is a little shorter than average.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's WWE Grab Bag at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling

books at:

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

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

Smackdown

Date: September 6, 2016

Location: Pinnacle Bank Arena, Lincoln, Nebraska

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

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

Opening sequence.

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

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

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

Cue Alexa Bliss to say they're both whiners and calls Bryan a Bella trophy husband. Now it's Carmella cutting them because women in WWE can't let anyone else get more than a few words out. Everyone gets catty about nicknames and the villains accuse Becky of turning them all against each other. Naomi and Nikki run out for the save and the villains leave. This was fine for a quick build but as usual, the women almost all have characters that can be summed up in six words or less and you have to stretch to get that far. If you want the division to go anywhere, give us some development and a reason to care about them.

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

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

The Miz vs. Apollo Crews

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

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

Rating: D+. I have no idea what they're trying for with Miz and Ziggler at this point but it seems to be YET ANOTHER attempt to make Ziggler seem important after years of failing to live up to expectations. I'll be very, very disappointed if they put the title on him Sunday as Miz vs. Bryan still has a lot of potential as they're trying to make Miz look like something special for a change. Ziggler would be the same nothing champion who would likely lose every non-title match but it doesn't matter because he tried his best.

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

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

American Alpha video.

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

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

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

Nikki makes her entrance before a break so we come back with.....the other five entrances. Bliss and Naomi start things off and it's time

for the dancing kicks, which still look horrible. As a bonus this time, Naomi's kick to the head completely misses but it's off to Carmella (now in tights instead of the shorts in a smart move for the heel turn) vs. Becky anyway. A backslide gets two on Carmella, who didn't seem like she kicked out in time. Nikki comes in and again the fans seem to care for reasons that I don't understand. The villains are chased to the floor and we take a break.

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

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

Tag Team Title Tournament Semifinals: Usos vs. American Alpha

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

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

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

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

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

Children with cancer awareness video.

Curt Hawkins video. He's here next week.

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

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

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

We look at the knee injury earlier.

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

Here are Dean Ambrose and AJ Styles for a face to face meeting to end the show. Dean has a gift for AJ: a bowling trophy for participation, which is the only trophy Dean will ever give him. We see clips of AJ getting crotched last week and AJ isn't happy. Styles talks about how he beat John Cena but Dean points out that this Sunday, AJ isn't fighting Cena. On top of that, AJ beat Cena in a wrestling match and Sunday it's going to be a fight. They don't give out trophies for second place so AJ kicks Dean low and breaks the trophy to end the show. They kept this short and that's probably best given how the feud has gone so far.

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

Results

The Miz b. Apollo Crews – Skull Crushing Finale

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

American Alpha b. Usos – Grand Amplitude to Jimmy

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

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's WWE Grab Bag at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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

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

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

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

Smackdown

Date: August 30, 2016

Location: American Airlines Center, Dallas, Texas

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

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

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

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

Opening sequence.

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

What the fans don't understand is what goes on backstage. Who do you think they call when they need someone to do a red carpet premiere or a commercial or main event Wrestlemania and then dress up as a chicken? Miz didn't spend the first twelve years of his career wrestling in front of 50 people and people booing him for that makes them cowards. Cue Dolph Ziggler and I'm done. This was getting really interesting and it's about Dolph "RESPECT ME WHEN I'M SERIOUS AND THEN LOSE EVERY BIG MATCH OVER AND OVER AGAIN" Ziggler all over again.

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

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

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

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

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

Post match the Hype Bros say they're hyped enough to win the titles. We finally see the tournament brackets and the Usos vs. American Alpha is actually a semifinal match. That makes things a lot more interesting.

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

Here's AJ Styles for a chat. AJ, in the Cena headband, says he's already beaten up John Cena and now he's going to win the World Title. This brings out Apollo Crews to say Daniel Bryan has granted him a match against AJ right now. I love the fact that they just got to the point here. It was clear we were getting this match the second they ran into each other so there's no reason to waste time setting it up.

AJ Styles vs. Apollo Crews

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

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

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

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

the scars inside. He agrees to the match and goes inside but Bray vanishes.

Natalya/Alexa Bliss vs. Becky Lynch/Naomi

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

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

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

Video on Curt Hawkins.

