

Smackdown – September 27, 2016: NXT Style(s)

Smackdown

Date: September 27, 2016

Location: Quicken Loans Arena, Cleveland, Ohio

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Mauro Ranallo, David Otunga

It's a big night for Smackdown as we have a rare World Title match on free TV with AJ Styles defending against Dean Ambrose. We're less than two weeks away from No Mercy and it should be interesting to see where things go as we get ready for the triple threat and whatever else is announced before the show. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Randy Orton to open the show. He's heard about Bray Wyatt talking about fear but thinks it's because Bray is scared himself. Bray comes on screen to talk about Hansel and Gretel. Bray has left his own trail of breadcrumbs that will lead Randy through the prison of his own mind. He holds up an hourglass and sings He's Got The Whole World In His Hands. Orton leaves to go after Bray.

Dean Ambrose says he's ready to fight AJ Styles tonight.

Usos/Ascension vs. American Alpha/Heath Slater/Rhyno

Alpha works on Jimmy's arm to start before a double monkey flip sends this Usos flying. Jey tries to go after Gable but gets pulled down into an armbar over the ropes. Jimmy offers a distraction and Jey chop blocks Gable again to take us to a break. Back with Gable still in trouble and Konor getting two. Gable tries to break free for the tag but everything breaks down and everyone not named Slater is knocked off the apron.

The hot tag brings in Heath for a big reaction, followed by some knees and a leg lariat to the bad guys. A neckbreaker gets two on Jey with Konor diving in for the save. Jordan Cactus Clotheslines Viktor to the

floor but the Usos make a blind tag, allowing Jimmy to kick Heath in the face. The jumping kick to the back of the knee sets up a Tequila Sunrise to make Heath tap at 10:00.

Rating: C. This was a fine way to set up the title match without having the champs lose in a regular tag match. I can't imagine anything other than the Usos taking the belts at No Mercy and that's all it should be. Slater and Rhyno have reached heights they have no right to be near so it's hard to call them anything other than a success. Another few weeks as champions would be fine but you have to take the belts off them and let us get to the Usos vs. Alpha for the real feud.

John Cena will be at ringside to scout the main event.

Miz has a Lebron James poster covered with one of his own.

Orton goes to what looks like the boiler room and sees an arrow left by Bray. For some reason he turns it around and goes the other way. When the camera pans back, the arrow has been turned around again and Erick Rowan is standing there in his mask.

Back from a break with Bray saying Orton might find out the meaning of the abyss tonight. The hourglass is almost out of sand.

Carmella/Natalya vs. Nikki Bella/Naomi

Naomi and Carmella get things going with the latter dangling instead of fighting. That earns her a quick spank and now it's Naomi's turn to moon walk. It's off to Nikki, who scares Carmella to the floor for a breather. Back with Naomi in trouble on the floor and Natalya putting on a chinlock. Carmella gets in a Bronco Buster, followed by Natalya's basement dropkick (which missed) for two. It was enough of a miss that the tag brings in Nikki a few seconds later and it's time for the showdown with Carmella (which seems to happen every week). Natalya offers a distraction though and Carmella gets the rollup pin on Nikki at 10:05.

Rating: D+. This small division is working at the moment, mainly because they've split it up into two distinct stories. Unfortunately one of those is about how we're all supposed to love Nikki Bella, who still isn't all

that interesting. Carmella is fine for a first victim for Nikki but hopefully it doesn't lead to yet another Nikki title reign.

Orton finds a message saying there's one way out. He opens a closet to find a cardboard cutout of himself with the eyes missing. Another message on another door asks Predator or Prey reveals....Rowan a few feet away but Orton doesn't open the door wide enough to see him. Good thing there was a camera waiting there right then.

Here are Miz and Maryse for his homecoming celebration. Maryse introduces a video package on Miz's career, including Real World clips, his time as a Tag Team and US Champion, his World Title win (still the only possible call) and capped off by the promo on Bryan from Talking Smack. Miz talks about the Cleveland Cavaliers winning the NBA Title and wonders why his celebration isn't as big. Mr. and Mrs. Miz are in the front row, as are Dolph Ziggler's parents.

