

# Smackdown – June 25, 2015: This Match. Again.

## Smackdown

Date: June 25, 2015

Location: Huntington Center, Toledo, Ohio

Commentators: Jimmy Uso, Jerry Lawler, Tom Phillips

Well Lesnar is back and a full on hero now, complete with a knee injury and Kane attacking him. We're still a few weeks away from Battleground though and Seth Rollins needs something to do before he has to face the Beast. Other than that we have Bray Wyatt being creepy about Roman Reigns' daughter. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Lesnar and Heyman promising to hurt Rollins on Monday, followed by Rollins trying to get the Authority to help him again. This led to the team reforming for no obvious reason and Lesnar being beaten down to end Raw.

Here are Rollins, Kane and Joey Mercury (Jamie Noble was injured at the end of Raw as Brock rammed him into the barricade) to open things up. What an odd looking trio. The band is back together and they took a little road trip to Suplex City on Monday, but they burned it to the ground. Good line.

Things change in this business, such as Rollins going from a member of the Shield to the WWE World Heavyweight Champion in just about a year. Here he is now with a genius like Joey Mercury (the grin on his face from that line is awesome), but unfortunately they're missing a member of their family due to Noble having three broken ribs from Lesnar ramming him into the barricade. Tonight's show is dedicated to Jamie, who would want the Authority to celebrate.

No one in the Authority has more to celebrate than Kane, who got to beat up both Lesnar and Dean Ambrose on Monday because he is forever the Devil's Favorite Demon. Off to a completely different subject, Kane blames Ryback for Big Show not being here tonight. After a clip of Ryback

laying Big Show out, here's Ryback himself. He defends his actions but Rollins criticizes him for not acting as a champion is supposed to. Ryback calls Rollins a sellout, earning himself a match with Kane tonight. That's some punishment.

The music plays but Rollins says cut it. He's sick of the lack of respect he's receiving as World Champion, so Kane can take care of Ryback tonight. Rollins isn't happy with Dean Ambrose though, as Ambrose is still walking. Let's remedy that tonight with a one on one match tonight. Ambrose will learn that the Authority always wins.

### Sheamus vs. Dolph Ziggler

Ziggler knocks him to the floor with an early dropkick but here comes Rusev. He begs Lana to come back to him because he'll "kiss her the right way." Lana, with her hair down in a ponytail, walks towards the ring, as the match just stopped so Rusev could talk. A big knee puts Ziggler on the floor and we take a break.

Back with Ziggler in a chinlock before Sheamus takes his sweet time going to the top, allowing Dolph to run the ropes for a faceplant. A superkick is blocked but Ziggler is able to crawl over Sheamus into a sunset flip for two. Back up and the superkick connects this time (Uso: "SUPERKICK PARTY!") for two, followed by a sleeper from Ziggler. Sheamus shrugs it off and puts Ziggler on the top rope, setting up the Brogue Kick for the pin at 9:26.

**Rating:** C. Run of the mill match between these two but it's nice to see Sheamus racking up some wins like this. They're actually treating him as something important instead of just letting him lose all the time so he can hold up the briefcase and beg us to believe that he still matters.

Rusev freaks out in the back until Summer Rae comes up and tells him that Lana isn't worth it.

Here's a clip of Rollins breaking up the Shield last year.

### Alicia Fox vs. Naomi

Fox has the Bellas with her and remember that Jimmy is married to Naomi.

Alicia gets kicked in the head and taken down with a nice hurricanrana, followed by a legdrop for two. They fall out to the floor with Naomi yelling at the Bellas, allowing Tamina to superkick both of them. Back in and Fox hits her reverse Fameasser for the pin at 3:10.

**Rating:** D. This was just a way to set up I'm assuming Naomi as Paige's new partner against the Bellas, which is about as uninteresting an idea as you could have. The match was your standard Divas fair: no time to go anywhere and too much other than the wrestling being packed into just a few minutes.

Recap of Cena vs. Owens, including everything that happened on Monday.

New Day says you can't live a positive life if you focus on the individual losses. They'll overcome all of their trials and tribulations at Battleground, but here are the Prime Time Players to interrupt and do their version of the clap. They laugh at the idea that New Day will be down a man at Battleground but here's Bo Dallas for a pretty obvious pairing. Dallas has been allowed to join the New Day against the Players and any two other partners. New Day likes him but Dallas can't get the clap down. This has potential to be funny stuff.

