

Smackdown – July 26, 2016: The Big Problem

Smackdown

Date: July 26, 2016

Location: First Niagara Center, Buffalo, New York

Commentators: David Otunga, Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield

We're into the new era of Smackdown now and it should be interesting to see where they go now that they're all on their own. Given who they have on the roster, there's a chance we'll have to get some new titles or at the very least some new stars to challenge for the titles that already exist. Let's get to it.

Daniel Bryan and Shane McMahon are in the back and say this new era is all about us as they walk into the arena.

Just like Raw, there's a new intro accompanied by new music.

The roster is around the ring with the bosses inside. Shane talks about how we have the only WWE Champion here so it's time to find a new #1 contender. Dean Ambrose comes out to say he's ready for a new challenge and has Smackdown Live fever. Tonight there's going to be a Six Pack Challenge for the right to face Ambrose at Summerslam. Included in that match will be:

John Cena

Bray Wyatt

Dolph Ziggler

AJ Styles

Baron Corbin

That leaves one spot open so let's have a battle royal right now for that final position.

Battle Royal

Kane, Tyler Breeze, Fandango, Apollo Crews, Konnor, Viktor, Simon Gotch, Aiden English, Kalisto, Zack Ryder, Jey Uso, Jimmy Uso, Erick Rowan, Alberto Del Rio, Mojo Rawley

The camera has a slightly different camera angle, starting from over the cover and down a bit lower instead of the stationary shot. Kane throws out Gotch and clotheslines Ascension out to start clearing out the ring early on. Breezango gets together to eliminate Jey Uso and we take a break.

Back with Rowan and English having been eliminated, leaving us Breeze, Fandango, Kane, Del Rio, Crews, Kalisto and Ryder. I didn't bother listing Rawley as he was eliminated a few seconds after we came back. A double clothesline gets rid of Del Rio and Kane throws out Breezango to get us down to four. Everyone starts taking shots at Kane but Crews seems to injure his knee on a standing shooting star.

All four are down for a bit until thankfully Crews gets up fine. A clothesline sends Ryder to the apron and Kalisto hits Salida Del Sol on Crews. Ryder goes up for the Elbro but slips off, only to have Kane do the dramatic sit up. Kane dumps Kalisto with ease and Ryder follows him out, leaving Kane and Crews. Apollo backflips out of a chokeslam and low bridges Kane out for the win at 12:45.

Rating: C. The ending really does this match a lot of good and teasing Kane winning made it even better. Above all else though they kept this moving very quickly and didn't overstay the welcome as so many battle royals do. Crews isn't likely going to win the Six Pack Challenge but it's a nice win to get him noticed.

Crews says he won't celebrate until he wins the main event.

Shelton Benjamin is coming back.

Dolph Ziggler is ready to break through the glass ceiling. You can't be a multiple time World Champion and still complain about the glass ceiling.

Natalya vs. Becky Lynch

Battleground rematch because those are still a thing in the new era. Becky takes her to the mat for a bit but gets run over by a shoulder. Natalya flips to her feet and slams Becky off the top as we take an early break. Back with Becky jawbreaking her way out of a chinlock and getting two off a guillotine legdrop. The Disarm-Her is broken up and Nattie By Nature gets two. The slow motion Sharpshooter that is only designed to be countered is countered into the Disarm-Her to make Natalya tap at 10:21.

Rating: C-. I don't know any other way to put this but Natalya is really dull. She wrestles the exact same match as a heel that she wrestled as a face and there's really no motivation for her other than something that happened a few weeks ago and now she's a villain basically in name only. It doesn't help that these two don't have the best chemistry, especially when they're the best in the Smackdown division.

Post match Becky says you can call her Becky Balboa (No.) but is interrupted by Alexa Bliss who says this is what the new era looks like. This is followed by the returning Naomi, Carmella (almost no reaction) and Eva Marie, who comes out with a voiceover like a movie trailer, listing off every possible positive attribute about herself. It's really corny but I actually liked it, even though Eva didn't say anything.

Baron Corbin says he'll win.

It's time for MizTV with special guest....The Miz. He brags about how awesome he is (well duh) until Randy Orton interrupts. Orton thought Miz was talking about him with all those accolades and agrees that Miz is awesome. Miz brings up the upcoming Brock match and Orton is ready to take Lesnar to Suplex City because he'll be taking Brock to Viperville. Orton suggests a match against Miz tonight and he'll even make it non-title so Maryse accepts for her husband.

Randy Orton vs. The Miz

Non-title. They're quickly on the floor with Miz stomping Orton down, throwing him back inside, and then whipping him into the steps. Back in and the RKO knocks Miz silly for no cover. Instead Orton stares at the entrance and slowly gets up before slapping the ropes a bit. Miz has been down for about two minutes before getting up to take a second RKO for the

pin at 4:53.

Rating: F. Oh screw you WWE. Smackdown has almost nothing and you have Miz lose to one move with almost half the match spent on him standing up after the RKO. You know who would have been perfect for this spot? Kane. He's established, he's tough, he loses NOTHING by taking the loss and it makes Orton look like he can beat a monster. This was stupid and one of the things that ticks me off more than any other nonsense WWE pulls.

Video on American Alpha. They're here next week. Well I mean they were here earlier but we don't have time for the hottest tag team act in a long time. I mean, aside from New Day of course.

A jobber is in the ring for a match when Heath Slater comes in and knocks him out. Slater isn't happy that he wasn't drafted to either show and wants to be in the main event. He starts a SIGN HEATH SLATER chant and the fans actually go along with it. Cue Shane McMahon to say Slater needs to send in his resume. Slater says his resume would say he was the brains behind the Nexus, the Corre (there's a name I never thought I'd hear again) and the Social Outcasts. As Slater rants, Rhyno of all people sneaks up behind him for a Gore.

AJ thinks Smackdown is against him because he's too good. Why else wouldn't the Club have been drafted together and why else would he have to fight five guys at once?

Bray Wyatt says it all revolves around him and tonight he'll have the whole world in his hands.

John Cena vs. AJ Styles vs. Apollo Crews vs. Bray Wyatt vs. Baron Corbin vs. Dolph Ziggler

One fall to a finish, no tags and the winner gets a shot at Ambrose at Summerslam. We take an early break and come back with Bray and AJ double teaming Crews with the other three down on the floor. That lasts about as long as you would expect it to as Bray takes AJ's head off with a clothesline, only to be dropkicked down by Ziggler. AJ adds a springboard 450 with Cena diving back in for the save. Crews comes back in with rolling German suplexes on AJ, only to walk into an STO of all things

from Corbin. Baron throws on a chinlock, which really shouldn't be seen in a six way match.

We go to another break and come back with stereo Towers of Doom (because that's how wrestling works) and Corbin getting two off Deep Six to Crews. Apollo's toss powerbomb gets two with Bray pulling the referee out. The Zig Zag should finish Bray but there's no referee. Cena finally remembers he's in this match and AA's Ziggler and AJ with the latter getting two.

Crews and Wyatt take AA's as well but Corbin takes a bit more to get up and elbows his way out. And scratch that as the second attempt works, only to have AJ springboard in with the forearm. Styles turns right into a superkick though and Ziggler gets the very surprising pin at 16:12.

Rating: C+. ZIGGLER??? Of all the people you have here you pick ZIGGLER??? I mean I know this lets you have Styles vs. Cena and....well that's about it actually. Yeah Smackdown needs new stars but the best they can do is having Dolph Ziggler's main event push brought out of mothballs? I don't hate it but I'm going to need to see a lot more of this before I accept Ziggler as a top challenger.

Shane, Bryan and Ambrose come out and say nothing to fill in the last four minutes of the show.

Overall Rating: C. This show's main issue is it followed last night's great Raw. It's certainly not a bad show and they did some good things (Crews getting a push, setting up the title match, the women showing up) but on the other hand you have Orton's completely needless destruction of Miz, Heath Slater and Rhyno instead of American Alpha (which at least gives you something to look forward to next week so it's not all bad. This show set left a lot to be desired but it's certainly not terrible. The problem is Smackdown didn't look great in the first place and now those suspicions are even more confirmed.

