

Smackdown – April 25, 2017: Stairway to Nothing

Smackdown

Date: April 25, 2017

Location: Wells Fargo Arena, Des Moines, Iowa

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton

Can we call this a go home show? I mean, Payback is a Raw show but it feels like half of the major matches are built around Smackdown talent, or at least a combination of the two shows. Tonight is a packed show as well with three announced matches plus a Beat the Clock Challenge. Let's get to it.

Here's Shinsuke Nakamura (now billed as an artist) to open things up. In your first sign of WWE stupidity/being annoying, he loads up the signature pose and as he pulls the arm back, let's cut to a crowd shot for a reaction! Before he can say anything, here's Dolph Ziggler to interrupt.

Ziggler won't let him talk and says Nakamura is actually named Michael and he's from Gary, Indiana. We hear a bunch of Jackson Family stories and apparently Nakamura is Michael Jackson's alter ego. Nakamura takes the mic and insults Ziggler a bit, earning himself a kick to the ribs. That just means the exploder but Ziggler bails from Kinshasa.

Baron Corbin vs. AJ Styles

Kevin Owens is on commentary. AJ's headlock starts things off and stays on for a good while. Corbin gets bored waiting though and launches him out to the floor for a very early break. Back with Corbin holding a chinlock, followed by a chokebreaker (that's a good move for him) for two.

AJ slips out of a superplex and scores with the Pele as Owens says Saxton makes him miss Michael Cole. Owens: "Do you know how hard that is?" Styles' low running forearm gets two but the Calf Crusher

is blocked. Instead he loads up the Phenomenal Forearm but has to kick Owens away. Corbin's powerbomb is countered into a quick sunset flip to give Styles the pin at 10:51.

Rating: C+. I'm not wild on Corbin getting pinned but Styles needed to dispatch him before the title shot. At least it was closer to a fluke win after a fairly dominant performance, which certainly helps keep Corbin looking strong. I'm not sure what he'll be doing at the pay per view but I hope it's not a multi-man match.

The post match beatdown is on until Sami Zayn makes the save. That means a Helluva Kick for Corbin but Owens jumps Sami and powerbombs AJ.

Beat the Clock: American Alpha vs. Colons

There are four teams in the competition (another match later) and the winners get a future title shot. Alpha starts fast with the rollup attempts (makes sense) but Gable has to fight out of the wrong corner. The Colons send Gable into the corner though and the double teaming lets the cousins take over.

An armbar wastes some time before Primo grabs a chinlock at the three minute mark. Something like a reverse Koji Clutch keeps Gable in trouble before Primo drops Jordan off the apron. Back up and the powerbomb/Backstabber combination is broken up and a quick Grand Amplitude gives Alpha the pin, setting the time at 5:17.

Rating: C. JBL was right on during this match as he was yelling about the chinlocks and the wasting the time in a match built around winning as fast as possible. Alpha winning is good though I'm really hoping Breezango gets the title shot, if nothing else for the sake of not having to see the Usos vs. Alpha in another match. They're good but I've seen it enough already.

Rusev says he hasn't shown up yet because he doesn't like the Smackdown bosses. If he doesn't get a championship match at Money in the Bank, he's going back to Bulgaria.

Becky Lynch doesn't have much of an issue with what Charlotte did last week. The welcoming committee of

Natalya/Carmella/Tamina/Ellsworth show up and say Becky is with them or against them.

Randy Orton vs. Erick Rowan

Non-title and No DQ. They head outside to start with Rowan being bounced off the post. The belly to back onto the table keeps Rowan in trouble but he comes right back with a bad looking running dropkick. A few kendo stick shots get two on Orton and it's already table time. Orton makes his comeback and a few swings of the stick put Rowan through the table.

Back from a break with Rowan in control because tables aren't the big deal that they're made out to be. The elevated DDT cuts Rowan off but the RK0 is countered. Rowan hits him in the head with the steps but makes the mistake of wedging a chair in the corner. His head goes off of it all of fifteen seconds later and the RK0 gives Orton the pin at 12:13.

Rating: B-. So here's the thing: this was billed as a preview for the House of Horrors match but given that we have no idea what the House of Horrors is, how can we get a preview for it? For all we know, the House of Horrors is a turkey on a pole match. They really need to get this over with already and move on to anything else, which somehow includes Jinder Mahal.

Orton: "I don't know what a House of Horrors match is but I have a feeling I'll find out on Sunday." Orton promises to destroy Wyatt like he's done a million times but here's Jinder Mahal to interrupt. He's the real horror and has more wealth and class than Orton could ever hope to have. Mahal promises to win the title for his people and speaks some Punjabi before getting in a fight. Cue the Bollywood Boyz to slow Orton down, allowing Mahal to get in the cobra clutch slam. Mahal leaves with the title.