#### Kane vs. Ryback

Non-title. Not so fast though as Big Show attacks Ryback during his entrance and beats on him for a very long time. Show chops him, kicks him, whips him into the barricade, steps on his throat, and finally throws him in for the match against Kane. Somehow this is totally fine and the bell rings with Kane quickly covering for two. Ryback tries some shoulders in the corner but gets stomped back down with ease. Kane is sent shoulder first into the post and the Meat Hook connects, only to have Big Show come in for the DQ at 2:25.

Ryback gets beaten down and chokeslammed a few times but keeps trying to pull himself up. I like the idea they're going for here, but it still ends with Big Show and Kane dominating, just like they have for over fifteen years now.

Clip of Rollins vs. Ambrose from Elimination Chamber.

Recap of this week's Tough Enough.

### New Day/Bo Dallas vs. Lucha Dragons/Prime Time Players

Kofi and Titus get things going with O'Neil hitting some very loud chops in the corner. It's off to Young who doesn't do as well, with Kofi driving him into the corner for a tag to Dallas. I miss Jesse Ventura criticizing teams for tagging their normal partners and praising heels for tagging anyone on their team. Darren headlocks Bo to the mat but the threat of a Gutcheck has the heels on the floor as we take a break.

Back with Kofi dancing a bit before diving into a Sin Cara dropkick for two. Woods has some better luck by stomping away, followed by all three of his partners getting turns. It always amuses me to see someone get stomped about forty times total and just stagger to their feet. Off to Big E. for his abdominal stretch before handing it off to Kofi for a superbomb, only to be countered into a hurricanrana. The hot tag brings in Kalisto for his hurricanrana DDT to Woods but everything breaks down. It's down to Kalisto vs. Woods again with the masked man hitting a handspring kick to the head and a springboard 450 for the pin at 10:30.

**Rating:** C. This was fine with the New Day losing again, though I'm not sure if I want to see them get a title shot after all these losses. That being said, you also don't want to have the champions lose so soon after winning the titles. In other words, it would have made sense here to have New Day just beat Lucha Dragons in a regular match, but why do that when you can have something like this?

Ambrose tells Reigns to not worry about Bray Wyatt because they can look through every inch of this building until they find him. Dean: "Cincinnati style!" Roman: "We're not even in Cincinnati." Reigns says he'll take care of Wyatt at Battleground and he'll have his back out there tonight. Dean leaves and Reigns finds a picture of himself in his jacket with the words ANYONE BUT YOU written in red.

After a break, Reigns searches for Wyatt but finds Kane instead. Kane won't tolerate Reigns yelling at a production guy so he's banned from the building tonight. Reigns was far more interesting here due to having something personal to deal with and I'm digging this feud a lot.

## Dean Ambrose vs. Seth Rollins

Non-title. Dean starts with some armdrags into an armbar, followed by a clothesline to put Rollins on the floor. Back from a break with Rollins starting to go after the knee. Rollins puts on a complicated leg lock with Ambrose on his stomach but Seth laying like he's putting on a Figure Four. Either way Dean makes the ropes and Rollins is way too cocky. He's cocky enough to take forever getting to the top, allowing Dean to slam him down for a breather.

The tornado DDT is countered so Dean settles for a swinging neckbreaker instead. Dean gets all fired up but opts for a suicide dive to take out Kane instead. Back in and the standing elbow looks to finish but Mercury offers a distraction to earn his paycheck for the night. Scratch that actually as the look he gave earlier was more than worth it. A DDT gets two on Seth but Dean can't follow up. The rebound clothesline is countered into a buckle bomb which is countered into a hurricanrana to put them both on the floor. Dean dives on everyone but gets distracted again, allowing Rollins to Pedigree him for the pin at 13:03.

**Rating:** B-. They accomplished the goal of showing that the reunited Authority is capable of beating anyone on the roster, but Lesnar isn't exactly the same as a guy that Rollins has drawn about even with over the last few weeks. That's the problem here: they've done this match so many times recently that they're running the risk of taking away its effectiveness. Reigns not being there to help Ambrose could lead somewhere, but I really, really hope it's not to an Ambrose heel turn.