Results

Apollo Crews won a battle royal last eliminating Kane

Becky Lynch b. Natalya – Disarm-Her

Randy Orton b. The Miz – RK0

Dolph Ziggler b. AJ Styles, Apollo Crews, John Cena, Bray Wyatt and Baron Corbin – Superkick to Styles

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Monday Night Raw – July 18, 2016: The Lame Duck Go Home Game Changing Show (Updated)

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 18, 2016

Location: Dunkin' Donuts Center, Providence, Rhode Island

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

This is a unique show as it's kind of a big night but also kind of a lame duck show while also being the go home show for a pay per view. The Draft is tomorrow night but there's also a World Title match as champion Dean Ambrose defends against Seth Rollins. The show is also going to open with the announcement of the new General Managers for both shows. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here are Shane and Stephanie to open things up. They have their standard bickering that makes award show presenters seem like Bogart and Bergman before arguing over testicles vs. lady balls. Stephanie's big announcement: there's going to be a new Cruiserweight division on Raw. Shane mentions his General Manager and the YES chants begin. That's cut off just as quickly though as Stephanie Raw's General Manager: Mick Foley. I wouldn't have bet on that one but I'd be shocked if he's still around by TLC.

After Stephanie awkwardly dances to his music. Foley compares the feeling here to the Attitude Era because IT'S THE GREATEST THING EVER and feels like the MONDAY NIGHT WARS ALL OVER AGAIN BABY! Stephanie calling him made the little embers turned into a fire. He's ready to bring Raw to new heights and all that jazz.

Shane brings out his own General Manager with the worst kept secret in wrestling this year: Daniel Bryan. Daniel won't shake Stephanie's hand before he talks about how much he missed the people. Naturally Stephanie cuts him off to suggest he pander to the fans. See she doesn't get it because they've never cheered for her. Stephanie: "They did once!"

Bryan talks about how he heard Shane's ideas for a show where wrestlers are put first and he wanted to come back. When he beat HHH at Wrestlemania XXX (Stephanie: "Technicality.") and won the WWE World Title, he and the fans did that together. Stephanie gets in her B+ jokes and Shane says Stephanie can only stay relevant by marrying a WWE superstar. One last YES chant takes us out.

Chris Jericho/Kevin Owens vs. Sami Zayn/Cesaro

Cesaro gutwrenches Jericho to start before it's off to Sami so things can speed up a bit. An Owens distraction lets Jericho get in a shot though and we take a break. Back with Jericho still in control over Sami and sending him out to the floor. Sami gets in a few shots of his own though and the hot tag brings in Cesaro.

That means it's time for the uppercut train and the springboard spinning

uppercut for two on Jericho. Owens and Sami come in off the double tags but Jericho breaks up the Helluva Kick. Cesaro's high cross body gets two on Chris and the Swing makes it even worse. Everything breaks down and Sami tornado DDTs Owens before small packaging Jericho for the pin at 12:02.

Rating: C. In case you didn't get enough of these guys during the Money in the Bank build. I love Sami getting a pin here though it should be interesting to see what happens with all four of these guys tomorrow night. Jericho and Cesaro not having matches on Sunday doesn't say much for either of them but that's their norm all around.

Golden Truth, Titus O'Neil and Jack Swagger try to get on Daniel Bryan's good side until Stephanie interrupts. They insult each other (with jabs about Daniel and Brie planting peaches) for a bit until Daniel says she ruined Raw.

Alberto Del Rio vs. Darren Young

Miz is on commentary. Del Rio sends him into the corner to start and works on the arm as Miz gets in his second plug for Bob Backlund's book. Young comes back with a backdrop and atomic drop as we flash back to the 70s. A Miz distraction earns himself a forearm to the face, allowing Darren to roll up Del Rio (with a Backlund style bridge) for the pin at 2:33.

It's time for a twelve man tag but Cena comes out first and says it's an interesting time in WWE with Battleground being the icing on the cake. The Club is going to try to beat up Cena on Sunday but he has the Certified G's. Enzo says the term "don't take this the wrong way" has a 0% success rate so don't take this the wrong way but the Club is like a bunch of herbs.

Without ugliness in the world there can be no beauty so thanks for your sacrifice Gallows. AJ has a haircut like a soccer mom and Anderson is as generic as Times New Roman. Cena thinks Enzo is just a catchphrase machine but Cass says that's what he does. That's what makes them the best trio in the world like Nirvana, Destiny's Child or the Wu Tang Clan.

Enzo: "How you doin?" Cena: "I don't know how I'm doing!" He thinks they need to get serious but the Club cuts off the S-A-W-F-T line. AJ accuses them of meeting a few weeks ago over a bowl of candy at catering and thinks they can beat up everyone on the team tonight. Cue New Day to talk about going to the Wyatts' compound but AJ makes fun of Woods for being scared.

That goes nowhere so New Day explains How You Doin to Cena. Naturally this turns into a Pokemon Go reference with Woods listing off the ones he's captured but Cena cuts him off, only to be cut off with a NEW DAY ROCKS chant. This brings out the Wyatts as it turns out we actually have a match to get to.

John Cena/Enzo Amore/Big Cass/New Day vs. The Club/Wyatt Family

This is joined in progress after a break with Gallows coming in to shoulder Cena down. That brings in Big E. for a power showdown, only to have a little gyrating first. Now we get Strowman coming in to run Big E. over but Enzo tags himself in. Woods plays some trombone and Enzo bounces off Strowman so it's time for Cass to try his luck. A shove to Cena triggers a huge brawl until it's back to Strowman and Cass with the big boot staggering Braun. Kofi tries to dive in but gets slammed down by Braun as we take a break.

While we're on commercial, it deserves to be pointed out how good of a job they've done with Cass. Him staring down Strowman felt more like a big deal than anytime Lesnar did it and I actually bought Cass as a threat to hurt him. That's very impressive and a great sign for him to come.

Back with Bray charging into Kofi's pendulum kick and a diving tag to bring in Cena. The finishing sequence is initiated but Bray brings the spider walk out of mothballs to shut him down. Rowan grabs a chinlock and the heels start taking turns on Cena. Gallows misses a splash and we take another break.

We come back again with Bray missing his backsplash to Cena, allowing the hot tag to Cass. Everything breaks down again and New Day cleans house on the Wyatts. Woods hits a big flip dive to take them all out but Gallows

breaks up Bada Book Shakalacka. New Day and the Wyatts fight up the ramp, leaving Enzo to clothesline Cena by mistake. The Styles Clash ends Amore at 18:58.

Rating: B+. This is even more impressive when you consider how many people had to be incorporated here. The ending really pushes the idea that Cena/Enzo/Cass don't know each other well enough to fight off a well oiled machine like the Club which is a really logical point to make. New Day vs. Wyatts could be a lot of fun and this was a nice preview. Really good stuff here with the pre-match promo being just as great.

Earlier today, Seth Rollins was in the empty arena (well save for the cameramen) to talk about how they came through so many stands to fight. He was the brilliant mind and kept Ambrose around to take the beatings and Reigns around to dish them out. After Sunday, Reigns will never be the same again. Ambrose on the other hand is a coward who is running out of places to hide. This Sunday, Rollins will prove he was always the man.

We recap the opening segment.

Shane comes up to Foley in the back and suggests that Stephanie just hired him because he'll connect with the fans while being manipulated. Foley appreciates the caring but thinks Stephanie has fire and drive. This would be another beloved face trying to put Stephanie over.

Baron Corbin vs. Sin Cara

This is Cara's first match after the Lucha Dragons officially split. Corbin sends him into the corner to start but gets kicked away. A springboard elbow to the jaw staggers him but End of Days gives Baron the pin at 1:15.

Kalisto comes out for the post match save but gets beaten down as well.

Charlotte/Dana Brooke vs. Becky Lynch/Sasha Banks

Dana gets taken into the corner to start and it's time for Becky's early armbar. The spinning legdrop gets two on Dana but here's Natalya to attack Lynch for the DQ at 2:22.

Sasha gets beaten down post match.

Rusev/Sheamus vs. Dolph Ziggler/Zack Ryder

Sheamus headlocks Ryder down to start and cuts off his comeback by hitting him in the face a few times. Rusev sends him into the barricade and it's back to Sheamus for the slow beating. Sheamus won't tag for some reason though and we hit the chinlock. Ryder dropkicks him down and makes the hot tag off to Ziggler as everything breaks down. Rusev kicks Ziggler in the back and it's the Accolade for the submission at 3:45.

Rating: D+. Just a quick way to show off the idea that Rusev is awesome because we didn't know that yet. Ryder needed a win here after that mess last week against Sheamus. Ryder is going to get destroyed on Sunday and I'm not sure where things go after that. Sheamus on the other hand continues to float, just like Ziggler. And no WWE, that's not a hint about a bonus match for Sunday.

Video on Randy Orton.

Video on Cena hosting the ESPYs.

Daniel suggests a peace treaty with Mick Foley because they're so much alike. Foley has no issue with Bryan but the battle is on.