Post break Mahal and the Boyz leave in a Hummer limo.

Beat the Clock: Ascension vs. Breezango

The clock is set at 5:17 and Ascension doesn't get an entrance. Viktor shows some intelligence by hitting a running elbow to

Breeze's jaw for two less than ten seconds in. Konnor comes in for some near falls of his own but Breeze escapes for the hot tag to Fandango. Everything breaks down and Fall of Man is broken up, allowing Breeze to superkick Viktor into the Falcon Arrow for the pin at 2:41. Good call here as Breezango is a popular enough team for a one off title shot.

Video on Wyatt vs. Orton.

Naomi doesn't want to hear about Charlotte talking about being the best. It's time to feel the Glow.

Women's Title: Naomi vs. Charlotte

Charlotte is challenging after defeating Naomi last week. After the Big Match Intros, Charlotte is sent outside but pulls Naomi out for a crash. Back from a break with Naomi caught in a cravate, followed by some stomping in the corner. Naomi makes her comeback with a hurricanrana and a bulldog, followed by a Chick Kick for two.

The Rear View gives Naomi her real near fall before another hurricanrana is countered into a sitout powerbomb. Charlotte's moonsault hits knees, which JBL calls a turning point. And never mind as here's the Welcoming Committee (seems to be their official name) to pull Naomi to the floor for the DQ at 10:33.

Rating: C-. This match suffered from a common problem as we were just waiting on the ending. Making Charlotte a face (maybe) is interesting as you can only have her do the entitled heel character for so long. The Welcoming Committee is fine for a way to fill in time until someone new (Asuka) comes up to give Charlotte a real challenge. Not much to see here but it worked well enough.

Charlotte gets beaten down to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This is a show where the wrestling really doesn't tell the whole story. So many of the stories feel like they're setting up filler matches, which isn't a good thing when the pay per view is almost a month away. Payback is really messing things up but at the same time we have to deal with Jinder Mahal as the #1 contender. The worst part is that he's really not a horrible

character (done before but not horrible). The problem is that it's Jinder Mahal playing it and there's no reason to believe he's ready for this level. This week flew by but without anything interesting, it's not much of a show.

Results

AJ Styles b. Baron Corbin – Sunset flip

American Alpha b. Colons – Grand Amplitude to Epico

Randy Orton b. Erick Rowan – RK0

Breezango b. Ascension – Falcon Arrow to Viktor

Naomi b. Charlotte via DQ when the Welcoming Committee interfered

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**Smackdown – February 14,
2017: Roses Are Red,
Violets Aren't Blue,**

Smackdown Was Good, This Doesn't Rhyme

Smackdown

Date: February 14, 2017

Location: Honda Center, Anaheim, California

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

There's nothing in between us and Wrestlemania XXXIII at this point with Elimination Chamber out of the way. We still have some big TV to knock off first though and that includes one heck of a main event tonight. Bray Wyatt won the Smackdown World Title in the Elimination Chamber on Sunday but tonight he has to defend against former champion John Cena. Let's get to it.

Long recap of Elimination Chamber kicks things off.

Here's Bray with the title to open the show. After getting a chuckle at the YOU DESERVE IT chants, Bray says Sister Abigail told him this would never be easy. But now, after everything he's gone through, he truly does have the whole world in his hands. Bray welcomes us to the era of Wyatt but here's John Cena to interrupt him.

After waiting for the Roman Reigns levels of booing to cut him off, Cena congratulates Bray on becoming the new champion. John says Bray has already brainwashed the fans because they think he deserves it. Around here, you earn things instead of deserving them so now there's a target on Bray's shoulder. Cue AJ Styles to say that he's already beaten Cena over and over so he wants his one on one rematch for the title right now. Bray seems willing but here's Daniel Bryan to interrupt and make it a triple threat.

Dean Ambrose storms into the building wanting to fight Baron Corbin.

American Alpha vs. Ascension

Non-title. Gable wrestles Viktor to the mat to start and everything breaks down a few seconds later. Alpha is sent outside but come back in off the top with a double clothesline (old Steiner Brothers move) to take us to a break. Back with Gable fighting out of a chinlock, only to get kneed in the face for his efforts. There's something to be said about getting hit square in the face to cut someone off.