Cue Ziggler because of course it's still Ziggler to go after Miz. Ziggler doesn't like Miz talking about his parents and goes to leave almost immediately but Miz laughs at Ziggler for failing again. Dolph brings up Miz cheating, which Miz interprets as yet another excuse. Miz says Ziggler has nothing left to offer for another shot and leaves but Ziggler calls for Mike to come back. All Ziggler has left is his career so he'll put that on the line. Miz agrees and the match is made for No Mercy. Uh....yay. Like really, yay.

Bray says when one door closes, another opens but he's watching Randy wander around like a mouse in a maze.

Becky Lynch comes out for a match but Alexa Bliss attacks her from behind and takes off her belt.

Curt Hawkins says gravity has to obey his laws. He's making a big announcement next week.

Bray wants to know where Orton is. As in any horror movie, he's right behind Bray and beats the heck out of him. Wyatt runs off so Orton puts on the sheep mask for a little singing. I think the video breaks up as the voice starts distorting and it turns into Bray. It's not clear if

that was intentional.

AJ Styles recaps his rise to the championship and says he'll still have the title after tonight.

Smackdown World Title: Dean Ambrose vs. AJ Styles

Ambrose is defending and Cena is on commentary. Dean chops away in the corner as JBL asks if Cena really is a part timer or still a full time performer. Cena says nothing as Ambrose takes AJ onto the announcers' table for some right hands to the head. Back from a break with Ambrose hitting a running clothesline to put both guys down. A backbreaker gets two on the champ and we hit a cloverleaf.

Styles gets to the ropes so Dean gets in a suicide dive because every match needs a suicide dive. Back with AJ cranking on a Calf Crusher until Dean grabs his head to slam it onto the mat for the break. They slug it out until Dean gets two off a double chickenwing facebuster for two of his own.

AJ's torture rack powerbomb gets two more and a Pele puts Dean down again. He misses the springboard 450 though as Dean rolls away (it would have missed by a mile anyway) and they head outside where AJ hits Cena in the face. The distraction makes the referee miss a rollup, meaning Dean goes outside to hit Cena as well. The distraction lets AJ grab a rollup with tights for the pin to retain at 21:17.

Rating: B. Another good match here and they did a good job of setting up the triple threat. It's fairly certain that Cena isn't getting the title this soon and since there's almost no one around to face Dean, AJ retaining makes the most sense. That's not a bad thing though and the build has been strong, which is the best thing you can ask for in this sort of feud.

Cena AA's both guys to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. This was a very NXT style show and that's the best thing you can say about wrestling these days. The Orton vs. Wyatt stuff was an interesting idea to tie things together, though the ending wasn't

all that great. Rowan wasn't a factor and Orton just finds Wyatt to beat him up? That's it? Other than that though this was all about setting up a big match to end the show and move us closer to the pay per view in a few weeks. Just a fun wrestling show here, as Smackdown often is.

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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 forearm Naomii 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

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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

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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

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

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

New Column: Two For The Gold

WWE wants to add more Tag Team Titles when there's barely enough of a division for one set of belts.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-two-for-the-gold/>

Smackdown – August 9, 2016: False Hope

Smackdown

Date: August 9, 2016

Location: Rabobank Arena, Bakersfield, California

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

Summerslam is coming up but tonight is going to be another light show as a bunch of the roster is off on a tour of Australia. Tonight is again going to be focused on Dean Ambrose vs. Dolph Ziggler and their upcoming WWE World Title match, though there's the chance that the Wyatts will be involved as well. Let's get to it.

Randy Orton is ready to kill Brock Lesnar's legend because all it takes is one RKO to get to Viperville. Alberto Del Rio comes up and says that sounds like Disneyland so Orton offers to give him a VIP tour.

Opening sequence.

Here are Bray Wyatt and Erick Rowan to open the show. Last week Bray did NOT fall to Dolph Ziggler because he was a victim. Ziggler was desperate and in that desperation came a ram into the turnbuckle because it was the only way. You can't defeat Bray Wyatt because he is everywhere. There is no red or blue because this is him against the world.