Raw World Title: Dean Ambrose vs. Seth Rollins

Rollins is challenging and all the bosses are at ringside. Dean headlocks him to start and Seth bails out to the floor. The champ sends him into the barricade and we take a break. Back with Seth in control and putting on a chinlock. A hard right hand gives Seth some near falls before both try cross bodies at the same time. Dean fights up first and hammers on Seth a bit, including a forearm to put him on the floor.

There's a big suicide dive but Rollins powerbombs him into the barricade. Back in and a frog splash gets two as we take another break. Back with Seth still in control and hitting his springboard knee to the head. Another frog splash misses though and Dean has an opening. It sounds like the fans are cheering for Rollins here.

Dirty Deeds gets two with Rollins putting his foot on the ropes. Seth rolls outside but comes right back in and counters the top rope clothesline into the Pedigree for two. With nothing else working, Seth loads up a superplex but Dean ties up the legs and it's a double pin at 24:18.

Rating: B+. More really good stuff from these two but the ending comes off as a cheap way to have Sunday's title match be for the vacant title. You knew they weren't sticking with Ambrose on top for long because he's not the "star" kind of guy and that's the excuse they're sticking with. I mean, Rollins may be a ratings disaster but he's a STAR ratings disaster. Really good match here though and a big feeling title match.

Stephanie (of course) declares Rollins the new champion and Shane doesn't say anything to close the show. You know you'll see more of this on Sunday.

Overall Rating: A-. Like I said at the beginning, this was a very odd show without anything actually mattering until the ending but even that was odd. I'm sure there's going to be an update tomorrow night but this comes off as a way to either set up a new World Title or to just give the belt back to Reigns like nothing ever happened. There are two great wrestling matches on here though and they were more than enough to make this show awesome, questionable ending aside.

So apparently after the show went off the air, a bonus clip aired on the Network where Ambrose was declared champion because it was a screwy finish. You know, because THREE HOURS AND EIGHT MINUTES isn't enough content.

Results

Sami Zayn/Cesaro b. Kevin Owens/Chris Jericho – Small package to Jericho

Darren Young b. Alberto Del Rio – Rollup

Wyatt Family/The Club b. Enzo Amore/Big Cass/John Cena/New Day – Styles Clash to Amore

Baron Corbin b. Sin Cara – End of Days

Sasha Banks/Becky Lynch b. Charlotte/Dana Brooke via DQ when Natalya interfered

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Smackdown – July 7, 2016: Pre-Draft Momentum

Smackdown

Date: July 7, 2016

Location: Huntington Center, Toledo, Ohio

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton

This is a fresh start for a change as Monday was a completely worthless show thanks to the Fourth of July. We're getting closer to Battleground but more importantly we're less than two weeks away from the Draft which resets everything anyway. In other words there's no way of knowing how good this will be so let's get to it.

The Club is conferencing.

Chris Jericho is trying to find his blue scarf.

Sami Zayn is ready to beat Jericho tonight and make him second best.

Seth Rollins arrives and runs into Jey Uso. Some Samoan family insults are made and a match gets the same treatment. I could go for these quick vignettes becoming a regular thing. It worked for Saturday Night's Main Event and it works here too.

Opening sequence.

Here's Dean Ambrose to say he wants to try his hand as a ring announcer because he could be a taller Howard Finkel.

Jey Uso vs. Seth Rollins

Seth is apparently from a place where he didn't get enough hugs as a child. That's sad. Jey takes over with an early armbar as the fans (or at least the canned versions) are behind the Samoan. Seth gets two off a backbreaker as Dean plugs his new t-shirt and the Seth Rollins ice cream bars but apparently they don't taste very good. A high crossbody gets two on Rollins and there's a suicide dive to take Rollins out again. Dean says that's five minutes (not quite) and asks Seth if it's time to go to a commercial.

Back with Seth hitting his running knee off the apron and throwing on a chinlock. Seth goes to the middle rope but Dean makes an announcement that a 1997 Ford is about to be towed for being in the fire lane. This one doesn't work as well as Seth scores with an enziguri, only to run into a Samoan Drop. The Superfly Splash hits knees though and the Pedigree puts Jey away at 10:25.

Rating: C. Dean was amusing enough here and it's better than just having him do guest commentary for the tenth time Rollins has a match. It's also a good sign that the Usos can work as singles wrestlers and do well enough as so many teams can't do anything without their partner around.

Dean: "The winner of the match, the human equivalent of a root canal."
Seth bails at the threat of a fight so Ambrose can't raise his hand.
Dean: "I'll just raise this instead." And he holds up the title.

We look back at Sami and Kevin Owens beating Jericho up two weeks ago.

Zack Ryder vs. Sheamus

Ryder has a new rock version of his music and it's actually working for me. Sheamus pounds him down with forearms and clotheslines to start, followed by the forearms to the chest. A slam onto the apron makes things even worse but Ryder kicks him in the face and comes back with more forearms. That just earns him an Irish Curse before Sheamus loads up a superplex. Ryder knocks him off and drops the Elbro for the completely clean pin at 2:43. I know Sheamus isn't what he used to be but this is a big drop off. At least Ryder is getting a push though and that's a good thing.

Ryder wants to get his US Title back and issues the challenge to Rusev.

Baron Corbin video.

Rusev accepts the challenge.

Becky Lynch vs. Natalya

No match as Natalya jumps Becky from behind and puts her in the Sharpshooter. Naturally she tells Becky to tap, which always makes me chuckle.

We recap the Wyatt Family and New Day from Monday.

Xavier Woods is worried about going to the Wyatt Compound because they have no idea what's going to happen there. Woods isn't happy with what his brothers have decided but he'll stand by them. Did the Wyatts send them directions to get there? Otherwise we could be in for a long scavenger hunt.

Here are Enzo and Big Cass to talk about deciding to help John Cena on Raw. That wasn't about them saving Cena or any personal issue with the Club. Monday was about sending a message to the Club to tell them that they can't beat down anyone they want. This brings out the Club with AJ saying they owe the Club an apology for interrupting them as they beat up John Cena.

Anderson thinks they should beat up Enzo and Cass, then hit some golf balls, have some strawberry shortcake and then BEAT UP JOHN CENA. AJ wants to fight Enzo, who says they're not a good original or a good

remix. After one round with Sugar Ray Amore, they'll walk out a diabetic.

AJ Styles vs. Enzo Amore

AJ wrestles him down and smirks a lot, only to have Enzo do the same right back. Enzo sends him outside for a big dive but trips on the top for a big crash onto the floor. Thankfully he gets up and is fine this time with AJ hammering away in the corner. Enzo gets in a dropkick but AJ easily takes him down for a chinlock. Back up and the tornado DDT is countered into a suplex to send Amore crashing into the corner. The big guys get in a fight on the floor as AJ crotches Enzo, setting up the Styles Clash for the pin at 5:37.

Rating: C-. This was fine despite the ending not being the biggest surprise in the world. Enzo is fine for a spot like this as he isn't expected to beat almost anyone on his own but he can do such an effective job of talking that he can get back whatever he lost in all of ten seconds. The six man could be a lot of fun.

Apparently Owens stole Jericho's scarf because he wanted to see if he could get one for his wife. Owens had some popcorn earlier and got the thing all greasy so Jericho demands money to have it cleaned. Kevin drops some change into Jericho's hand but Owens makes sure to get the button back. Jericho wants one more quarter but Owens gives him a Jolly Rancher. Oh and he'll be ringside for Jericho vs. Sami later. Jericho thinks it smells like soup. This was a completely face promo from Owens and he was just as good as always.

The Miz vs. Kalisto

Non-title. This is the result of Kalisto being the one to throw potato salad at Maryse on Monday. Apparently she's allergic so this could have been an international incident. Kalisto starts fast with a top rope corkscrew armdrag to send Miz outside where Maryse prevents a dive. Miz sends him into the steps and we take an early break. Back with Miz working on the back with some forearms before he charges into Kalisto's raised boots. Miz comes right back with a slingshot powerbomb for two before sidestepping the corkscrew forearm. The Skull Crushing Finale puts Kalisto away at 7:54.

Rating: D+. So much for the Kalisto experiment as he's gone from defending the US Title at Wrestlemania to losing a match started over potato salad. He's just the latest victim of the writers throwing a toy out of the crib and it's still pretty sad to see. They had something there but so much for that because it's time to go with....well nothing actually.

Sasha Banks talks about how awesome she is when Charlotte comes in dressed as Banks. Insults are exchanged and Sasha vs. Dana is set for Monday. Charlotte throws down her Sasha gear because it's not her look.

We get Monday's Darren Young/Bob Backlund segment. This has to be close to the last one.