Chad gets an armbar over the ropes for a breather but Viktor runs around the ring to cut off the tag. Not that it matters as Gable rolls over for the real hot tag. That means it's time for the suplexes but Chad tags himself back in, leaving Jordan to miss a charge into the corner. Something like an H Bomb gets two on Chad but Grand Amplitude wraps up Viktor for the pin at 9:59.

Rating: C+. I liked this one more than I was expecting to as they've actually made Ascension feel a little more like a threat with just a few good performances. I know we've been told for years that wins and losses don't matter but the last week or so is proof that just one fall can go a long way. Now of course we need some fresh talent on Smackdown and it's WAY too late for this version of Ascension to work but it's better than nothing.

Post match the Usos pop up on screen to say they're coming for the belts. My goodness FIND SOME NEW CHALLENGERS. It feels like they're the only real competition Alpha has had since they debuted.

James Ellsworth is trying to get Carmella to go to dinner when Ambrose comes in. Dean says Carmella is just using him so try online dating. Carmella tells Ellsworth to stand up for her so James kind of does so, only to have Bryan come in and grant Dean a match against Ellsworth for later tonight.

Dean Ambrose vs. James Ellsworth

And never mind as Baron Corbin drags Dean out to the stage. Deep Six into the production area gives us some sparks and Ambrose is out.

We recap Nikki Bella and Natalya fighting backstage at Elimination Chamber, including Bella being knocked into Maryse.

Nikki is in Bryan's office with the boss saying things need to end. Natalya comes in and the arguing begins again. That quickly turns into a fight so Bryan makes it a falls count anywhere match for next week.

Baron says Dean isn't WWE Champion because of him and now Dean is in the hospital because of him. That's everything you need to know.

Dolph Ziggler is tired of people like Apollo Crews and Kalisto trying to take his spot. If he has to wipe out an entire generation to prove his point, so be it.

Mickie James vs. Becky Lynch

Feeling out process to start with Mickie going for the arm but getting reversed so Becky can take over on the mat. Back up and a shove puts Mickie on the floor, followed by an armbar on Mickie to copy Sunday's tactics. They head outside again and it's a double clothesline to take us to a break.

We come back with Mickie grabbing a chinlock before scoring with a flapjack. The Bexploder gets two on Mickie and a forearm puts her on the floor. James comes up holding her shoulder (which didn't seem to actually hit anything in the crash) but of course she's goldbricking, setting up a spinning kick to Becky's jaw for the pin at 11:58.

Rating: C. The goldbricking might not be the most creative thing in the world but it does play up the idea that Mickie is a veteran who can use her experience to pull off something like that. I'm not wild on them splitting wins on back to back shows but it sets up what should be an entertaining third act.

Here's new Women's Champion Naomi, who says she was hurt at Elimination Chamber. It doesn't matter though because she's coming in to Wrestlemania with this title one way or another. Cue Alexa Bliss to say Naomi is just hiding from the pressure. Naomi could even have her own 30 for 30 special called The Lights Go Out. Bliss is feeling generous though and is giving Naomi a week to get ready for the rematch.

Black History Month video on Nelson Mandela.

TJ Perkins wants us to watch 205 Live.

Smackdown World Title: Bray Wyatt vs. John Cena vs. AJ Styles

Wyatt is defending and this is one fall to a finish. Bray does his entrance and runs into Luke Harper who gives him a pre-match beating. We take a break before the bell and come back with Cena loading up the Shuffle on Styles until Bray pulls him outside. AJ isn't one to be shown up though and hits a big forearm out to the floor.

Back in and a low forearm gets two on Bray but Cena comes back in for the running shoulders to the champ. The AA is countered into a failed Sister Abigail attempt though as Styles comes in with the forearm. Cena plants AJ with the AA for two, followed by Sister Abigail getting the same on Cena with AJ making the save.

Back from a break with AJ slamming Bray onto the announcers' table and dropping a leg to put him through the wood. Cena throws AJ in for another AA but tries a third and gets reversed into the Calf Crusher. That's reversed into the STF but Bray comes back in with the backplash for the last second save. AJ is sent outside and another AA gets two on the champ. The Styles Clash gets the same on Cena and all three are down. Back up again and AJ is sent outside, leaving Bray to grab Sister Abigail for the pin on Cena at 14:05.

Rating: B+. They were spamming the finishers like few matches you'll see these days but at least Wyatt won in a really solid TV match. The fact that Bray pinned Cena clean with his finisher is a great sign and exactly what should have happened here. Cena isn't losing a thing here and Wyatt gets another big fall on his resume. Well done indeed and they even managed to make me buy some of those near falls, which I really didn't expect coming in.