Cue Dean Ambrose to say this is a new era because Bray is talking about how he's a victim. That sounds like a baby instead of an eater of worlds. Bray invites him into the ring but Dean is smarter than that. This brings out Zigler who charges into the ring on his own with Dean coming in a few seconds later. Rowan is sent outside but Dolph superkicks Dean by accident, only to eat Sister Abigail.

Post break, Ambrose yells at Zigler until the bosses come up and make the tag match. As usual I can only wonder why we need both Bryan and Shane for this segment. One of them accomplishes the same as two but we get both of them anyway.

American Alpha vs. Mike Vega/Mikey O'Shea

Before the match, Ascension, the Vaudevillains and the Hype Bros come out to watch. Alpha starts on Vega's leg, followed by the double dropkick and the Grand Amplitude for the pin at 1:11.

All four teams brawl post match with Alpha cleaning house. As they brawl, the announcers talk about the upcoming Smackdown Tag Team Titles.

Miz and Maryse are at Renee Young's interview desk and nearly crawl over her as she sends us to a video package on Miz's #1 contender Apollo Crews. Back with Miz and Maryse laying on the table with Miz calling his wife a modern day Aphrodite. That's enough for Renee as she throws it back to the arena.

Becky Lynch vs. Eva Marie

Eva gets her big over the top entrance and breaks her top on the way off the turnbuckle so again no match.

Post match Becky vents some frustration and issues an open challenge.

Becky Lynch vs. Alexa Bliss

Joined in progress with Bliss in control for a bit until Becky makes a comeback with a clothesline and the Bexploder. Now here's Eva Marie with the big voiceover doing the full entrance again, allowing Bliss to hit a choke shove and Twisted Bliss for the pin at 2:32. Bliss was fine here

but I'm not wild on the Divas being more sexualized again. They did just fine and got better than ever without it but now we seem to be seeing it again.

Post match Eva calls this a shame but she'll make her debut next week.

Randy Orton vs. Alberto Del Rio

The fans chant RK0 to start and Orton takes over with some right hands in the corner. Del Rio comes back with a knee to the ribs and then stands there for a second, allowing Orton to snap him back first across the ropes. Back from a break with Orton going shoulder first into the steps and Del Rio working on an armbar.

Alberto gets the armbreaker across the top rope for a few seconds but gets crotched on top for taking too long. That means the superplex but Orton has to escape an armbreaker attempt. The elevated DDT doesn't set up the RK0 as Orton takes it outside and loads up the announcers' table instead. That takes too long as well though and Del Rio hits him in the arm with a chair for the DQ at 12:20.

Rating: C-. Would anyone notice if Del Rio was traded for a red wagon and a box of Ding Dongs? His entire character can be summed up as "Mexican heel who attacks arms" and that's not enough to carry my interest. I'm also not sure why they didn't have Orton get the clean pin here as it's not like Del Rio needs protecting. Then again they'll probably have a rematch next week because it would be asking a lot to have them come up with a new idea so soon.

Post match Orton hits the RK0 to prevent another chair shot.

Heath Slater asks Rhyno to lay down for him. Rhyno says no because he needs to impress his constituents in his Michigan State Senate district (where he really is up for election). Slater suddenly can't remember how many kids he has so Rhyno says no.

Miz arrived earlier today and met Scooby-Doo, demanding that all of his new DVDs are immediately recalled. Scooby shoves him in a van and steals Miz's car.

Heath Slater vs. Rhyno

Rhyno beats him up to start and shrugs off everything Slater can throw at him. A belly to belly gets two on Heath but he avoids a charge to send Rhyno into the buckle. That's only good for two though as Slater is caught with his feet on the ropes, setting up the Gore to give Rhyno the pin at 3:03.

Rating: D. This was all it needed to be though I'm hoping Slater gets to keep going with this run he's on as it's quite entertaining. Rhyno is fine in the role as well as he can go out there, hit people really hard and then get pinned while keeping most of his credibility. He's a fine role player and that's all it needs to be.

We go to the Wyatts with Rowan talking about wolves being led by a sheep. Bray says Rowan has always been a good soldier (Good?) but tonight he wants Erick to be ready to give his life for the cause.

After a break the bosses are considering giving Heath a job for his fighting spirit until Slater comes in to yell at them for embarrassing him in front of his seven kids. Heath says Smackdown doesn't deserve him and storms off. They change their mind on the contract.