Brock Lesnar's official opponent for Summerslam is.....Randy Orton. Scott Stanford, Booker T., and Corey Graves preview the match a bit from WWE world headquarters.

Golden Truth plugs Sonic with Truth putting the food on top of a ladder to get ready for Money in the Bank. This was no "we got a couple of taters" from Monday.

Sami Zayn vs. Chris Jericho

Kevin Owens is at ringside and starts ripping on Byron before his music even ends. Owens: "Hi Sami! Hope you have a good match! I hope you break your ankle." Jericho wristlocks him down for a bit until Sami scores with three straight armdrags. They head outside with Sami hitting his barricade moonsault but Jericho punches him in the face and mocks the OLE chants as we take a break.

Back with the Lionsault (Owens: "I taught him how to do that.") connecting for two before we hit the chinlock. Jericho: "WHERE'S THE OLE??" Sami comes back but Jericho bails to the floor, only to take one of those running clotheslines. Back in and Owens talks about wanting to see Jericho kick Sami in the face, which is exactly what Chris does a second later.

Sami tornado DDTs Jericho to the floor for the big flip dive but Sami

goes to take out Owens so Jericho can take over again. The exploder suplex sends Jericho into the corner but the Helluva Kick has to take Owens down. Jericho's Walls attempt is countered into a quick rollup to give Sami the upset pin at 12:12.

Rating: B-. This is exactly the kind of match you have Jericho around for. He's been built up for the last few months and now you have a young guy like Sami get a big win that makes him seem important. Owens interfering was a nice touch but the key here was Sami having Jericho beat with the Helluva Kick before having to recover and then win with the rollup. In other words, Sami was the better man and didn't just win off a fluke.

Jericho lays Sami out and Owens comes in for a Pop Up Powerbomb to leave Sami laying as the show ends.

Overall Rating: C. There was an energy to this show that has been missing in the last few weeks and that's a good sign going into the Draft. Above all else though they actually had some stuff happen here with the Lesnar announcement and Ryder challenging Rusev for the title. It's the start of making people feel like they need to see Smackdown instead of it just being a show that they'll stop on if they flip over to USA by mistake. There's a long way to go but hopefully this was a first step.

Results

Seth Rollins b. Jey Uso – Pedigree

Zack Ryder b. Sheamus – Elbro

AJ Styles b. Enzo Amore – Styles Clash

Miz b. Kalisto – Skull Crushing Finale

Sami Zayn b. Chris Jericho – Rollup

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Smackdown – June 23, 2016: The Smackdown Gravestone

Smackdown

Date: June 23, 2016

Location: Tucson Arena, Tucson, Arizona

Commentators: Byron Saxton, Mauro Ranallo, David Otunga

It's an interesting time in WWE as we're less than a month away from the new era really taking hold as the Draft takes place and separates the two shows into different entities. On top of that though, Roman Reigns has been suspended for thirty days, meaning the build towards the triple threat match at Battleground could be interesting. Let's get to it.

The opening video focuses on the recent issues with the World Title.

Opening sequence.

Here's Seth Rollins to get things going. He talks about how when he was a kid, his parents would tell him that he could do anything if he worked hard enough. Well obviously that was a lie because no one works harder than he does but Dean Ambrose is the WWE World Champion. Ambrose should have given him his rematch one on one but instead we're coming up on this triple threat at Battleground to make it as hard on him as possible. As for tonight though, Seth is going to prove that he's more man than

Ambrose ever could be by issuing an opening challenge.

This brings out Sami Zayn and the fans seem interested. Rollins: "Did your master Kevin Owens let you off your leash for a couple of hours?" Cue Dean Ambrose, who has his guys turn this into an impromptu Ambrose Asylum. Actually wait because Dean needs to draw a title on the sign because this is now the championship edition. Sami is thrilled to be on the show but Rollins freaks out because he hates this show. Dean says Rollins has always has a poor attitude as Seth storms out to get ready. This was a pretty long way around to set up Sami vs. Rollins.

Cesaro vs. Alberto Del Rio

OH COME ON. Money in the Bank is over! I shouldn't have to deal with these pairings anymore. They get some inset promos with Del Rio claiming Cesaro cost him the briefcase and Cesaro telling him to do something about it. Del Rio grabs a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker to start so Cesaro hits one of his own.

The uppercut train sends Del Rio outside for the flip dive off the apron, only to have Alberto go after the apron as we take a break. Back with Del Rio slapping on an armbar and taking the arm out to block another uppercut. Alberto goes up but dives into an uppercut from the good arm. The corkscrew uppercut gets two (ok do something else) followed by a double stomp for the same on Alberto.

Del Rio comes back with a Backstabber for two of his own but Cesaro comes back with yet another uppercut. Cesaro gets crotchted while trying a superplex but is still able to lift himself up and armdrag Del Rio down. A quick cross armbreaker attempt is countered into the Neutralizer for the pin on Alberto at 10:26.

Rating: B-. This was better than most of the Money in the Bank pairings but there's almost no reason to care about any of them anymore. We've seen this so many times now and without a reason to fight, these matches are even less interesting than they were in the first place. At least the match was better this time around.

Apollo Crews vs. Sheamus

Sheamus hammers away and tells Apollo to smile now, only to have Crews cross body both of them over the top to the floor. Crews sends him into the steps before having to fight out of the Irish Curse back inside. An enziguri sets up the standing moonsault for two on Sheamus but he comes back with the ten forearms to the chest. The Regal Roll on the floor has Crews in trouble and Sheamus makes it worse by loading up the steps. Crews dropkicks him into the barricade, only to have Sheamus kick him off the apron. A whip into the steps is enough to get Crews counted out at 3:55.

Rating: D+. Well that means it's time for a rubber match because the fans are dying to see a rematch from a sub-four minute TV match on a show not many people watch that ends in a countout. The idea of Crews beating Sheamus is fine but there really wasn't much of a reason for a rematch, save for maybe Sheamus getting pinned again. I really hope we get somewhere new with the Brand Split because this stuff is getting old.

Recap of AJ Styles vs. John Cena on Sunday as well as Monday's fallout.

The Club is happy with what happened on Monday but the Usos return. PLEASE not this match again. Jey calls the bald guys head and shoulders in an unfunny line and we're getting Jimmy vs. AJ for later.

Jimmy Uso vs. AJ Styles

Mauro bills this as a Smackdown first. This is joined in progress after a break with Jimmy running Styles over and dancing a bit. That's fine with AJ who takes him down into a headlock but Jimmy reverses into one of his own. Jimmy sends him outside but the baseball slide is countered as AJ grabs the feet and sends him head first into the steps.

Back in and AJ catapults him throat first into the bottom rope. Jimmy comes back with an enziguri so Styles Peles him right back. The Phenomenal Forearm is broken up with a superkick but the running Umaga attack hits buckles. Cue the Club to go after Jey, causing Jimmy to dive over the top and take them out. AJ hits a slingshot forearm to the back of Jimmy's head and the Phenomenal Forearm puts Jimmy away at 6:02 shown.

Rating: C. For reasons that I'll never understand, this means more Usos

vs. the Club. I'm a big Usos fan but there's little interest for them as singles wrestlers and they've done everything there is for them as a tag team, especially fighting the Club for probably the tenth time in a few months. AJ looked good but this was just a step above a squash for him.

New Day vs. Vaudevillains

Non-title. Kofi and Gotch start things off but it's off to English inside of twenty seconds to start in on Kofi's arm. Aiden's running spin kick in the corner staggers Kofi but he runs English over with a clothesline. The hot tag brings in Big E. to clean house with a string of suplexes. Kofi takes out English and a quick tag sets up the Midnight Hour to pin Gotch at 2:28.

Post match the Wyatts pop up on screen to say everyone fears them and that New Day will fall.

Bob Backlund wants to review Darren Young's goals. Darren wants to be a singles champion and then main event Wrestlemania. Backlund has wrestled at Wrestlemania and won singles titles but he's already had his era. Now it's time to start the Darren Young Era.

Sami wants to win so he can make a statement. He isn't worried about Kevin Owens.

Charlotte and Dana Brooke are ready to take out Becky Lynch before showing Sasha that Charlotte is the queen because playtime is over.

Dana Brooke vs. Becky Lynch

Dana starts fast with some knees and shoulders to the ribs before avoiding Becky's charge. Charlotte eats a forearm though, allowing Brooke to roll Becky up for the pin at 1:21.

Post match Becky gets beaten down until Sasha Banks makes the save.

Dean follows Seth to the ring to get on his nerves.