**Overall Rating:** C. This was a totally fine show and the best part was it flew by. The show never dragged like so many Smackdowns have done over the last few years, but at least they had some decent matches and advanced a few stories, even though we're not likely to see those advancements until Monday. Totally acceptable show here but as usual, it's nothing you need to see.

## Results

Sheamus b. Dolph Ziggler – Brogue Kick

Alicia Fox b. Naomi – Reverse Famesetter

Ryback b. Kane via DQ when Big Show interfered

Lucha Dragons/Prime Time Players b. New Day/Bo Dallas – Springfield 450 to Woods

Seth Rollins b. Dean Ambrose – Pedigree

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# Smackdown – January 15, 2015: I Can Hope Can't I?

## Smackdown

Date: January 15, 2015

Location: Baton Rouge River Center, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton

Smackdown is back on Thursday nights in its original time slot, which might mean WWE will put a fresh focus on it instead of just using it as a dumping ground for whatever they can't fit on Raw. The big story tonight is Daniel Bryan's return to the ring for the first time since his neck surgery in May. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Daniel Bryan (with a fresh set of name graphics) for an in ring chat. Daniel says he should be in good spirits because he's back home where he belongs, in front of these great people, wearing his gear and ready to fight. Saxton shows him a clip of Kane tombstoning Bryan on everything he could find and Bryan looks a bit shaken. He talks about being Kane's partner and brother, but then Kane stabbed everyone in the back by trading in the mask for a suit.

Doctor after doctor has told him that he would never wrestle again but now he's ready. Of course he's worried about his neck but tonight he's going to prove himself by fighting Kane, winning the Royal Rumble and then getting his title back at Wrestlemania. Now some people think that's just a pipe dream, but YES he thinks he can do it. This brings out the Authority who actually doesn't have anything to say before the match starts.

### Daniel Bryan vs. Kane

Bryan charges right at him to start but Kane takes him down with a single forearm to the back. They head to the corner where Bryan smartens up and goes after the knee. As usual though, Kane doesn't seem interested in selling and takes Daniel down with a pair of neckbreakers. A cravate doesn't last long so Kane kicks him in the head for two. I know I rip on Kane a lot but at least he's smart enough to go after the obvious body part. A neck crank has Bryan in even more trouble but he's able to kick Kane to the floor.

Kane is staggered up against the barricade but not staggered enough to let Bryan hit a flying knee from the apron as he punches Daniel out of the air. Back from a break with Kane holding a chinlock, followed by a running DDT for two. Off to the chinlock as the Authority plays cheerleader. For some reason the Noble seems like he would be very enthusiastic in that role. Kane loads up a superplex but gets shoved down and dropkicked for two. The kicks to the chest get the same but the Stooges come in to break up the YES Lock for the DQ at 11:41.

**Rating:** C-. If there isn't something else later in the night, I'm sending WWE a bill for the injuries suffered from my eyes rolling that hard. There is no way WWE doesn't let Bryan get a clean win in his big comeback match against Kane. Bryan looked fine but there's only so much you can tell in a match that didn't even get eight minutes of TV time. I did like Kane going after the neck and setting up the tombstone. It never ceases to amaze me when you have someone coming back off an injury and their opponent goes after a different body part. Even Shawn did that once when HHH had a bandaged leg.

Bryan fights back and finally runs away from the numbers advantage. The Authority stays after him but Reigns and Ambrose come out to stand next to them. HHH makes a six man with those three against Kane, Big Show and Rollins later tonight.

Randy Savage Hall of Fame video. I'm very worried about Hogan turning the induction speech into a way to talk about how great he was.

Bray Wyatt is not a human being but for thousands of years, society has labeled people like him a threat. At some point, his poison starts to seep out of the cracks. All those people over the years have been right, and it's going to be too late to run after he wins the Royal Rumble.

#### Usos/Naomi vs. Damien Mizdow/Miz/Alicia Fox

Miz/Mizdow vs. Usos for the titles is official for the Rumble. Mizdow gets a huge ovation as he's on the apron and watching Miz start with Jimmy. The brothers elbow Miz down for the double team elbow, followed by a nice suicide dive from Jey. Mizdow finally gets the tag but Fox tags herself in. That's fine with Naomi, who goes off on Fox for taking her spot on Total Divas. Pay no attention to Naomi still being on the show of course. A cross body gets two on Fox and it's already back to Miz vs. Jimmy.