Post match here's Randy Orton for the big staredown. The fans cheer for Orton as Bray says not to listen to it. Orton says he won't fight Bray for the title at Wrestlemania because he pledges loyalty to Wyatt. Bray says that means Orton has the keys to the kingdom and the double pose ends the show.

Overall Rating: B-. Good show here for the most part as they kept me wanting to come back next week (no not for Nikki vs. Natalya 2, which isn't even big enough to earn Roman numerals) and gave us a hot main event. This was a big step up from Sunday and you can see a mixture of upcoming TV plus Wrestlemania plans forming. I liked the show here and that's encouraging coming off a hot Raw.

Results

American Alpha b. Ascension – Grand Amplitude to Viktor

Mickie James b. Becky Lynch – Spinning kick to the head

Bray Wyatt b. AJ Styles and John Cena – Sister Abigail to Cena

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

Smackdown

Date: December 13, 2016

Location: Verizon Center, Washington D.C.

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

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

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

Opening sequence.

It's time for MizTV with special guest AJ Styles, who thinks Ellsworth has come down with Chinfluenza. AJ laughs off the idea of Ellsworth being a threat to the title, which is probably accurate.

Miz says that he's the one who raised his title to greatness and beat Ambrose last week. It's true that Miz isn't on AJ's level because he's above it, meaning maybe it's time to make the WWE Championship legendary. A fight is teased but Ambrose and Dolph Ziggler come out because Heaven forbid we go a week without hearing from Dolph. Miz takes Dirty Deeds and actually so does Ziggler, only to have Luke Harper appear and lay Ambrose out.

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

Carmella vs. Natalya

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

Rating: D+. So like did you know that Nikki and Natalya were the best friends EVER and would never ever stab each other in the back? I need a camera to awkwardly stare into while I list off various emotions I'm feeling as I talk about this because it's one of the worse reality show stories they've done in a long time.

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

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

Tag Team Battle Royal

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

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

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

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

Rating: D. Battle royals almost always suck by definition and it certainly didn't help that the Hype Bros were built up as the next challengers last week. At least they had to do more than beat Ascension and Breezango to get the shot though, making this somewhat of an effective way to crown new #1 contenders.

Baron Corbin video.

Alexa Bliss vs. Deonna Purrazzo

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

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

is on.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Back with Ambrose hitting a spinning backbreaker for two on Ziggler while Luke it out on the floor. The Zig Zag puts Harper down but Dean drops the top rope clothesline for two on Ziggler. Harper comes

back with a sitout powerbomb for two more on Ziggler but a superkick into Dirty Deeds gets rid of Luke at 15:13.

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

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

Rich Swann tells us to check out 205 Live.

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

Results

Carmella b. Natalya – Small package

Zack Ryder won a battle royal last eliminating Konor

Becky Lynch b. Alexa Bliss via countout

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

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

Smackdown

Date: December 6, 2016

Location: Toyota Center, Houston, Texas

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

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

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

Here's AJ in a walking boot and street clothes to open the show. Styles talks about the tragedy of Sunday but is talking about his torn tights. Apparently AJ isn't cleared to wrestle tonight but here's Ellsworth to start the match now. That isn't happening though and Ellsworth thinks Daniel Bryan is protecting him. After all,

Ellsworth has his number and can beat him a fourth time. AJ laughs off the idea that Ellsworth helped him get the title and says Ambrose handed Ellsworth every win. Cue Ambrose to give Ellsworth Dirty Deeds and immediately leave. Again, makes sense for him.

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

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

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

Kalisto says speed kills.

Natalya vs. Carmella

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

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

Baron Corbin compares cruiserweights to flies.

Hype Bros vs. Ascension

Both teams want the titles. Viktor knees Ryder in the head to start and Zack is in early trouble. Ascension takes turns with a variety of stomps to the back until a neckbreaker puts Konnor down. The hot

tag brings in Mojo to clean house and the Hype Ryder puts Viktor away at 3:30.

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

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

Kalisto vs. Baron Corbin

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

Nikki meets singer Sophia Grace and they get along.

Chad Gable vs. Tyler Breeze

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

Here's Alexa Bliss for her championship celebration, complete with a long pyro display. The fans don't seem happy and want Becky so Bliss

laughs about taking the title from her. Cue Becky to say how hard it is to hold onto the title because she wants her rematch right now. Bliss takes off the jacket but bails to the floor like you might expect.

Opening segment recap.

Intercontinental Title: Miz vs. Dean Ambrose

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

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

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

Ellsworth is upset to end the show.