Seth Rollins vs. Sami Zayn

Dean is on commentary. Rollins scores with a shoulder to start and they

pause early on. Some armdrags put Seth down and Sami gets in a nice headscissors. A good right hand puts Sami outside before a clothesline takes us to a break. Back with a fight over a suplex until Rollins gets two off a Falcon's Arrow. Seth slowly stomps away as Dean talks about not sleeping for six or seven days.

A big clothesline drops Rollins and it's time to pound some right hands in the corner. Sami gets two off a high cross body and Seth loses an elbow pad. That's not exactly interesting stuff so Sami gets in the Blue Thunder Bomb for two. The Helluva Kick is blocked so Seth scores with the buckle bomb. Sami counters the Pedigree and scores with the tornado DDT. Rollins bails so Sami hits the big flip dive. Not that it matters as Seth grabs the Pedigree as soon as they get back in for the pin at 8:42.

Rating: B-. The ending was really odd as Sami hit two big moves in a row before Seth just hit the Pedigree with nothing in between. It was like they had to go home really fast and had to cut out a few minutes in the middle. The match was what you would expect from these two, albeit a few steps slower than I thought it would have been.

Seth and Dean brawl post match with Rollins running from the threat of Dirty Deeds.

Overall Rating: C+. Another acceptable but totally forgettable show. When they're boasting an AJ Styles vs. Jimmy Uso match, you know your show is in trouble. Again though it's not like any of this matters when you consider everything resets three more shows. At least it's not bad and we got some decent wrestling here though. That's about all there is to say, which is going to be the legacy of this era of Smackdown: it wasn't bad, but I can't remember much about it.

Results

Cesaro b. Alberto Del Rio – Neutralizer

Sheamus b. Apollo Crews via countout

AJ Styles b. Jimmy Uso – Phenomenal Forearm

New Day b. Vaudevillains – Midnight Hour to Gotch

Dana Brooke b. Becky Lynch – Rollup

Seth Rollins b. Sami Zayn – Pedigree

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Smackdown – June 9, 2016: Keeping The Standard

Smackdown

Date: June 9, 2016

Location: Intrust Bank Arena, Wichita, Kansas

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Mauro Ranallo, Byron Saxton

We're pretty much at business as usual here as Money in the Bank is a week from Sunday and most of the big stories are starting to round into form. AJ Styles is going after John Cena, the Tag Team Titles are in a big mess of a match and we'll see yet another combination of the six Money in the Bank participants tonight because just having them be announced over time isn't an option for whatever reason. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's the Club to get things going. AJ talks about how this Money in the

Bank may be the best ever with the Club winning the Tag Team Titles and AJ himself taking care of John Cena. For ten years it's been the John Cena Era and the New Era can't really get started until he takes Cena out. When he came to WWE in the first place, he made it clear that the Club was a package deal. The Club has transcended countries, continents and companies. As for Cena, you can't beat him.

Cue Enzo and Big Cass with the latter reminding AJ that there are two other teams going after the Tag Team Titles. The Mr. Clean Dream Team isn't taking those belts but Karl says they've been traveling the world for ten years while Enzo was managing a Hooters. Enzo basically says "Well yeah. What's wrong with that?" before saying the Club has wrestled everywhere but Antarctica.

Enzo would love to walk a mile in Karl's shoes because then he'd be a mile away from him. The last time Enzo and Cass had a big match, Enzo fell asleep on the job. Enzo thinks that makes them a couple of haters so in Vegas, money will talk and money will walk. That makes Anderson and Gallows S-A-W-F-T.

Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Karl Anderson/Luke Gallows

New Day is on commentary with Woods eating Booty0's and Big E. holding a broom. Anderson runs Cass over a few times to start before it's off to Gallows for a big boot. For some reason this makes New Day talk about pasta. The Enzo beating continues as Kofi puts Byron on grape duty, meaning he has to feed Kofi grapes on demand. Anderson throws him down to stop a tag attempt, making Kofi think Enzo should switch to Alfredo instead of the marinara.

Big E. does his nerdy commentator voice as Enzo Stuns Anderson over the top rope. A diving tag attempt is stopped by a running boot to the head as the Vaudevillains come out to watch. Back from a break with Gallows suplexing Enzo for two as the fans chant for Cass. Amore punches away but is shoved away, only to get caught by the jumping DDT. Now it's the hot tag to Cass as house is quickly cleaned. A very big boot puts Gallows on the floor as New Day gets up to cut off the Vaudevillains. They all get in the ring and that's a no contest at 10:54.

Rating: C. Cass continues to look like the biggest star out of all these guys and that big boot was awesome. I really can't imagine the New Day keeps the titles after Money in the Bank and the Club would be the logical way to go with the belts. Enzo and Cass are hot right now though and you would have to expect Cass to get a big singles push soon.

Enzo and Cass clear the ring post match.

We recap Dean Ambrose vs. Chris Jericho, who will be facing each other tonight, focusing on the battle over the talk shows.

Muhammad Ali tribute.

The announcers talk about the Money in the Bank card.

Lana and Rusev aren't worried about Titus O'Neil because Rusev is the real greatest of all time instead of Muhammad Ali. Titus comes in and says he'll take the title at Money in the Bank by floating like a butterfly and stinging like a bee.

Cesaro/Sami Zayn vs. Alberto Del Rio/Kevin Owens

Sami and Owens start things off with Zayn spinning him around and sending him into the corner for a tag off to Del Rio. That's fine with Alberto who kicks Sami's leg out but lets the tag bring in Cesaro. Alberto takes over and asks Owens for a tag but Kevin says Del Rio is doing fine by himself and walks out. Sami chases him up the ramp so we're down to a singles match.

A shot to the back puts Del Rio on the floor and it's time for a break. Back with Del Rio getting two off a Backstabber. We hit the chinlock but Cesaro is up in less than five seconds. Well he's certainly not lazy at least. Cesaro muscles him up into a suplex as Sami and Kevin fight back down the aisle. Del Rio isn't cool with Owens walking out on him and now it's Alberto walking out. Owens won't let that happen so Sami dives over the top to take him out, leaving Cesaro to suplex Del Rio on the floor.

Back in and Del Rio starts in on the arm but can't get the armbreaker. Everything breaks down and Swiss Death drops Del Rio again. Owens and Zayn are sent outside again, leaving Del Rio to take the Swing. Owens

breaks up the Sharpshooter and crotches Cesaro on top, setting up the top rope double stomp from Del Rio, only to have Owens throw his partner out and steal the pin at 13:29.

Rating: C+. I'm normally not a fan of the way the build towards Money in the Bank goes but this was kind of a creative way to do more than just another tag match. I'm sure we'll see something else like that next week because there's almost no way around seeing those matches over and over but at least this was something fresher. The wrestling is all fine and having only six people keeps the match from being such a mess but a change to the build could be an improvement.

We look at Jericho destroying Mitch.

Dana Brooke vs. Becky Lynch

Natalya and Charlotte are at ringside. Dana immediately bails to the ropes but Becky snaps off some armdrags to send her outside. Back in and Lynch misses a charge, allowing Charlotte to get in a forearm like a good heel should. Becky comes back with a kick to the ribs but she has to go after Charlotte, triggering a brawl between Charlotte and Natalya on the floor. That earns them both an ejection, leaving Becky to make Dana tap with the Disarm-Her at 3:04.

Rating: C-. You know, I wouldn't be opposed to them actually announcing the women's match for the pay per view. I'm assuming it's going to be a fatal fourway or a non-title tag match (which actually fits for a change) but anything is better than another Natalya title shot. Whatever gets us past this and on to Sasha FINALLY getting her title shot would be a good idea though.

Bob Backlund asks to see Darren Young's victory celebration. Young starts doing the Millions of Dollars dance but Bob tells him to bring it back down to earth. Backlund tells him to save money, which Darren interprets as not going to the movies and no popcorn. Darren asks how Bob saves so much money, which apparently is all about wearing only one set of clothes. Young agrees to cut down on the shopping. Backlund: "How do you feel about a bow tie?"

Baron Corbin vs. Kalisto

Dolph Ziggler is on commentary because this thing just won't die. Kalisto is still listed as one half of the Lucha Dragons despite them almost never teaming together anymore. Some quick kicks put Corbin on the floor to start but he shrugs off even more kicks and tosses Kalisto onto the barricade to take over.

We get the staredown with Ziggler, who says he'd love to take off his jeggings and get right in there. Back in and we hit the chinlock on Kalisto for a bit before he comes back with the corkscrew cross body. The headscissors driver gets two but Corbin just blasts him in the back of the head. End of Days puts Kalisto away at 3:45.