The Reality Check is broken up and a double clothesline puts both guys down. The ice cold tag brings in Jey for a Samoan drop, followed by a Whisper in the Wind. Fox makes the save, only to have Jimmy throw Naomi at her for a cool looking spot. Mizdow tries to come in but takes a superkick to the hands (clearly didn't get close to his face). The distraction works though, allowing Miz to hit the Skull Crushing Finale for the pin on Jimmy at 4:50.

**Rating:** D+. Cool Naomi throwing spot aside, this feud is really getting dry. The Naomi Goes Hollywood part has been completely dropped, which you almost had to expect because it was actually interesting. That basically leaves Miz fighting the Usos in a handicap feud as we wait on Mizdow to finally break off on his own, even though they passed his peak about a month ago. At least the girls were there to keep this from being the champions losing in another non-title match.



Roman Reigns is with Renee Young (who has chopped off a lot of her hair) and says his partners would be in big trouble if this was the Royal Rumble. However, Dean is his boy and he has no issue with Bryan. On the other hand, he has a problem with the Authority and their giant crybaby Big Show. When it comes to the Royal Rumble, it's one vs. all. Dean and Bryan are part of the all, and that leaves him as the one. This felt a lot more natural from Reigns and it worked better than his usual stuff. The lack of fairy tales or Looney Tunes lines helped too.

Here's a ticked off Heyman with something to say. We look back at Rollins laying out Lesnar to end Raw and standing tall over the champion. Heyman says he's afraid for the first time because there's a threat to Lesnar. Brock has conquered everyone and everything because he can. When he beat up the Undertaker and broke the Streak or suplexed John Cena 16 times, it was all because he could and felt like doing it because he didn't have anything else to do on a Sunday night.

Now his purpose is to F5 the future of the WWE back into the past, but here are Rollins and the Stooges to interrupt. Seth is sick and tired of hearing about how awesome Brock Lesnar is and accusing him of hiding behind the Authority. He isn't afraid of Brock Lesnar and is going to cash in right now. Let's give the fans a treat for the show being back on Thursdays and have Brock Lesnar vs. Seth Rollins right now....but Brock isn't here.

Rollins isn't cool with that and threatens to curb stomp Heyman if he can't curb stomp Lesnar. Heyman tells Rollins to be original because everyone threatens to beat him up when Lesnar isn't around. Seth is right in his face and says he's going to curb stomp Heyman and take away Lesnar's greatest asset. Then at the Royal Rumble, it's Rollins vs. all brawn and no brains, leaving Brock as nothing more than a 300lb mass of muscle that he can run circles around.

The facts are that he's curb stomped Lesnar twice now and he's going to do it again at the Royal Rumble, so why shouldn't he knock Heyman out right now? Paul says the Authority has been removed from power once so what makes Rollins think they can't be removed again by hook, crook, or by Vince McMahon's whims?

He's gained power every single day since he returned to the WWE and been by Brock Lesnar's side. Brock Lesnar has a death grip on the WWE Championship and he will control it as long as he likes. He can control that title by either defending the title or protecting the new champion when Heyman decides that the future is now. Paul drops the mic and leaves Rollins with a lot to think about.

This story has gone from another dull title match to one of the better stories around the title in a good while. Rollins is looking like a monster on equal footing with Lesnar and Cena in the span of a week. There's always the chance that this is the annual Royal Rumble challenger who goes nowhere after, but I'm totally buying into Rollins as a main event player. After the year he's had, there's a real argument to be made for him to win the title and defend it at Wrestlemania. I'd love to see him stop being the Authority's lap dog if nothing else.

#### Natalya vs. Nikki Bella

Non-title and Paige is here to counteract Brie. Natalya goes for the leg to start but gets taken down by a flying armbar of all things. She actually stays on the arm instead of yelling at the crowd but Natalya lifts Nikki into the air to break up a short arm scissors. Back up and Natalya steps onto Nikki's back before to drive her face first into the mat, followed by a running dropkick to the face.

Brie gets on the apron for a distraction, accidentally allowing Paige to slap Nikki. I'm sure they'll argue about it and then forget it a month later with no resolution. The Sharpshooter makes Nikki tap at 2:40. This would be their third match since December 29 now. Well that settles it. We MUST continue this feud at the Rumble. I for one couldn't survive without the thrilling end to this saga.