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

Results

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

Hype Bros b. Ascension – Hype Ryder to Viktor

Baron Corbin b. Kalisto – End of Days

Chad Gable b. Tyler Breeze – Rolling Chaos Theory

Miz b. Dean Ambrose – Skull Crushing Finale

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Main Event – November 8, 2016: Tag Teams Are Fun

Main Event

Date: November 8, 2016

Location: SSE Hydro, Glasgow, Scotland

Commentators: David Otunga, Tom Phillips

We're still across the pond for the supplemental show, meaning we're likely to see more from this week's Monday Night Raw. Survivor Series is in less than two weeks and Goldberg vs. Lesnar is starting to heat up. Hopefully we get more from the tag team division this week as that was a lot of fun last time. Let's get to it.

Jason Jordan vs. Viktor

Jordan easily takes him down with a belly to back suplex before

hitting that perfect dropkick. Konnor offers a distraction and Jordan is sent hard into the corner. We're already in the chinlock for a bit before an elbow drop misses. Jordan makes his quick comeback and takes the straps down, only to get kneed in the face. As Jordan kicks out, Gable takes Konnor down with a flip dive off the apron, followed by Jordan grabbing a modified t-bone suplex for the pin at 3:46.

Rating: C. This didn't do much to make me think that Jordan has a future without Gable. The dropkick looks great but Jordan really does need that fire from Gable for the hot tag. There's nothing wrong with that as a lot of people are just better as a tag wrestler. The dropkick still looks great and Jordan has talent but he needs someone to bring it out of him.

We get the Goldberg and Brock Lesnar videos from Raw.

Clip from Sami Zayn vs. Rusev from Monday as Sami earns an Intercontinental Title shot.

Hype Bros vs. Usos

Zack and Jey get things going without a lot happening before it's off to Mojo, who throws Jey into the corner. The Bros start beating Jimmy into the corner but Jey offers a distraction to save his brother from the Broski Boot. The first superkick drops Ryder and we take a break. Back with Jey holding a chinlock, as is the case in almost every match with a break ever.

Jimmy adds his own chinlock before changing things up by bringing Jey back in for another chinlock. A neckbreaker finally snaps the streak and it's Mojo coming back in to clean house. Rawley wants the tag but Ryder is still down. Mojo: "Ok rest up!" The rest seems to work as Zack is backdropped over the top and onto both twins. Jey takes a Broski Boot but a blind tag allows the superkick to the leg and the Tequila Sunrise makes Ryder tap at 11:00.

Rating: C+. The Hype Bros are getting better and the Usos have gotten a very needed upgrade with the heel turn. They're still not great but this is way better than seeing them do the same stuff over

and over again for years. This didn't have a ton of sizzle but it was a completely fine tag match.

We'll wrap it up with Monday's main event.

Braun Strowman vs. Seth Rollins vs. Roman Reigns vs. Kevin Owens vs. Chris Jericho

Stephanie: "Now you all are going into the biggest match of your lives and it's so important for Raw to win. NOW GO OUT THERE AND BEAT THE HECK OUT OF EACH OTHER FOR MY AMUSEMENT!!!" Non-title, nothing on the line and Reigns comes out last. Rollins, Owens and Jericho go outside so we get Reigns staring at Strowman for a long time. Strowman is knocked to the floor where Rollins beats on him with a kendo stick. Now it's a table but Strowman makes a quick save to take us to a break.

Back with Strowman giving Reigns the reverse chokeslam and kicking Jericho out of the air. Owens tries to talk his way out of trouble before punching Strowman in the face, earning himself a clothesline. Everyone goes after Strowman and an enziguri from Rollins into the Superman Punch is finally enough to send him outside. The Sling Blade drops Owens and it's time for the Shield showdown.

That goes nowhere as Strowman has to be dealt with again, only to have the Canadians break up the TripleBomb through the table.

Strowman is put on the table and it's Jericho being powerbombed through Braun through the table. Back in and Rollins kicks Owens in the head for two, followed by the Pedigree for the same with Jericho making the save. That earns Chris a Pedigree but Owens makes a save. Reigns Superman Punches Owens....right into the pin on Jericho at 14:58.

Rating: C+. This was fine, although I'm really not sure what this changes. The World Champion winning a match has become a big surprise because he loses way too often anymore. At least the right guy won and this isn't being used to set up the new challenge. I'm still not sure why Stephanie would want to make that match but who am I to question her?

Overall Rating: B-. This was a lot more fun than Superstars as you had a few more energetic matches. I really don't understand why Superstars insists on trotting out the same boring acts every few weeks when they have a bunch of people who are at least marginally more entertaining. Either way, fun show this week.