Rating: C. You can definitely add Kalisto to the long list of people who started fast until the company got bored with him and threw him to the side for their new favorite toy. The match was your normal boring stuff as Ziggler vs. Corbin is a feud that needed to wrap up two months ago but for some reason the thing just keeps going.

We look at Ambrose ripping up Jericho's jacket. This feud really isn't big enough to warrant this kind of attention.

Another chat about AJ Styles vs. John Cena with Lawler telling a story about having to face the top ten contenders in order to get a shot at NWA World Champion Jack Brisco. Why can't we hear those stories more often?

Sheamus brags about the success of Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and Zack Ryder/Golden Truth aren't all that impressed. Apollo Crews (Remember him?) comes in and Sheamus suggests that Crews get him a latte. Sheamus gets knocked through some well placed boxes.

Chris Jericho vs. Dean Ambrose

Ranallo says this is the first time these two have ever fought on Smackdown. Why is that supposed to be something interesting or appealing? I've never gotten that concept. Jericho shouts about the thumb tacks Dean put into his back and the chase is on outside. Back in and Dean strikes away, only to get clotheslined down. That means it's time to yell about

the tacks even more but a clothesline puts Jericho outside for the suicide shove.

Dean loads up the announcers' table for Dirty Deeds but gets catapulted onto the floor for a big crash as we take a break. Back with Jericho suplexing him for an arrogant two, followed by the chinlock. Dean's comeback is stopped with a clothesline and it's time to choke on the ropes. Another comeback attempt works a bit better as Dean scores with a clothesline and elbows but Dirty Deeds is countered into a failed Walls attempt.

Jericho dives into a forearm to the jaw for two but comes back with a middle rope enziguri (looked like a missed dropkick) for two of his own. Dean breaks up a superplex attempt and grabs la majistral for two more before both guys collide to put them down. The Codebreaker and Dirty Deeds are broken up but Dean has to stop himself from running into the referee, allowing Jericho to grab a one legged Codebreaker for the pin at 13:46.

Rating: B-. Well so much for Dean's hot streak. The match was fine but that cage match destroyed a lot of my interest in this feud. Jericho only has so much interest these days and it makes sense to have him win a match here or there since he has almost no chance of winning the ladder match. Then again that's what people were saying before he fought AJ at Wrestlemania.

Post match Jericho grabs a ladder but gets sent face first into it for his efforts. The standing elbow drop from the ladder crushes Jericho to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. Totally run of the mill Smackdown here as it was missing most of what I liked about the show last week. Most of the Money in the Bank card (which is looking stacked) is set so this was a bunch of supplemental material. To be fair though, we're five weeks away from the end of Smackdown before it gets turned into something new, which hopefully turns the thing around for a change.

Results

Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Luke Gallows/Karl Anderson went to a no contest when New Day and the Vaudevillains interfered

Kevin Owens/Alberto Del Rio b. Sami Zayn/Cesaro – Top rope double stomp to Cesaro

Becky Lynch b. Dana Brooke – Disarm-Her

Baron Corbin b. Kalisto – End of Days

Chris Jericho b. Dean Ambrose – Codebreaker

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Smackdown – June 2, 2016: Hope For The Future

Smackdown

Date: June 2, 2016

Location: BMO Harris Bank Center, Rockford, Illinois

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Mauro Ranallo, Byron Saxton

Things are rapidly changing around here as we have the new Brand Split in less than two months. More importantly for now however is the freshly

heel AJ Styles who has set his sights on the returning John Cena, likely setting up a huge showdown at Money in the Bank. This show will likely focus on the build towards the ladder match so let's get to it.

The opening recap focuses on AJ Styles and the Band reuniting on Monday and Styles turning full heel.

Opening sequence.

Here's the New Day to open the show. Woods mentions Smackdown going live on July 19 and then it's time to talk about the Club. Yeah they're big and tough but they'll never be your WWE World Tag Team Champions. This brings out Gallows and Anderson with New Day asking what kind of club they are exactly. Do they meet in a tree house? Do you have to pay dues?

New Day wants a fight but the Club says no. Woods: "They don't want none." Cue AJ to say the WWE belongs to the Club but Kofi doesn't seem to get that. Kofi lists off all their accomplishments and laughs that AJ took ten years to get here. AJ talks about what he did to Cena but gets a NEW DAY ROCKS chant.

Becky Lynch vs. Charlotte

Non-title. Becky sends her into the ropes to start before Charlotte reverses in the corner and grabs a neckbreaker. Dana offers a distraction and Charlotte kicks Becky in the face to put her on the floor as we take an early break. Back with Becky hitting a running forearm in the corner and getting two off the exploder suplex.

Becky misses a knee though and hurts her leg (Did the Flair family find a lucky charm a long time ago or something? It's uncanny how many in match knee injuries their opponents have.) but it doesn't seem to bother her that much. Instead Becky grabs a triangle choke but gets lifted into a Batista Bomb for two. Charlotte misses the moonsault but lands on her feet anyway, only to have the Figure Eight countered into the Disarm-Her, drawing in Dana for the DQ at 8:45.

Rating: C+. It's nice to have Becky not lose a match for a change though at some point she needs to actually win something of note. I'm assuming

they're gearing up for a four way or something like it at Money in the Bank though I can't imagine they'll take the title off Charlotte this soon. Good match here though.

Post match Natalya comes out but Charlotte and Dana get away before they can be put in submissions.

Dean Ambrose and Sami Zayn are having a friendly argument in the back when Kevin Owens and Alberto Del Rio come up with Owens saying Sami is trying to manipulate Ambrose. Owens: "He's Canadian remember? You can't trust him." More trash is talked and Dean wants to fight now instead of waiting for their scheduled tag match later.

Golden Truth vs. Dudley Boyz

Breezango is in the VIP area. The Goldust music hits and the Golden Truth graphics come on but the Dudley Boyz video is still playing. Truth's remix now has the lyrics on screen with a bouncing Goldust head telling you what to say. Also it's apparently "Goldentruth".

Truth drives Bubba into the corner to start and a double suplex puts the big man down. The Dudleyz take over and D-Von's spinning elbow to the jaw gets two. Everything breaks down and Goldust catches D-Von with a spinebuster, only to have Tyler get on the apron for a distraction. Goldust goes to deal with him but gets rolled up by D-Von for the pin at 4:04.

Rating: D. I hate to admit it but I'm digging this story more and more every week. It's a naturally developing story and it's actually entertaining me every time they go out and do something else. I'm not sure where this ends but it's been FAR more entertaining than it had any right to be the whole way through.

Post match Breezango laughs at Golden Truth. Fandango: "Just like a game of shooty hoops, three strikes and you're out!"

Recap of Baron Corbin vs. Dolph Ziggler.

Corbin is standing outside because he won't grace the fans with his presence after they cheered what happened on Monday. The next time he

comes into a WWE arena, it's to end Dolph Ziggler. Or on Raw next week.

Dean Ambrose/Sami Zayn vs. Alberto Del Rio/Kevin Owens

Owens goes after Sami to start before it's quickly off to Del Rio, who is rolled up for two. Dean comes in for a shot to the ribs and it's right back to Sami but he walks into a Backstabber for another two. Owens is happy to come in and pick Sami's bones but quickly hands it back to Del Rio for a kick to the ribs. The fast tags continue as Dean is brought back in to dive on Del Rio as we take a break.

Back with Alberto stomping on Dean's chest in the corner before the heels take Ambrose outside for a beating. Unfortunately it's in front of the announcers' table so Sami flip dives onto both of them. Sami gets pulled off the apron though and the beatdown continues on Dean, only to have him escape the armbreaker. The Dirty Deeds attempt is broken up though and the running enziguri hits Owens instead. Sami gets the tag and scores with the Helluva Kick to put Del Rio away at 9:24.

Rating: B. Nice fast paced tag match here with both teams working well together and doing some things you don't normally get in the tag team formula. I'm not wild on having these tags where the good guys always team with the bad guys leading up to the ladder match but at least it was an entertaining match this week.

Post match Owens grabs a headset and says he's tired of his partners screwing things up. He goes under the ring and finds a ladder so he can climb up and pull down the briefcase, only to have Cesaro run down and hit the spinning uppercut while still wearing his suit. Cesaro climbs the ladder and pulls down the briefcase instead.

Jack Swagger vs. Rusev

Non-title and Rusev attacks before Jack can get in the ring. Swagger says ring the bell and has the Patriot Lock on about two seconds in. Rusev bails to the floor and eats a hard clothesline but Jack's shoulder is banged up from the attack. Back in and Swagger makes a quick comeback but misses the running Vader Bomb. Instead he clotheslines Rusev again with the shoulder mostly fine. Rusev escapes another Patriot Lock attempt and

sends Swagger outside for a whip into the steps. The Accolade is countered into the Patriot Lock but Rusev gets the rope and puts on the Accolade so Jack can pass out at 4:43.