Carmella vs. Natalya

Natalya jumps her during the entrance and sends her throat first into the ropes. A stomping in the corner makes the orange Carmella scream and we're off to a bow and arrow. It's off to the abdominal stretch with Natalya lifting Carmella's leg to make it even worse. Nattie By Nature connects but Carmella kicks off the Sharpshooter and puts on her headscissors crossface for the tap at 4:12.

Rating: D+. Not much to this one but it's a good way to introduce Carmella. Unfortunately I really don't think she's ready for the main roster in ring level. Keeping it short here like they did with Bliss earlier makes sense though as they both need ring time. I'm still amazed that they think they have enough talent for a division when you have to count Eva and Maryse as members of the roster though. Maybe in a few months when Carmella and Alexa have developed but this is too soon.

Long video on AJ Styles vs. John Cena.

Baron Corbin attacks Kalisto for costing him the triple threat last week.

Erick Rowan/Bray Wyatt vs. Dolph Ziggler/Dean Ambrose

The Wyatts run the good guys over to start and Rowan hits a clothesline to send Dolph outside as we take a break less than ninety seconds in. Back with Dean getting the hot tag to clean house, only to spend too much time on the floor with Rowan so Bray can take him down with a big clothesline. Bray sends Dean outside again for the release Rock Bottom on the apron, only to have to escape Dirty Deeds.

Instead Dean hits a swinging neckbreaker and makes the real hot tag to Ziggler. Everything breaks down and Rowan's spinning kick to the face gets two on Dolph. The Zig Zag gets the same with Bray making the save but Dean breaks up Sister Abigail. Dean's suicide dive gets tangled up in the ropes and he crashes down to the floor, leaving Rowan to eat the superkick for the pin at 10:40.

Rating: C+. It was false hope at best to imagine Bray being added to the title match and I'm ok with that. Ziggler vs. Ambrose will be a fine match. Not thrilling mind you but definitely entertaining enough for a middle of the shot spot. Rowan taking the fall here was the only way to go as Bray can come back later, hopefully against the winner of the title match and no one is any worse off.

Dean gives him Dirty Deeds as a receipt for earlier in the night. A BIG YES chant ends the show.

Overall Rating: C. This was a bit better than last night's show but a lot of the improvement is due to the show being an hour shorter. It's so much better to have this show wrap up at ten instead of eleven as the show doesn't drain you nearly as much. That being said, it was still little more than a bunch of short matches with so many people off on the overseas tour. The show was completely in the middle though as an easy two hour sit but nothing that you needed to see. Things should pick up with the full roster back next week though.

Results

American Alpha b. Mike Vega/Mikey O'Shea – Grand Amplitude to Vega

Alexa Bliss b. Becky Lynch – Twisted Bliss

Randy Orton b. Alberto Del Rio via DQ when Del Rio used a chair

Rhyno b. Heath Slater – Gore

Carmella b. Natalya – Headscissors Crossface

Dean Ambrose/Dolph Ziggler b. Erick Rowan/Bray Wyatt – Superkick to Rowan

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Smackdown – August 2, 2016: Double The Problem And It Might Go Away

Smackdown

Date: August 2, 2016

Location: Bridgestone Arena, Nashville, Tennessee

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

Last week's show wasn't the greatest in the world and the reception has been mixed at best. That doesn't mean the show is in trouble by any means though as Raw started off great and wasn't exactly as strong last night. If nothing else we get American Alpha tonight. Let's get to it.

We open with Shane McMahon and Daniel Bryan watching the end of Raw last night with Randy Orton. Shane isn't happy because he thinks Orton has jeopardized everything but it was pretty awesome. There's a bunch of security standing by but Orton doesn't think they're necessary. The bosses walk away and run into Miz and Maryse with the former saying he's their Jason Bourne. Bryan announces a triple threat match between Baron Corbin, Apollo Creed (yes Creed) and Kalisto with the winner getting the shot at Summerslam. They keep walking and run into Dean Ambrose who says nothing of note.

Opening sequence.