Big Show cuts Renee off and brags about knocking out Cena and Reigns this past Monday. Tonight he'll knock out all three but more importantly he's entering the Royal Rumble. That's where he dominates because no one can throw him over the top. Kane comes up and says he's in the Rumble as well.

#### Intercontinental Title: Sin Cara vs. Bad News Barrett

Rematch after last week where Sin Cara beat Barrett in a non-title match. Cara gets two off a rollup just after the bell and hits an enziguri from the apron to stagger Bad News. Barrett has had enough of that though and hammers Cara down before whipping him hard into the corner for two.

We hit the chinlock for a few moments before Cara hits a springboard spinning cross body for two. The announcers actually bring up Barrett's past troubles against Cara for some context. The Winds of Change lays Cara out but the Bull Hammer is countered into a rollup into a powerbomb. Cara misses the Swanton though and the Bull Hammer retains the title at 2:51. I'm so glad they had the champ get pinned clean to set up this epic showdown. To be fair though this was fun while it lasted.

The announcers plug the WWE Network launching in the UK, which went live a few days earlier than planned.

Dean Ambrose is in a dimly lit room and says he was the one you avoided on the playground. His report card always said he was disruptive in class, but that works really well for him in the Royal Rumble. The winner of the match isn't going to care about friendships or their own well being. Don't count him out, because you should be counting him in. His partners tonight have one big thing in common: they all detest the Authority.

#### Kane/Big Show/Seth Rollins vs. Daniel Bryan/Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose

Seth and Dean get things going with Ambrose slamming him face first into the buckle. He rips at Seth's hair and stomps at the ribs before bringing in Reigns for a nice suplex. Roman starts working on the arm but lets Rollins go for a tag to Kane. Reigns throws the big bald around for a bit before tagging Bryan in for the rapid fire kicks in the corner. A big uppercut finally puts Bryan down but Ambrose is right there to stop the Stooges from getting involved.

Everything breaks down in a fight on the floor and the good guys stand tall in the ring (not as tall as Big Show and Kane but still tall) as we take a break. Back with Ambrose stomping Rollins in the corner and hitting his dropkick up against the ropes for two. Seth finally sends him into the corner and ties Dean in the Tree of Woe to work on the injured

knee.

Off to Big Show for something like an ankle lock but pushing forward on the shin instead of the foot. Rollins gets two off a running forearm in the corner and we hit the chinlock. Again I wonder why you would do that when you should know it's going to lead to a comeback. Back to Big Show as the Authority keeps things slow, hopefully leading to the hot tag to Bryan. I'll settle for one to Reigns as long as we don't hear another scripted promo.

Show hooks that same leg lock before Kane comes in and keeps up his good psychology by cranking on the knee. Seth comes back in and talks a lot of trash, earning him a slap in the face. The rebound clothesline finally puts Kane down but Rollins breaks up another tag. Dean sends him to the floor but everything breaks down on the floor. With everyone else fighting, Ambrose dives over for the hot tag to Bryan. Daniel cleans house and hits the Flying Goat on Kane and a top rope hurricanrana for two on Seth.

Kane comes back in with a chokeslam for two with Reigns having to make the save. Show loads up the announcers' table but Reigns jumps him to put both guys down. The YES Lock goes on Kane but Rollins makes a save. Dean's standing elbow takes out Rollins and the Stooges on the floor, leaving Bryan to escape the tombstone and hit the running knee for the pin on Kane at 17:48.

**Rating:** B+. This got a lot better as things went on and the slow build worked well here. I'm really glad Bryan won in the end and thankfully they kept the focus off Reigns vs. Big Show. At the end of the day, there just isn't enough interest in that feud to validate giving it the attention here. Ambrose selling a knee injury is a good way to keep him from 100% and makes the losses a bit easier to sit through. Really solid main event here though and a good main event for the first show back on the old night.

Post match HHH comes out and says Bryan's luck is running out. Next week on Smackdown, Kane is getting a rematch against Bryan and if Kane wins, Daniel is out of the Rumble.

**Overall Rating:** B-. The show was good but there's one thing I liked more than anything (well anything other than the main event): HHH making Kane vs. Bryan for next week. It's not the biggest match in the world, but it's a match being announced in advance for Smackdown with a week's notice. If you're lucky you'll get a match announced four days in advance, but this feels like a match for Smackdown, not a match that happens as a result of something on Raw. It's like they're treating Smackdown as a show that matters, even if it's just a bit at first. That's something this show has been lacking for years now.