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

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

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

Baron Corbin vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title and AJ is on commentary. Ambrose knocks Baron to the floor to start and hits a running clothesline from the apron. Back in and

Dean's bulldog is broken up and Baron pounds away with right hands. We come back from a break with Corbin holding a chinlock and getting two off a choke legsweep. Dean fights up and gets two off his clothesline before hitting the suicide dive on the floor. Back in and the Deep Six plants Dean but AJ gets in Baron's face and tells him to stay on it. Dean knocks Baron into Styles so AJ kicks Baron in the face for the DQ at 12:12.

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

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

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

Results

Hype Bros b. Vaudevillains – Hype Ryder to English

AJ Styles b. Apollo Crews – Phenomenal Forearm

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

Rhino/Heath Slater b. Headbangers – Gore to Mosh

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

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

Smackdown

Date: August 23, 2016

Location: Mohegan Sun Arena, Uncasville, Connecticut

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

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

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

Opening sequence.

The tag and women's divisions are in the ring around the new titles (The Women's Title is the same as the Raw version but with a blue background. The Tag Team Titles look similar to the Raw versions but with silver instead of bronze.) when the bosses come out. We'll start with the women, all of whom have potential to be the champion.

At Backlash, there will be a Six Pack Challenge to determine the first champion. The Tag Team Titles will be decided at Smackdown as well with the finals of a tournament. Cue Heath Slater to say he should be Michael Phelps and get to compete for some gold. Ignoring that THE BELTS ARE SILVER, Daniel says Heath isn't equipped to fight for the Women's Title.

Heath meant the tag belts so Bryan gives him an offer: if Slater can find a partner by the end of the night, the bosses will find another team and make it an eight team tournament. However, Slater only gets a contract if he and his partner win the whole thing. That's fine with Slater but here's AJ to interrupt. He's tired of hearing about

the Tag Team Titles and the Women's Ti...."No I won't be your partner Slater." This brings out Ziggler to jump him from behind and the bosses send the tag teams out to break it up as we go to a break.

Becky Lynch vs. Alexa Bliss

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

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

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

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

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

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

Here's AJ to discuss his win on Sunday. With the NEVER GIVE UP armband around his own arm, AJ says he beat up John Cena and then beat him at Summerslam. All these Cena fans can be his new fans because he should be #1 contender to the WWE World Title. Ziggler

fights his way to the ring but here's Bryan to make a match for tonight. AJ already has a shot at Backlash but if Ziggler wins, it's a triple threat.

Nikki Bella vs. Carmella

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Grand Amplitude sends American Alpha on at 10:28.

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

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

Dolph Ziggler vs. AJ Styles

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

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

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

Rating: B+. So at the end of the day, after a pay per view title match and this big match, Ziggler is right back where he was coming into the Draft: an upper midcard jobber to the stars who isn't

likely to win anything important and while he can have some good matches like this, I still have no reason to care about him. AJ winning was the only way to go here and there's nothing wrong with that.

Dean and AJ have a staredown to end the show.

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

Results

Becky Lynch b. Alexa Bliss – Disarm-Her

Usos b. Ascension – Superfly Splash to Viktor

American Alpha b. Breezango – Grand Amplitude to Breeze

AJ Styles b. Dolph Ziggler – Styles Clash

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's WWE Grab Bag at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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

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

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

NXT – August 17, 2016: This

Is What They Do

NXT

Date: August 17, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

It's the go home show for Takeover: Back to Brooklyn and that means it's time for the big hard push towards New York. Odds are we'll be getting the big showdown between Samoa Joe and Shinsuke Nakamura, possibly with Nakamura getting taken down as payback for embarrassing Joe last week. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Hideo Itami vs. Mustafa Ali

Ali is from the Cruiserweight Classic. Itami starts fast with the strikes and sends him to the apron for a baseball slide. Back in and Ali takes him down for a chinlock followed by a kick to the head for two. Itami is tired of playing around though and starts firing off the strikes, capped off by the running knee for the pin at 3:20.

Rating: C. The silent assassin could work for Itami as it's better than watching him just not have much charisma. I do like the idea of bringing in the cruiserweights as NXT isn't going to treat them as worthless jobbers. Ali certainly wasn't squashed here and that makes all the difference in the world.

Video on Bobby Roode. Any excuse to hear GLORIOUS is worth it.

Video on Asuka vs. Bayley, which makes it feel like the ultimate rematch and challenge for Bayley after she was destroyed in Dallas. Asuka has gotten even more aggressive since winning the title and Bayley could be in way over her head on this one. Bayley said the underdog has become the champion before and she's going to do it again.