Here's Ambrose to say he loves being the captain of the blue brand and he's here to stay. That brings us to Summerslam so Dean would like Dolph Ziggler to come out here right now. Ziggler started here as a male cheerleader and knows what it means to work hard to get to the top. Dean doesn't want to hear it though because people told him that he wasn't championship material and you can't pay attention to all that negativity. You can't be worried about what fans chant and what people say on the internet and stealing the show all night long.

All that matters is that Ziggler is facing him for the title at Summerslam. Ziggler goes into a story about going to his first WWE live event when he was five and then being a star at Kent State University as a walk-on. He's spent seven years being told he's too good and then not good enough and he's going to walk into Summerslam to take the title like he deserves to.

Dean leaves and there go the lights with Bray Wyatt appearing to lay out Ziggler with Sister Abigail. Bray calls him worthless and wants a match with Ziggler tonight for the #1 contendership. Putting Wyatt in the spot would make sense but I have a bad feeling that they're going with this as a way to put Ziggler over because the last six to eight years haven't

accomplished that yet but having Wyatt lose would be the ticket.

Post break Ziggler tells the bosses that he wants the match.

Kalisto vs. Apollo Crews vs. Baron Corbin

Winner gets the Intercontinental Title shot at Summerslam with Miz on commentary. Everyone also now has a little tail of the tape during their entrance to make things feel a little more professional. Corbin gets double teamed to the floor to start but he's able to low bridge Crews to the floor, only to have Kalisto take Baron out with a suicide dive as we go to an early break.

Back with Corbin in control with Kalisto sends him outside. A Samoan drop gets two for Crews but Corbin comes back in with Deep Six for two of his own. Another hurricanrana attempt is countered but Corbin gets dropkicked to the floor, leaving Crews to pin Kalisto for the title shot 6:45.

Rating: C. This was barely long enough to rate with the commercial but Crews was the only option. They're not going to go heel vs. heel for the title and Kalisto is a lost cause so Crews had to get the win. It's nice that they're actually doing something with him for a change though and maybe it can actually mean they're serious about these random callups.

Post match Corbin goes after Kalisto with Crews making the save, only to eat a Skull Crushing Finale.

Becky Lynch vs. Eva Marie

Eva gets her big over the top entrance, which seems to be her new standard. Actually hang on a second as Eva is claiming a leg injury before the bell. We get a trainer brought in and there's no match. This comes off as the latest answer to "we can't have Eva wrestle live."

We go to Renee Young for an interview with Carmella but Natalya cuts them off. They get catty with each other (because that's what WWE women do) and a match is teased for later.

American Alpha vs. Vaudevillains

Gable quickly takes Gotch down to start before it's off to Jordan. That doesn't go as well so it's right back to Gable for a top rope double clothesline. A double dropkick sends the Vaudevillains to the floor and Alpha does their sliding pose. Chad gets beaten down for a few seconds before the hot tag brings in Jordan to clean house. The dropkicks and suplexes set up Grand Amplitude to end English at 3:28.

Rating: C+. This was exactly what the debut needed to be as they kept it short but got in everything they needed to hit. These guys really are like a modern day Steiner Brothers and the high flying makes it even more entertaining. I still don't know why they're doing new Smackdown Tag Team Titles though when of the seven or so teams they have, two of them are jobbers and another is Breezango. Anyway though, Alpha looked great here.

Video on John Cena hosting the Teen Choice Awards.

Here's AJ Styles with a message for Cena but he's cut off in a hurry by Cena himself. AJ thinks he could beat Cena up but he's done that time after time and Cena just keeps sticking around. Styles doesn't like Cena making these kids delusional and taking the kids with them. You don't get dessert before dinner, you don't stay up late with school the next day and you don't get a trophy for participation. You're rewarded for winning like AJ did when he beat John Cena last time.

Cena does his standard "they make up their own minds about me" but AJ cuts him off again to rant about his win again. Styles wants to know why Cena is still here with all that stuff he has going on outside of WWE. As usual, it's because Cena loves this place. He loves doing the ESPYs and the Teen Choice Awards because people always ask him when he's leaving WWE. That gives him another chance to say the WWE is his home and he's never leaving.