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

Smackdown

Date: October 4, 2016

Location: Valley View Casino Center, San Diego, California

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

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

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

Bray Wyatt vs. Kane

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

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

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

Post break, Bray is looking for Orton.

Alexa Bliss vs. Nikki Bella

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

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

Becky Lynch/Nikki Bella vs. Carmella/Alexa Bliss

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

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

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

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

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

Vaudevillains vs. Hype Bros

There's still something weird about JBL being a Mojo Rawley fan. Mojo slams Gotch to start and it's Hammer Time! Cue Ascension, now with face paint, to the stage for a distraction but Ryder dropkicks English off the apron anyway. Ryder gets kneed in the back but Gotch's chinlock goes as far as a chinlock is going to take him. The hot tag brings in Mojo a few seconds later and a Hype Ryder ends English at 3:48.

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

The Ascension point at the Hype Bros.

It's time for MizTV with a special Dolphumentary. Ziggler comes out and the documentary is of course a career lowlight reel with stuff like Ziggler as Kerwin White's caddy and the Spirit Squad and various out of context statements from wrestlers. This Sunday, it's the feature film the Success of a Failure. Ziggler doesn't take kindly to this and says that he loves it when a Make-A-Wish kid says

he's their hero but Ziggler gets to tell them that they're his hero. That's the kind of thing that makes Ziggler know he can't walk away. Miz laughs this off and brings out two members of the Spirit Squad (Kenny and Mikey). We get a cheer with Miz saying Ziggler can join them at their \$5 autograph signing. Ziggler goes after Miz but gets jumped from behind. Dolph easily fights them off and Miz bails from the threat of a superkick. This feud is really, really growing on me despite it being Dolph Ziggler. They're nailing every single thing about this and I want to see the match, albeit with Miz winning to finally get rid of Ziggler.

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

Hispanic Heritage Month video on Roberto Clemente.

Jey Uso vs. Jason Jordan

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jack Swagger vs. Baron Corbin

Corbin shoulder blocks him down to start and rains down right hands to the head, sending us to an early break. Back with Swagger favoring his knee and getting caught in a chinlock. Jack fights up and elbows Corbin in the face, followed by the Patriot Lock. Corbin

dives for the ropes over and over, which the referee calls a tap out at 8:25. Replays show that Corbin was reaching for the ropes as his hand is up and it's his wrist hitting the mat when he can't reach the ropes.

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

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

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

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

Overall Rating: B. The wrestling wasn't great here but that's not the point most of the time. The point here is a very well done

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

Results

Kane b. Bray Wyatt via countout

Nikki Bella b. Alexa Bliss via DQ when Carmella interfered

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

Hype Bros b. Vaudevillains – Hype Ryder to English

Jason Jordan b. Jey Uso – Rollup

Jack Swagger b. Baron Corbin – Patriot Lock

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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 danging 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 13, 2016: Plugging The Holes

Smackdown

Date: September 13, 2016

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Mauro Ranallo, David Otunga

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

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

Opening sequence.

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

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

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

Therefore, AJ will be defending against Cena and Ambrose in a triple dance at No Mercy. As for tonight though, it's Cena/Ambrose vs. AJ/a

partner of his choosing. If AJ can't find one, Daniel Bryan will pick one for him.

Connor's Cure video.

Usos vs. Hype Bros

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

Curt Hawkins talks about wolf cubs.

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

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

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

Apollo Crews vs. Baron Corbin

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

Swagger: "LADIES AND GENTLEMEN IT'S THE ROLLING STONES!" You've seen

him wrestle for a long time but you don't know Jack. We, as in we the people, are going to be a big problem.

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

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

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

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

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

Kane laughs at AJ for suggesting a partnership.

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

referee. Shane thinks we can fix that so let's defend the belts right now.

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

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

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

Randy Orton comes out to address Bray Wyatt, but not before some extra posing. Orton has finally figured out that Bray calls himself the face of fear because he's afraid. Right now Orton is ready for a fight so Bray can come out here and face his fear. Instead Bray comes up on screen to warn Randy not to sleep. The lights go out again and Bray is on the floor behind Randy, who is actually smart enough to turn around before Bray can do anything. Bray takes off the gear but the lights go out again, allowing Erick Rowan (Didn't they split?) to come in and jump Orton....who scores with a quick RK0 to take care of that loser.