The rest of the show felt like a regular episode, meaning the wrestling was good to decent and mostly skippable. The main event was really good though and worth seeing, but most important of all is how they put a match on this show that people would want to see and it was given the time to stand out. If this were on Raw, they would have had to squeeze it in around a twenty minute promo, the New Day and Adam Rose beating up the Bunny for the 19<sup>th</sup> time. Hopefully Smackdown gets some more attention and is able to take some of the pressure off Raw, which would help both shows and the TV product as a whole.

### Results

Daniel Bryan b. Kane via DQ when Jamie Noble and Joey Mercury interfered

Miz/Damien Mizdow/Alicia Fox b. Usos/Naomi – Skull Crushing Finale to Jimmy

Natalya b. Nikki Bella – Sharpshooter

Bad News Barrett b. Sin Cara – Bull Hammer

Daniel Bryan/Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose b. Kane/Big Show/Seth Rollins – Running knee to Kane

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# Smackdown – December 26, 2014: Oh Brother

## Smackdown

Date: December 26, 2014

Location: Tyson Events Center, Sioux City, Iowa

Attendance: 4,000

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Tom Phillips, Michael Cole

It's the show after Christmas which means that Hulk Hogan is still in charge tonight. All that means is he'll make a match and say BROTHER a lot, but that's at least better than some of the previous bosses this company has had. Other than that we're still in the dull period before they start caring about the Rumble so let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Hogan walking through the same Christmas set from Raw to open things up. I really wish they would mix those things up a bit more often. Anymore it's just the same set from Raw but with blue as the main color. Switch things up a bit and make Smackdown feel more unique. Maybe they'll do that when the show moves back to Thursdays.

Anyway, Hogan has something to tell us brother (1), he's in charge tonight brother (2). We hear some of his fondest memories from being on Smackdown, including winning the Tag Team Titles with Edge, who will be hosting Raw with Christian on Monday. That's another thing I wouldn't mind seeing more of: plug those announcements. It's simple and quick yet gets the word out there.

Hogan is about to go on but Rollins and the Stooges cut him off. Seth

calls him a champion, a Hall of Famer and the embodiment of Wrestlemania. He asks for and receives a handshake before saying if Hogan keeps it up, they might start calling him the Seth Rollins of the 80s. Hogan may have been great, but he doesn't belong in Rollins' ring anymore. That's a bit too far for our American hero, who says he's running Smackdown tonight. Hogan: "So if you don't mind brother (3)..." Rollins: "Well I do mind brother. AND DON'T YOU BROTHER ME!"

Seth talks about how great the Authority was for business but now they've been replaced by a sideshow act like Hogan. As the future of WWE, this is Seth's business and he'd like Hulk to officially endorse him. After that, Hogan can get out of this ring because it's almost 2015. Hulk isn't sure Rollins is getting out of this ring alive if he keeps talking like that. He can think of several people who could lead this company into the future, like Dolph Ziggler for instance.

Cue Dolph, who calls Rollins the future. If you don't believe that, just ask Seth because that's all he talks about. Rollins says Ziggler just doesn't get it. The future isn't just a popularity contest and Rollins should just Curb Stomp him right in front of Hogan. How does that sound brother? Ziggler has been curbstomped before and keeps getting up, so what does Seth want to do about it brother?

Here's Big Show to say that sometime you have to just use force, so now he's going to come out here and knock out Hogan and Ziggler. This brings out Reigns who tells Show not to come through those ropes unless he wants to get hit in the mouth again, right in front of his wife and kids. Hogan makes the tag match main event and actually doesn't drop a ninth brother (yes I counted) of the segment.

### Kane vs. Ryback

Jobber entrance for Kane. We see Ryback sending Rusev running on Monday before things get going. Ryback fires off to start but runs into a boot to the....shoulder I think to put him down. So Kane can't even sell for ten seconds now? Cole crushes several dreams by confirming that Rose and the Bunny have split, partially due to the tombstones from Kane. Ryback grabs a spinebuster and loads up the Meat Hook but we've got Russians.

He's still able to escape the chokeslam though and hits the Meat Hook and Shell Shock for the pin at 2:10. Now THAT is what Kane should be used for more often than not.