Music video with footage of Aries vs. No Way Jose, Roode vs. Almas and the Tag Team Title match.

William Regal is talking about how awesome Takeover is going to be when Billie Kay comes in and asks why she's not on the card. Regal agrees and gives her a match with newcomer Ember Moon. Simple and effective again.

Carmella/Liv Morgan/Nikki Glenncross vs. Alexa Bliss/Mandy Rose/Daria Berenato

Rose is from Tough Enough, Glenncross is from Scotland and Berenato is from New Jersey. You can tell Rose is glorified eye candy in the vein of the early days of Eva Marie. Graves: "Mandy Rose is only second to one person in my heart: Eva Marie." Berenato (a newcomer just like Glenncross) is dressed like a boxer. Ten seconds in and Graves is reaching Jerry Lawler levels of drooling over the women.

Bliss and Nikki start things off with a quick cross body putting Alexa down. The villains take a break on the floor and it's off to Daria, who immediately takes her gloves off as we go to an early break. Back with Daria fighting out of Liv's chinlock before Bliss offers a distraction so the bad women can take over.

We hear about Daria's MMA training before it's off to Mandy with Graves losing his mind in the vein of Cole freaking out over Miz. A running knee puts Liv down before Daria comes back in for a kick to the chest. We hit the chinlock with a body vice and Daria even adds some trash talk. You don't see that enough.

Morgan enziguris Alexa down and the hot tag brings in Carmella to clean house. Carmella speeds things up with clotheslines and a hurricanrana to take Rose down for two. Everything breaks down and Mandy's rollup is countered into the Cone of Silence for the tap out at 11:35.

Rating: C+. This was a very nice surprise and a good hope for the future of the women's division. Rose is already a mile ahead of Eva Marie in the ring as she looked competent and comfortable with the basic things she was doing. Glenncross didn't get to show off all that much but Daria had a unique enough character to stand out immediately. Carmella and Bliss definitely looked ahead of the others and I'm sure they'll be fine on the main rosters with a

little more time.

Regal tells security to keep Joe and Nakamura apart during their interview.

Ember Moon is coming.

We run down the card. I miss that happening on the main shows.

It's time for the sitdown interview with Joe and Nakamura. Both of them say they're excited to start before Joe says he doesn't like the lack of respect. Joe had to go through the entire roster for months to get a title shot but Nakamura beats Balor once and gets his shot. Bayley only had to ask for a rematch and Regal checked with Asuka to make sure it was ok. Nakamura says he's a calm man by definition, especially outside of the ring.

Joe says Nakamura came to his dojo for training earlier in his career. Nakamura doesn't remember it being Joe's dojo and smiles a lot. Joe respects what Nakamura has done but maybe not Shinsuke himself. In answer to the same question, Nakamura leans forward and smiles a lot which gets Joe out of his chair. Regal has security break it up.

One last Takeover ad ends the show.

Overall Rating: B. This show had one goal and that was to make me care about Takeover more than I did coming in. They more than accomplished that task so anything else they do is a bonus. The wrestling was really an afterthought at this point and the fact that the women's tag worked as well as it did is a bonus. It's a really fast show and they covered all of Saturday's matches, albeit some a bit faster than others. Joe vs. Nakamura has the potential to be an absolute war and I'm looking forward to seeing it. Well done all around here and a great go home show.

Results

Hideo Itami b. Mustafa Ali – Running knee

Carmella/Nikki Glenncross/Liv Morgan b. Daria Berenato/Alexa

Bliss/Mandy Rose – Cone of Silence to Rose

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's WWE Grab Bag at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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

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

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

Smackdown – August 16, 2016: What Does That Make Dean?

Smackdown

Date: August 16, 2016

Location: Frank Erwin Center, Austin, Texas

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, David Otunga, John Bradshaw Layfield

It's the final show before Summerslam and it's time to see what the blue show has to offer. Odds are we'll be seeing a big build towards AJ Styles vs. John Cena II to go along with Smackdown World Champion Dean Ambrose and Dolph Ziggler as guests on MizTV. We'll also have another chance to see Eva Marie's in ring debut. Let's get to it.

Randy Orton signs his contract vs. Brock Lesnar but warns the bosses that the match might be short because it only takes one RKO. Heath Slater brings in a fruit basket but Bryan sees the card: "To Bob, my condolences." Slater can't believe that he's not being offered a contract so Orton eats an apple and says he has an idea. A secret alliance with Carlito?