Tomorrow when AJ is kicking it on his day off, Cena will be in New York on the Late Show representing WWE. All AJ has to do is be a great wrestler who can get up and leave when he needs to. There is no other place for Cena so what the heck is AJ doing here? AJ mockingly applauds him and issues the challenge for Summerslam, which Cena immediately accepts. Cena was great as usual but I'm really not sure what AJ's issue

was here and that's not good.

Randy Orton vs. Fandango

Security is around ringside. The fans already want an RK0 but get Orton working on the leg but walking into a dropkick instead. We're already in a chinlock as JBL incorrectly says Orton's father was in the main event of the first Wrestlemania (being in the corner for doesn't mean being in the match). Breeze tries to come in and eats a powerslam, leaving Fandango to take the elevated DDT. There's the RK0 but cue Brock to come in for the F5 and the DQ at 3:05.

Rating: D. Normally I wouldn't rate this when the last fifteen seconds of the match were Brock coming out to watch and the F5 but it's not like it matters that much. Thank goodness they can use a team like Breezango as cannon fodder like this. But hey, we should totally buy them as title contenders soon after this.

During the break, Lesnar was forced to leave the arena.

Heath Slater comes in to see Daniel Bryan and asks for a contract. Bryan gives Slater a match next week and if he wins, he gets a job. Slater thinks he's facing Jumping Marty Lunde (Arn Anderson's real name) but gets Gored by Rhyno instead.

Ambrose says nothing surprises him.

Carmella vs. Natalya

And again no match with Natalya jumping Carmella from behind and putting on a Sharpshooter.

The bosses try to talk Ziggler out of the match and he says screw them.

Bray Wyatt vs. Dolph Ziggler

Ziggler hits a dropkick and Fameasser for two less than ten seconds in. The threat of a superkick sends Bray outside and he's hobbling on his previously injured leg. Back from a break with Bray hitting a superplex and putting on a cravate. Bray's leg seems fine as Ziggler comes back

with clotheslines and a neckbreaker. The superkick is blocked though and Bray gets two off the backplash.

Bray goes to pull off the turnbuckle pad but gets caught with a Zig Zag for a close two. Even Dean is stunned off the kickout. Sister Abigail is countered into a rollup for two but the release Rock Bottom gets two on Dolph. Back up and Bray is sent face first into the exposed buckle (as usual, right in front of the referee because they're worthless in WWE), followed by a superkick for the title shot at 11:34.

Rating: B. The false finishes were really good here but that lack of a DQ makes the match look so faked. At least try to make it clear that the referee isn't looking or something because it makes them look incompetent. Speaking of incompetent, we're really sticking with Ziggler vs. Ambrose at Summerslam? That's what they're going with? I mean, I know it's not a popular move and the match won't be that great but that's what we're getting because WWE decided it.

Post match Erick Rowan comes out to beat down Ziggler. Ambrose's save attempt doesn't work and it's Sister Abigail on Dolph to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. I liked it better than last week but it's really clear that adding more titles would be a horrible decision right now as the depth just isn't there. The depth was barely there for one set of titles so the solution is clearly to double everything. That ending gives me hope that we won't be seeing just Ambrose vs. Ziggler at Summerslam. The worst part is the match will be at least decent but there's just no WOW factor to it and that's a really bad thing for Smackdown's future.

Results

Apollo Crews b. Kalisto and Baron Corbin – Rollup to Kalisto

American Alpha b. Vaudevillains – Grand Amplitude to English

Randy Orton b. Fandango via DQ when Brock Lesnar interfered

Dolph Ziggler b. Bray Wyatt – Superkick

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New Column: Reviewing the Reviews

Bringing this one out of mothballs, much like Ziggler as a credible main eventer.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-reviewing-the-review/>

New Column: Draft Fallout

Everyone is doing one of these and it's not like there's anything bigger going on right now.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-draft-fallout/>

NXT – July 20, 2016: Those Final Shows

NXT

Date: July 20, 2016

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves

We're heading towards Brooklyn and it's going to be a few weeks before we can really feel the differences from the Draft. There are three matches scheduled for tonight with the headliner of American Alpha vs. the Authors of Pain in the Authors' first match on the show. Let's get to it.

The opening video talks about all three big matches tonight: American Alpha vs. Authors of Pain, Bayley vs. Nia Jax and Rhyno vs. Samoa Joe.