Rusev gets in the ring for a staredown but Kane comes back in to chokeslam Ryback, setting up the Accolade. I'm still not sure who wins this feud, even though it should be obvious. That's always a good sign.

After a break, Hogan runs into the Russians to tell Rusev that the US Title is on the line tonight. Giving champions almost no notice to defend their titles is the American way you see, BROTHER. And SISTER!

#### Alicia Fox vs. Naomi

They start fast with Naomi nipping up, only to eat a kick to the face for two. More speedy kicks get two for Naomi as Miz is watching from the back. A tilt-a-whirl backbreaker gets two for Alicia and we hit the chinlock. That goes nowhere so Naomi heads to the apron for a kind of Twist of Fate onto the top rope. Naomi gets tired of carrying Fox and kicks her in the head, setting up the split legged moonsault for the pin at 3:18. She even throws in counting the pin along with the referee because she's kind of awesome.

**Rating:** C. I'm so glad that Naomi is getting an actual story instead of the usual stuff we've been seeing with the Divas for years. She's an athletic freak and, in a description I wish I had thought of, the female Shelton Benjamin. No one in the division can keep up with her and unfortunately it means that WWE doesn't know what to do with her. It's good to see that they've given her some kind of a story though, because far too often the Divas' stories revolve around just wanting the title or some catty story that makes them all look ridiculous.

We recap the matches Hogan set up on Raw.

Jimmy and Naomi have a badly scripted conversation about Jimmy beating Miz later tonight.

#### R-Truth vs. Adam Rose

Rematch from Monday where the Bunny was beaten up by Rose after he lost



to Truth. Therefore, Rose comes out sans Bunny and doesn't even do the fall, waving the Rosebuds off instead. Rose is much more aggressive here and takes Truth into the corner for some mule kick stomping. A nice snap suplex gets two on Truth and we hit the chinlock.

Phillips tries to bring up the incident on Halloween where Truth said the Bunny was the star of the team to set up this mini feud. Since that's doing his job and keeping up continuity, JBL just buries him in response, saying how stupid the whole thing is. Back up and Truth makes his comeback, only to be sent into the post to set up the Party Foul for the pin at 2:07. Rose actually plays a decent heel, but his in ring work is still average at best.

Here are Rusev and Lana for a chat before the title defense. It's a short one this time, basically saying Rusev will crush anyone before he faces. Cue his opponent.

#### US Title: Dean Ambrose vs. Rusev

It's kind of amazing how Ambrose keeps getting these major matches despite barely ever winning anything. They take turns stomping each other down in the corner to start until Dean ties him in the ropes for chops and the running dropkick. A suicide dive drops Rusev again and Dean grabs a jackknife cover of all things for two.

The fans chant USA as Rusev runs Dean over and drops rapid fire elbows ala Hulk Hogan back in the day. You would think that the Russian imitating an AMERICAN would satiate the fans chanting USA but it doesn't quite work that way. A chinlock stays on even shorter than usual but Rusev ties him in the ropes and hits a running Vader clothesline to the back knocking him out to the floor as we take a break.

Back with the champ holding a nerve hold before the fall away slam gets two. Ambrose actually escapes the Accolade attempt and avoids a charge, sending Rusev head first into the post. The Rebound Clothesline sets up the standing elbow (love that move) for two and Ambrose's tongue is hanging out. They head outside with the champion going into the barricade, only to have Wyatt interfere for the DQ at 13:00.

**Rating:** C+. These matches are like a vacation: they're fun while they last but you know you're going to be disappointed by the ending. There was no doubt that it was going to end by countout or DQ because that's how these things end in WWE. It's a problem with how the company books its shows anymore but unfortunately it's something you have to live with. As usual Dean looks good, but when was the last time he had a fall on a show that actually mattered? And no, Tribute to the Troops doesn't matter.

Rusev leaves and Bray throws Dean over the timekeeper's area, only to have Dean come up throwing chairs. About five are thrown into the ring and Bray bails as well. I have no idea where they're going with this, but it's modern WWE and a major gimmick match doesn't end anything anymore.

#### Miz vs. Jimmy Uso

Cole plugs a new app where you're a backstage assistant in WWE and solve problems which have nothing to do with anything happening in the ring. Levels include identifying a spot as fatty tissue, yelling at someone for not memorizing a script, trying to figure out what the heck the commentators are talking about and finding stronger ear plugs so HHH doesn't hear the BORING chants.