Opening sequence.

We open with MizTV but Dean cuts off Miz's intro. Ziggler cuts off Dean's opening statement though and they go nose to nose. Miz talks about how this is a huge fight for the title at Summerslam and even he thought Ziggler was a write off. He was a flop like WWE's version of the Ghostbuster's reboot. Again, I'd like to point out: a two time World Champion and a four time Intercontinental Champion should never be considered a flop. All Dolph cares about is winning the title on Sunday.

Miz gets cut off again as Ziggler says all he wants to do is kick Ambrose's head off (of his face that is but I think I get what Dolph meant). Ziggler wants to hear Dean say he was the final push Dolph needed to get over the top. That earns a chuckle from Dean, who says the title isn't the goal. Winning the belt is just the start because that's the day the pressure really starts. Everyone knows Dolph can't handle pressure which is why he's never grabbed the ball and scored a touchdown. HE'S A TWO TIME WORLD CHAMPION AND HE WON IT THE SAME WAY DEAN DID!

Ziggler gets serious and says Dean is going to have to give everything he has but it's not going to be enough to put Dolph away. As Dean is reaching down deep and looking for one last move BAM! Dolph lays him out with a superkick in mid sentence and says this Sunday, Dean will realize that he's that good. Ziggler's stuff was much better but this idea that Ziggler has never won the big one is ridiculous, especially coming from Ambrose. Or are they just burying the legacy of the World Heavyweight Championship and saying it doesn't mean a thing anymore?

During the break, Miz insulted Apollo Crews by calling him Apollo Creed, only to have Crews come out and beat Miz down. I had almost forgotten about that match so it's nice to get a quick something.

American Alpha/Usos/Hype Bros vs. Ascension/Vaudevillains/Breezango

Viktor and Gable start things off but Mojo tags himself in for a three point tackle. Konnor saves his partner from the Hype Rider and everything breaks down to take us to a break. Back with Ryder and

Konnor reaching for tags as it's off to Jimmy vs. English. Jordan starts throwing suplexes and it's time for the parade of finishers, including a ridiculous four superkicks. Jimmy dives on most of his opponents, leaving English to take Grand Amplitude for the pin at 6:50.

Rating: D+. Well that accomplished a grand total of nothing. Wow the Usos can throw superkicks and hit dives and American Alpha is awesome. I feel so much more confident about this new division than I did coming in when I thought the division had no depth and was basically American Alpha and a bunch of nothing teams. That's really not enough to warrant a title but I'm sure WWE would disagree.

Naomi vs. Eva Marie

Naomi's full outfit now lights up, including her hair, and she has a backpack full of glow in the dark material to throw to the crowd. It's certainly eye catching if nothing else. And Eva isn't here due to traffic issues so no match again. This is becoming the highlight of the show.

AJ Styles can't wait to see Alberto Del Rio beat up John Cena tonight but Del Rio tells him to stop living in the past.

Curt Hawkins is coming. Uh...yay.

Heath Slater vs. Randy Orton

So I guess just facing Lesnar last night doesn't count for some reason. Slater can barely walk so Orton easily takes over by hitting him in almost every body part. Orton keeps hammering away in the corner....and that's a DQ at 1:00.

Orton destroys him post match and doesn't seem to notice that he lost. The elevated DDT onto the floor sets up some German suplexes and Brock's pose. An RKO leaves Slater out cold.

The Wyatts are here.

The bosses give Slater a contract so Heath brags about how he showed no mercy. Bryan thinks that's a great name for a pay per view but Slater thinks Bryan is Mick Foley and a bigger star than Roman Reigns. Oh and Shane is Stephanie. That's enough for the boss and

Shane takes the contract away but Slater keeps reading the bed he's laying on. No signing.

Erick Rowan vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title and the Wyatts came out during the break. Of note: Bray and Randy had a staredown as Orton was leaving. Dean tries Dirty Deeds thirty seconds in but settles with a dropkick to send Rowan outside for a suicide dive. Back in and Rowan takes over with a powerslam before sending Dean into the steps. Rowan slowly stomps and pounds in the corner, only to have Dean suplex him back down.