Rating: C. I know it's been a long time since this happened but it's still not something I'm going to get into. They've had the same match over and over and it's really kind of hard to care about when there's no way Swagger is going to do anything noteworthy. Swagger really needs a change and jobbing to Rusev again isn't a good sign.

Rusev won't let go until Titus O'Neil runs out for the save.

Bob Backlund asks Darren Young for a training update. Young says his running has been great so far but Backlund only wants him running in case he misses the bus. Apparently Backlund has stolen Young's car keys and Young can walk to the next town in eight hours. Backlund: "And if you get there any faster, I'll know you ran!" I freaking love these things.

We look at Rollins and Reigns not fighting on Raw.

AJ Styles vs. Kofi Kingston

Kofi flips him away to start but AJ snaps off some armdrags and poses a bit. The announcers speculate that the Club's breakup was staged to set Cena up, which is a better explanation than I would give it. Kofi takes him into the corner for a basement dropkick and that means it's time for a musical interlude. All six guys get in and it's a standoff until we take a break.

Back with Kofi elbowing Styles in the jaw and putting on an armbar. Styles is sent to the floor and it's a standoff between New Day and the Club, allowing AJ to post Kofi to take over. Woods starts running his mouth and apparently motivates Kofi to get in a jawbreaker, only to have Styles hit that strike rush of his to drop Kingston again. Kofi grabs a monkey flip of all things to put Styles down.

The Boom Drop makes a rare appearance and something like a knee drop to a standing AJ gets two. Styles is sent to the apron and Woods starts playing some trombone, causing AJ to miss the Phenomenal Forearm. The SOS

gives Kofi two but the Club and New Day get into it at ringside. Kofi dives over the top to take out Gallows, only to have AJ score with the Pele coming back in. The Styles Clash gives AJ the pin at 13:35.

Rating: B+. For all his goofiness, I think it's often forgotten just how good Kofi can be in the ring. No he's not likely to ever become a World Champion but he's definitely someone who can wrestle a good to very good match against almost anyone. I miss watching Kofi in singles stuff and I'd love to see him as more of the solo act on the team.

Overall Rating: B-. This was a stronger show than usual as it feels like Smackdown is starting to mean something again heading into the Brand Split. There was enough good wrestling here and Club vs. New Day got a strong focus to start what could be an entertaining feud going forward. I liked this show for a change and that's not something I can often say these days.

Results

Becky Lynch b. Charlotte via DQ when Dana Brooke interfered

Dudley Boyz b. Golden Truth – Rollup to Goldust

Sami Zayn/Dean Ambrose b. Kevin Owens/Alberto Del Rio – Helluva Kick to Del Rio

Rusev b. Jack Swagger – Accolade

AJ Styles b. Kofi Kingston – Styles Clash

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Monday Night Raw – May 30, 2016: The Slow Ride To The Bank

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 30, 2016

Location: Resch Center, Green Bay, Wisconsin

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

It's a big night here as we have the return of John Cena since his injury late last year. At the same time though we're probably going to hear the first news about the new Brand Split as Raw and Smackdown will become stand alone shows again starting in July. A lot of the details are still up in the air at this point but it should be interesting either way. Let's get to it.

We open with a moment of silence for Memorial Day.

A bunch of wrestlers quote a Ronald Reagan speech on fallen troops.

Opening sequence.

Here's Shane McMahon to open things up but Stephanie comes out to join him before anything can be said. They mention the Brand Split and Smackdown moving to Tuesdays before New Day comes out for a chat. Big E. likes the idea of bringing the power of positivity to Raw and Smackdown ("That's a lot of P's.") but then it turned into paranoia because the rosters might be split up. After making fun of Kofi for being the oldest member of the team (Woods: "You were my favorite wrestler in middle school."), they get to the point: which show will New Day be on?

Stephanie dodges the question and New Day does a dramatic reenactment of Stephanie dodging it like an invisible ball. Woods goes insane and nearly starts crying over the team being split up and Francesca II being in a broken home. There's also no decision yet on who will be running which show so New Day thinks there should be a dance challenge. Stephanie isn't interested but Shane gets into it to a nice reaction. They finally get Stephanie to join in but the Vaudevillains cut her off.

Vaudevillains vs. New Day

Non-title and joined in progress with Cole welcoming us back to Smackdown. English gets stomped down in the corner as JBL tells us that a herd of unicorns is called a glory. We get the Unicorn Stampede but Gotch pulls Kofi's foot to give the villains control. Gotch headlocks Kofi and knocks him to the floor as we take a break after less than four minutes of action. Back with Kofi taking Gotch down and making the hot tag to Big E. for the overhead belly to belly suplexes on English. As this is going on though, Karl Anderson and Luke Gallows run in to attack Kofi for the DQ at 8:54.

Rating: D+. I liked the ending as Gallows and Anderson were pretty much the only option to go after the titles at this point and would be a good choice for new champions. The Vaudevillains were just there to give Anderson and Gallows a reason to come out, though at least it was a non-title match and not a rematch for no particular reason.

Anderson and Gallows lay out the champions post match.

Post break Anderson and Gallows say they've just put the tag team division on notice because they can do just as much damage without AJ.

We look back at Sheamus attacking Apollo Crews last week.

Crews is doing pushups when Big Show returns to say hello. Apollo says he's ready to fight Sheamus and Show can admire that. Show knows Crews will make it work because Sheamus is scared of the New Era.

Usos vs. Breezango

Golden Truth is on commentary with JBL ripping on them for being a

horrible team. Truth: "JBL they do not allow elephants in here." Fandango hammers on Jey to start but Breeze charges into a superkick on the floor. Back inside, Jey crucifixes Fandango for the pin at 1:48.

Golden Truth beats up Breezango.

Here's Roman Reigns for a chat. Reigns talks about how the Shield broke up a long time ago and until someone takes this title from his shoulder, he's still The Guy. This brings out Rollins for a fight but of course he doesn't get in the ring. Instead he grabs the mic and teases talking but throws the mic down and goes towards the ring instead. This happens five or six times before Rollins just leaves. The fans call this boring because they have the attention span of drunken goats and can't go three seconds without being entertained. Rollins sprints down the ramp one more time but stops at the apron again to wrap this up.

Trailer for Warcraft.

Rusev vs. Zack Ryder

Non-title. Rusev knees him in the ribs to start and drops Ryder with a clothesline. Ryder gets the knees up in the corner and drops Rusev with a middle rope dropkick. The Broski Boot connects for two but the Rough Ryder is easily countered and the Accolade makes Ryder tap at 2:31. That's the sixth time Rusev has made Ryder tap on Raw in just over two years and actually the longest Zack has ever lasted.

Rusev calls himself a real American hero but here's Titus O'Neil to interrupt. Titus says this is Memorial Day and drops Rusev to the floor with a single right hand.

The Shining Stars want us to come to Puerto Rico.

We get a video on Charlotte dropping Ric Flair with comments from various people. This aired on Smackdown.

Earlier today, Stephanie yelled at Charlotte for being a spoiled, selfish brat. She yells a bit more and there's no reaction from Charlotte as Stephanie collects her first set of lady balls. To recap, so far the first Women's Champion has been made to tap out to Natalya more than

once, played second fiddle to Ric Flair and not been allowed to say a word when Stephanie, yes STEPHANIE MCMAHON, yelled about someone being a spoiled brat who didn't respect her father enough.

Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Dudley Boyz

Before the match, Cass lists off various types of cheese that he's putting on the knuckle sandwiches he's about to hand off. Bubba and Cass lock up to start but both Dudleyz are quickly sent to the floor as we take an early break. Back with Enzo in trouble (as expected) and eating an elbow to the jaw for daring to fight out of a neck crank.

Bubba comes in and drops some elbows for two before ripping at Enzo's face. We hit the chinlock from D-Von for a bit before the hot tag brings in Cass. The reverse 3D gets two on him though and Bubba goes up, only to have an Enzo distraction let Cass slam him down. D-Von takes the big boot and the Rocket Launcher gives Enzo the pin at 9:23.

Rating: C-. This was a really basic match though it's cool to see the new guys getting a clean win like this. I'm really not sure where you go with these two but they've looked awesome so far with Cass more than acting as a solid big man and Enzo as a great mouthpiece. There's no point in them fighting the Dudleyz anymore, so I'm sure we'll see them at Money in the Bank.