Opening sequence.

Rhyno vs. Samoa Joe

Non-title. I love the fact that Rhyno is the exact same guy he was back in ECW. There's something refreshing about having someone where you know exactly what you're going to get and nothing more. Rhyno runs him over with a shoulder to start but Joe comes back with his corner charge and the enziguri. A hard whip across the ring puts Rhyno down again and it's off to the nerve hold. The backsplash misses and Rhyno gets in his belly to belly. Joe blocks a Gore with some palm strikes and the Koquina Clutch puts Rhyno away at 6:23.

Rating: C+. Two big and thick guys beating on each other for a few minutes with Joe winning off his submission move. Like I said, you know exactly what to expect from someone like Rhyno and that's exactly what you can get. The thing is he knows how to wrestle that style and make it work perfectly well.

Asuka would love to face either Bayley or Nia Jax.

We look at the NXT names being taken in the Draft.

American Alpha vs. Authors of Pain

The Authors jump them on the ramp and it's not clear if we're going to have a match. Back from a break with Alpha charging to the ring with a referee right behind them. The brawl is on and Alpha clears the ring as we're still waiting on names for the Authors. Jordan starts with the bearded one (we'll call him #1 though they're pretty much interchangeable) and hits the running shoulder in the corner and a double northern lights suplex gets one.

It's quickly off to #2 who catches a launched Gable in a bearhug so #1 can splash him from behind. #1 slaps on a bearhug but Chad quickly escapes and makes the hot tag off to Jordan for the house cleaning. A belly to back suplex gets one on #2 but Gable tags in again and runs over #2 before throwing him across the ring on a release suplex. The ankle lock has #1 in trouble and Jordan dives over the top to take out #2. Gable goes outside as well but gets swung into the LED board. Jordan is sent into the steps, leaving Gable to take the Russian legsweep/clothesline combo for the pin at 6:34.

Rating: B-. This was a good way to get rid of Alpha and let them go up to the main roster. Sure they went out on a loss but NXT was smart enough to not have it be clean. The Authors are another simple idea for a team but that doesn't mean it's an idea that can't work. I liked the idea of Alpha being able to suplex these guys though as it prevents the match from being a squash, which makes it a lot more interesting.

Revival takes credit for the Authors' win because they softened Alpha up. Johnny Gargano and Tommaso Ciampa come in to say they've beaten Revival once and that the clock is ticking.

Austin Aries vs. Patrick Clark

Clark was on Tough Enough and I believe this is his TV debut. Aries gets caught in an early armbar but he forearm strikes Clark in the face and gives him

a flip belly to back suplex. The Last Chancery is good for the submission at 1:53.

No Way Jose comes out and beats on Aries post match.

Bayley vs. Nia Jax

Nia throws her into the corner to start and grabs an armbar of all things. Bayley swings away but walks into Snake Eyes. Some elbows and shoulders to the ribs before Nia just throws her outside as we take a break. Back with Bayley's crossbody working as well as you would expect and Nia throwing her outside for nine.

Now it's Nia being sent outside where she misses a charge into the steps for a near countout of her own. Well if it's good enough for Bayley it's good enough for Nia. Back in and Bayley slips out of an electric chair and into a victory roll for two before Nia just plows over her. A Jackhammer of all things gets two more but Nia stops short before trying the legdrop. Instead Nia goes to the middle rope, only to get pulled down into a super Bayley To Belly for the pin at 13:36.

Rating: B-. These two work well together and this was another good one with Bayley knowing how to play the underdog. That being said, I don't think anyone really bought Nia as having much of a chance here. It's a formula that's always going to work but as is almost always the case, the more you do a match the less interesting it becomes.

Overall Rating: C+. You can really feel the Draft starting to take its toll here as two of these matches have been effected by the people being called up. You have to think that the next few weeks, at least until Takeover, are going to be the final shows for a lot of these people and it's going to be a hard transition to fix things. Still good here though and that's what matters for now.

Results

Samoa Joe b. Rhyno – Koquina Clutch

Authors of Pain b. American Alpha – Russian legsweep/clothesline combination

Austin Aries b. Patrick Clark – Last Chancery

Bayley b. Nia Jax – Super Bayley To Belly

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