Mauro: "WWE Champion Dean Ambrose willing to put it all on the line!" Other than the title in this match that is. Erick kicks him in the face as JBL talks about opponents not expecting Dean to drop an elbow while they're standing up. You don't expect him to do something he does in almost every match? Speaking of which, Dean hits Dirty Deeds for the pin at 4:58.

Rating: D+. That's the match you would expect from these two as Erick showed off his power but Dean did his normal stuff while JBL said stuff that doesn't make sense. I like the idea of having Dean fight midcarders though as it allows him to look good and the person he beats doesn't look bad because they lost to the champ. Everything works fine.

Post match Bray looks at Rowan's mask and walks away. Good.

Becky Lynch/Carmella vs. Alexa Bliss/Natalya

Carmella and Natalya start things off with a headscissors sending Natalya flying. We hear about Daniel Bryan making a new Women's Title despite there being a total of five female wrestlers on the roster (I'm waiting on Eva to actually wrestle to count her and get it all the way up to six.). Natalya takes Carmella down and the heels take over until a diving tag brings in Becky. Everything breaks down and Natalya collides with Becky....as Eva Marie comes out to her full entrance. This brings out Naomi for a chase to distract Natalya, setting up the Disarm-Her for the tap out at 4:15.

Rating: D. I probably shouldn't have rated it due to how long the

match spent on Eva's entrance but it lets me talk about how stupid it is to have a title for this division. The entire division was involved in one match and you have a total of one former title holder in the whole thing. Becky has never won anything, Carmella and Alexa are rookies, Natalya is the same thing she was the day she debuted, Naomi is flashy but nothing great in the ring and Eva is a comedy act.

That gives you Becky, Natalya and Naomi to do the lifting until Bayley can come and make it four women of worth in the division, at least until Alexa and Carmella are more ready. Remember when all the women were in the ring the night after Wrestlemania and it looked like something might come of it? Yeah forget all that because having enough for one great division means it's time to split it into two weak divisions.

Baron Corbin attacks Kalisto again. What did Kalisto do to deserve this kind of demotion?

Long video on Orton vs. Lesnar, which we saw a few weeks ago.

Alberto Del Rio vs. John Cena

AJ is on commentary. Feeling out process to start until a hiptoss sends Del Rio outside and he takes a breather in the crowd. Back from an early break with Del Rio hitting a shot off the top but missing a charge to crash out onto the floor. Del Rio kicks him in the face (kind of) and avoids a charge to send Cena into the buckle.

AJ and Otunga keep arguing over respect with Styles calling him a rookie. Since this is a Del Rio match and you can guess what he's doing, I have the chance to flash back to Otunga being Styles' replacement at an autograph booth at this year's Axxess. I've never seen a line clear out so fast in my life. Alberto hits a DDT for two and we take another break.

Back with Del Rio diving into a dropkick as Cena starts his comeback. The Backstabber cuts him off and gives Alberto two, followed by the corner enziguri for the same. Cena reverses the cross armbreaker into the STF but Del Rio is too close to the ropes.

The low superkick sets up the cross armbreaker but Cena escapes with a powerbomb. A quick AA gives Cena the pin at 16:56.

Rating: C+. Really if you've seen these two fight once, you've seen almost every one of their matches. Del Rio isn't going to beat Cena in a regular match (certainly not at this point in his career) and it gets a little more boring every time these two fight. Del Rio is just so dull like this and it's so boring watching him clearly not care.

AJ runs in for a Phenomenal Forearm. Styles says he's tired of hearing that the future goes through Cena and he's going to be the new face that runs this place. He goes to leave but comes back for more, allowing Cena to hit the AA. Cena isn't done though and hits a big AA through the table to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. This show had some moments but it never took off and a lot of that is due to a lack of a really compelling feud. AJ vs. Cena feels like the World Title feud while Ambrose and Ziggler are continuing to fight over who is the best wrestler from Ohio. I still can't buy into the idea that Ziggler has never won a big match when he did the exact same thing Ambrose did. If so, what does that make Dean? Throw in the tag and women's divisions that can fit into a single match and it's hard to find a reason to get excited about this show.

Results

American Alpha/Usos/Hype Bros b. Ascension/Vaudevillains/Breezango – Grand Amplitude to English

Heath Slater b. Randy Orton via DQ when Orton kept attacking in the corner

Dean Ambrose b. Erick Rowan – Dirty Deeds

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

John Cena b. Alberto Del Rio – Attitude Adjustment

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's WWE Grab Bag at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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

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

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