Miz kicks him down to start but we get a quick chase scene around the ring. JBL, of course, is talking about fast food mascots. Jimmy can't hit the running Umaga attack but eats a right hand from Jey. Naturally, that's not a DQ. Back in and Miz begs off to offer more mainstream connections. The fans aren't really happy with the match stopping for nearly a minute of Miz standing there with his hand out saying "come on let's be Usos", so Jimmy hits two superkicks and the Superfly Splash for the pin at 3:08.

**Rating:** D. I'm liking the idea of the Usos having some singles matches. Of course it shouldn't lead anywhere because splitting them up for singles runs would be a terrible idea, but I like that they're not just doing the same tag match every week. Imagine that: trying something else to keep things fresh for the bigger shows. There's so much in WWE that is going right but at the same time the big problems are just so wrong.

Ascension is coming next week.

Goldust looks at an electric orb and sees that the new year will be.....something we don't get to hear as the ball shocks him. Stardust comes in to say it's going to be his year.

### Seth Rollins/Big Show vs. Roman Reigns/Dolph Ziggler

Ziggler and Rollins get things going as Cole recaps Survivor Series gets an achievement for recapping Survivor Series for the 200<sup>th</sup> time. A quick hiptoss has Rollins down so it's off to the power guys. Reigns can't get things moving too fast thanks to a shoulder from Big Show. Like the masterful heel that he is, Rollins comes in when Roman is down to stomp away. Reigns is able to get back up though due to the power of wetter hair, allowing for the hot tag off to Ziggler.

The Stooges get involved, and somehow don't get caught, by tripping up Ziggler as we take a break. Back with Dolph fighting out of a chinlock, only to be catapulted into the corner. The fans display their ventriloquism skills by chanting BIG SLOW without moving their mouths....or anything else for that matter. Reigns smiles at Show as the chant is getting annoying in a hurry. A few fans chant for Reigns but they're quickly drowned out by BIG SLOW.

Show misses a charge and eats a Fameasser, setting up the hot tag to Reigns. Mercury breaks up the Superman Punch and Seth nails the low superkick for two. The fans chant for Reigns (again with the ventriloquism) and he backdrops out of a buckle bomb attempt. The chokeslam doesn't work either and Dolph levels Big Show with a superkick, setting up the spear for the pin.

Nah I'm kidding. You know Big Show isn't going to get pinned when there's some hotshot with a future to take the fall for him. Rollins sends both opponents to the floor and suicide dives Reigns. Back in and Ziggler breaks up the springboard knee, setting up the spear to Rollins for the pin at 13:13.

**Rating:** C. The match was your standard main event tag (with another bad ending but I guess that huge fall over Show is supposed to make Reigns)

but the chants were the most interesting part. Of course they were piped in, but I find it interesting that they seem more interested in playing down Big Show than playing up Reigns.

They were similar to the LET'S GO CENA/CENA SUCKS chants: yeah they're against Cena, but they're not for his opponent. The chants made this sound like it was all about Big Show with the few Reigns chants only lasting a few seconds compared to the near minute of Show chants. I'm not sure what to make of that.

**Overall Rating:** C-. Yet another worthless episode of Smackdown with whichever main eventers we have on hand being thrown into a tag team main event. The Ryback vs. Rusev showdown still looks good, though I'm not sure they can stretch it out for another four weeks. Other than that, there really isn't much to talk about here. It's another basic episode of the same show they've done every Friday for weeks now and I get less and less enthusiastic about it every time. Oh wait Kane actually took a fall. He's been getting a bit better about that.

### Results

Ryback b. Kane – Shell Shock

Naomi b. Alicia Fox – Split legged moonsault

Adam Rose b. R-Truth – Party Foul

Dean Ambrose b. Rusev via DQ when Bray Wyatt interfered

Jimmy Uso b. The Miz – Superfly Splash

Roman Reigns/Dolph Ziggler b. Big Show/Seth Rollins – Spear to Rollins

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## Royal Rumble Pre-Show Match Set

It's not a spoiler but since people insist on whining about reading news when they come to a site where news is posted, I'll put it after the break. I'll even go one up on that and throw in some fake tags. Is THAT enough to make you lunkheads happy? Cesaro is defending against Miz. You knew that was going to be added to the card in some sort.