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

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

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

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

Rating: C. Just a main event tag but it did move us all the way up

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

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

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

Results

Usos b. Hype Bros – Superfly splash to Rawley

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

Heath Slater/Rhyno b. Ascension – Gore to Viktor

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

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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 – March 24, 2016: Smackdown And Such

Smackdown

Date: March 24, 2016

Location: TD Banknorth Garden, Boston, Massachusetts

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton

Brock is here for a rare Smackdown appearance so you know we're getting closer and closer to Wrestlemania. There are two shows left before the biggest show of the year and things are ranging from hot to lukewarm at best so it should be interesting to see which one we get here tonight. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte

Non-title and Becky Lynch is on commentary. We're not quite ready to go though as Charlotte promises to lead the WOO Revolution over Sasha and Becky in front of a record setting crowd in Dallas. Simple speech but rather efficient. Like any good heel champion, Charlotte

is on the floor before anything can happen to her. Back in and Sasha flips her over for two before slapping the champ in the face.

Charlotte comes back with a kick to the face and a neckbreaker, giving us a good old fashioned W00. We hit the chinlock before a big chop puts Banks down again. A Thesz press gets two on the champ but the double knees in the corner miss. They head outside for a minute and it's Sasha being whipped into Becky. Charlotte takes her back inside for the Figure Eight, only to be small packaged to give Sasha the surprise pin at 4:56.

Rating: C. Not a great match as they didn't have time but hopefully the intensity shown here is a good indication of what we're going to be seeing in Dallas. They're doing a good job of setting this up as a match where anyone can win, even though I can't imagine Becky having much of a chance. Good TV match here though and that's how you build to the big stuff.

Post match Becky gets in the ring for a Bex Plex to both of them, followed by Sasha giving Charlotte a Backstabber.

Here's New Day for their weekly chat. We're just ten days away from Wrestlemania XXXII and they'll be having a match against the League of Nations. The League is so boring that they're like the going to the DMV of WWE. If they were a Star Wars character, they would be the Jar Jar Binks of WWE. Or if they were another sports star they would be the Michael Jordan of baseball. As usual, this was all about how strong New Day sells the material instead of whatever they're actually saying.

Kofi Kingston vs. Sheamus

No Del Rio for some reason. Sheamus isn't playing around here and throws Kofi into the corner for an early stomping. It's not quite the Unicorn Stampede but Sheamus is hardly trained for such combat. Kofi gets back up for some stomping of his own to send Sheamus to the floor. A big standoff is teased but the power of Francesca II calms things down. Kofi gets tripped off the apron though and we take a break.

Back with Kofi still in trouble and Rusev shouting in some insults. We hit the chinlock with Sheamus clearly calling some spots, one of which seems to be missing a middle rope knee drop. Things get even worse for Sheamus as he misses a charge into the post to start Kofi's comeback. There's the Boom Drop and Kofi follows with a flip dive over the top to take out Sheamus again. Back in and Sheamus grabs a suplex slam for two before going for a turnbuckle pad. Rusev offers a distraction so New Day chases him off, only to have Barrett's distraction set up the Brogue Kick for the pin on Kofi at 10:28.

Rating: C-. Kofi is getting better and better every week, to the point where I could easily see him going up to the main event after the New Day run is over. You have to give the League something before they get to the pay per view though and this was as fine as anything else, especially with them playing up the numbers advantage for the League.

Usos vs. Ascension

Viktor runs Jey over to start and it's off to Konnor for a chinlock. That goes as far as a first minute chinlock is going to go as Jey fights up and sends Konnor into the corner. Everything breaks down and a double superkick puts Viktor away at 1:37.

Post match the Usos put Viktor through a table.

The Dudley Boyz don't think much of the Usos as they're only two time Tag Team Champions. They've beaten up Rikishi and they could beat up the Wild Samoans, but here's Roman Reigns to interrupt. Reigns doesn't like the way Bubba is disrespecting his family so let's have a fight tonight.

Long video on Shane vs. Undertaker, the same one from Raw.

Dolph Ziggler/Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens/The Miz

Sami and Miz get things going as we have to hear about the other three guys being added to the Intercontinental Title match for the sake of making it way more of a mess than it needs to be. Sami works on the arm to start (there's a safe idea) before it's off to Ziggler

for a rollup. Owens: "WE GET IT! YOU WENT TO COLLEGE!" Dolph's headlock slows things down but Miz puts a knee into his ribs to take over.

Owens comes in and eats a dropkick, only to run away from Zayn. He teases leaving again but this time Miz will have nothing to do with that and grabs Kevin's arm, allowing Zayn to get in a dive to take them out. Some elbows to the head have Owens in trouble and that's about it for this dream match. I would say save it for Wrestlemania but apparently we wanted a seven way ladder match including a guy who has won one match in nearly two years. Ziggler comes in and gets stomped in the corner before a catapult puts him on the floor.

We take a break and come back with Ziggler blocking the backplash with the only counter that people use for that move. The hot tag brings in Sami for his running clotheslines and a high cross body to Miz. The Blue Thunder Bomb gets two as everything breaks down. Owens breaks up the Helluva Kick and a victory roll gets two on Miz. Both guys are down but now it's time for Owens to walk out, only to have Sin Cara, Zack Ryder and Stardust stop him. Back in and Miz gives Owens a Skull Crushing Finale, setting up a superkick and Helluva Kick for the pin on Miz at 13:57.

Rating: C+. That scene with Ryder, Cara and Stardust coming out to stop Owens from leaving sums up every problem this title match has. If for whatever reason we can't have Zayn vs. Owens, the best solution is to just add Miz and Ziggler to the mix. I'm not wild on it but it's as good of a story as we can get. The other three can't even get into a match on Smackdown and really do come off as people just there for the sake of being there. As usual, if you can eliminate something entirely and tell the same story, they're really not necessary.

Post match Stardust comes in with the Queen's Crossbow to Zayn. Ryder and Cara come in for the big brawl and it's Ryder of all people standing tall.

Recap of Roman Reigns vs. HHH/Stephanie on Raw.

Roman Reigns vs. Bubba Ray Dudley

Reigns comes through the entrance again. Bubba immediately hits the floor to yell at the fans which is why he's such a great heel. Back in and a Superman Punch sends Ray right back out to the floor. The brawl heads outside and Ray is in even more trouble as Reigns slams him into the table over and over for a DQ at 1:52.

D-Von's save attempt earns him a Superman Punch and some steps to the shoulder. Reigns spears Bubba for good measure.

Goldust is painting his face in the bathroom when R-Truth comes in to call him partner. They're still not partners but Goldust denies coming down to help him on Monday. Somehow Truth knows that Goldust sleeps without clothes on so Goldust paints NO on Truth's forehead. Truth looks in the mirror. "ON! IT'S ON!"

The Lucha Dragons are in the back to talk about how they can leave Wrestlemania with a title each. Cara leaves and Ryback comes in to talk about how much bigger and stronger he is than Kalisto. He can bench press Kalisto with one arm and ate that much weight for breakfast this morning. Ryback deserves the Wrestlemania spotlight and Kalisto can settle for a flashlight. Kalisto says he'll win and leaves.

Tyler Breeze vs. AJ Styles

AJ starts with his striking sequence to send Breeze outside, setting up a springboard forearm. Breeze, who is announced for the Andre battle royal, knees AJ in the face but his superplex is broken up. Another Phenomenal Forearm is enough to pin Breeze at 2:03.

Here are Brock and Heyman to wrap things up. Heyman cuts off the speech by saying that his name is Paul Heyman and this is your main event of the evening. Brock is going to be your Wrestlemania moment, just like when he conquered the Streak. That still gets people to boo. That brings Heyman to the no holds barred street fight at Wrestlemania, which means Dean can use anything he can get his hands on against BROCK LESNAR.

It can be a chair, a table or a kendo stick but it won't be enough. Now we have Mick Foley and Terry Funk handing Dean various weapons

to use against Lesnar too. To shoot from the hip a bit, the only reason Funk and Foley are still alive is because Heyman's prayers continue to go unanswered. What Ambrose doesn't understand is that if Dean can get his hands on something, Brock can get his hands on as well. However, Brock can also get his hands on Dean and that's just going to end badly.

Heyman invites Dean out to fight right now but he gets the Wyatt Family (minus Harper) instead. Brock seems to like the idea of being surrounded but here's Dean to interrupt. Lesnar gets in a quick suplex to Rowan as Dean gets in, only to have Strowman take Brock's head off with a clothesline. Dean's distraction lets Brock suplex Strowman (first time for that I believe) before beating Lesnar down with the kendo stick. That's fine with Brock who pops up and gives him an F5 to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. The wrestling wasn't great here but this was all about helping to set the stage for Wrestlemania. Things are really starting to shape up for the big night and they're doing a better job of setting it up than they did last year. There are still some major issues on the pay per view of course but they're doing what they can to fix some of them as fast as they can. This was a good enough building show and that's exactly what it needed to be.

Results

Sasha Banks b. Charlotte – Small package

Sheamus b. Kofi Kingston – Brogue Kick

Usos b. Ascension – Double superkick to Viktor

Sami Zayn/Dolph Ziggler b. Kevin Owens/The Miz – Helluva Kick to Miz

Bubba Ray Dudley b. Roman Reigns via DQ when Reigns sent him into the announcers' table

AJ Styles b. Tyler Breeze – Phenomenal Forearm

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