Sami Zayn, Dean Ambrose and Cesaro discuss their match against Chris Jericho, Kevin Owens and Alberto Del Rio. They're keeping an eye on their opponents but Dean doesn't seem to think much of Canadians. Sami: "You know I'm Canadian right?" Dean: "...Oh. That explains so much."

It's the top of the third hour and here's the returning John Cena. He looks at the mic and gives a speech about Memorial Day and is very glad that he's back home. However, he wants to thank everyone who has paid the ultimate price to keep our liberty safe. As for the business at hand tonight, the question is whether or not Cena still belongs here. That starts up a YES chant in quite the little surprise.

It's a New Era around here with a bunch of new names and new faces and all of them are thinking that Cena's best days are behind them. The name

of this new era doesn't matter because Cena isn't going quietly into the night and the face that runs the place is back so the future must go through him.

Cue AJ Styles for something that would have been a dream match ten years ago. The fans are split (JBL: "The WWE Universe is having fun right now!") until AJ says he's been waiting for this for a long time. He's always heard about Cena being the first in and the last out and now AJ wants to be the first man to welcome him back.

Cue Anderson and Gallows to as they're here for a fight. That sounds like a challenge but AJ blasts Cena in the face and the Club is back together. The big beatdown is on and AJ even goes back in three more times to keep beating on him. Even Anderson and Gallows pull him back.

Natalya vs. Dana Brooke

Charlotte is at ringside as this feud is somehow continuing. Natalya hits her in the corner but gets taken down, allowing Charlotte to yell a lot. Charlotte distracts her to break up the Sharpshooter and the Samoan Driver gives Dana the pin at 1:20.

Post match Becky Lynch runs in for the save.

Dolph Ziggler is ready to show off tonight against Baron Corbin in a technical wrestling match. Dean Malenko was the Man of 1000 Holds and on the WWE Network you can see Chris Jericho list off his 1004 holds. Well Ziggler knows 1005, which he starts to list. As expected, every other one is armbar. This uh, wasn't funny.

Baron Corbin vs. Dolph Ziggler

This is billed as a technical wrestling exhibition and Dolph puts on headgear. And there's a low blow to Baron for the DQ at 33 seconds.

The fans aren't sure how to react to this so Dolph says the loser of this match is still Baron Corbin.

Miz is on the set of his new movie and needs to get some rest before shooting starts.

Owens, Jericho and Del Rio bicker about the six man tag. They agree to work together but Jericho calls them both idiots after they leave.

Alberto Del Rio/Chris Jericho/Kevin Owens vs. Dean Ambrose/Cesaro/Sami Zayn

Del Rio suplexes Cesaro to start but Cesaro runs to the floor for the running uppercut on Jericho. The Swing is blocked by a rope grab and Cesaro is taken outside for a triple team. Jericho stomps away as the fans chant STUPID IDIOT. Cesaro suplexes his way out and the hot tag brings in Sami to clean house with his clotheslines. The villains get in a fight on the floor and Sami scores with a big dive as we take a break.

Back with Owens dropping Sami ribs first over the top rope and getting two off the backplash. Del Rio grabs the leg to stop a tag and it's back to Jericho who misses a Lionsault and bangs up his own knee. The Blue Thunder Bomb finally allows the hot tag off to Ambrose as house is cleaned again.

Jericho dives into a kick to the ribs but still blocks Dirty Deeds. Instead Dean hits the suicide dive to take Chris out, only to have Jericho grab a Codebreaker back inside. Owens wants the pin but only gets two. The Canadians start arguing so Cesaro knocks them together and Swings Jericho. Everyone comes in and Owens tries the Pop Up Powerbomb on Zayn, only to get caught in Dirty Deeds for the pin at 17:56.

Rating: B. This was good, albeit a bit pointless. You have to expect things like this over the coming weeks as there isn't much you can do to set up the ladder match other than having mostly meaningless matches like this one. At least the finish was clean though and we have some dissension among people.

Overall Rating: C+. It wasn't exactly a great show but there was more good than bad going on. The problem is you have something like Stephanie yelling at Charlotte without her being able to say a thing because ALL HAIL STEPHANIE but then you have something amazing like AJ vs. Cena being set up which basically makes people hand their wallets over in advance. The rest of the show was hit or miss but I'm really not too excited about so many feuds continuing in the lame duck period between now and the

Brand Split.

Results

New Day b. Vaudevillains via DQ when Karl Anderson and Luke Gallows interfered

Usos b. Breezango – Crucifix to Fandango

Rusev b. Zack Ryder – Accolade

Enzo Amore/Big Cass b. Dudley Boyz – Rocket Launcher to D-Von

Dana Brooke b. Natalya – Samoan Driver

Baron Corbin b. Dolph Ziggler via DQ when Ziggler kicked him low

Dean Ambrose/Cesaro/Sami Zayn b. Chris Jericho/Alberto Del Rio/Kevin Owens – Dirty Deeds to Owens

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Smackdown – May 12, 2016:

Another One

Smackdown

Date: May 12, 2016

Location: Wells Fargo Arena, Des Moines, Iowa

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Byron Saxton, Jerry Lawler

It's kind of hard to say what to expect around here as the show has been bouncing back and forth between focusing on the Intercontinental Title feud and then the World Title situation. The former tends to be the more interesting and it should be a fun show tonight with all four people being thrown together in a tag match. Let's get to it.

Here's Dean Ambrose to get things going. Lawler thinks Jericho should press charges against Dean for destroying the jacket. Well, uh, YEAH probably but that's the kind of thing that doesn't happen in wrestling. Dean thinks they're even now because Jericho smashed Mitch over the back of his head to try and take away everything he has. This ring is all that he's got and as long as his heart is beating, no one is going to take it away. Now the question is what can Dean take away from Jericho and the first thing that comes to his mind is Jericho's ego.

After Dean gets done with him, Jericho isn't even going to be sure if wrestling is for him anymore. The lights go out and Jericho's music comes on, only to have Jericho appear behind Dean and lay him out. That's not it though as he pulls out a straitjacket to tie Dean down. Ambrose wakes up as Jericho shouts that Dean needs to get crazy while beating him in the head. A Codebreaker stops Dean's comeback and a second one FINALLY has referees out here to break it up. Jericho does his Gift of Jericho pose on the announcers' table.

Rusev vs. Sin Cara

Kalisto is on commentary and says helping Cara on Monday was just being a team. Rusev drops him with an early clothesline and stomps away as Kalisto stumbles over his battle plan for the pay per view. A kick to the chest puts Cara down again and we hear about Steph Curry for no good reason.

In your random insult of the week, Rusev has dubbed Kalisto the smelly boy who hides behind a mask. Cara starts kicking at the leg and scores with some right hands, followed by a top rope flip attack. As this is going on, Lana throws water on Kalisto for a distraction so Rusev can kick him in the head. Back in and the superkick sets up the Accolade to make Cara tap at 3:09.

Rating: D. SO WHAT WAS THE POINT OF MONDAY??? If you're just going to have Rusev squash Cara like he always should, why have him lose in the first place? As usual it comes off like WWE has no idea what they're doing from one show to another and just does stuff for the sake of doing it instead of with any kind of logical reasoning or planning behind it.

We look at Dana Brooke debuting and helping beat down Becky Lynch on Monday.

Emma introduces Dana, who is ready to destroy Becky tonight. People forget that Emma used to be on top of the NXT women's division but Dana has never forgotten and knows what Emma can do. This needed more patting on the head.

Becky Lynch vs. Dana Brooke

Lynch forearms her to start and pats Dana on the head, only to be pulled down by the hair. Dana stomps her on the mat and cranks on an arm and leg at the same time. Becky starts her comeback with a clothesline and a leg lariat but Dana sends her throat first into the ropes so Emma can poke her in the eye. Dana grabs a jackknife cover for the pin at 2:52. This was really awkward, which I'm sure has nothing to do with Dana debuting in September 2014 and being injured for months but still being called up to the main roster anyway.

Video on the end of Monday's six man tag and the post match showdown between Reigns and Styles.

AJ gives Anderson and Gallows a pep talk for tonight but says he's banned from ringside. They seem to be officially going with The Club.

Here's New Day for their weekly chat. Big E. nearly swears about what

happened on Monday, which Woods says was the Vaudevillians Kanye Westing them. By that he doesn't mean marrying someone who has a big.....I think you get the idea. Actually Woods means getting involved in something that was none of his business. They're stuck in the 1830s and at Extreme Rules they'll be knocked into the DeLorean and sent back to the future. Cue the Vaudevillians to sing about how they'll win the titles a week from Sunday. Soon the sun will set on the New Day and the night belongs to the Vaudevillians.

Aiden English vs. Kofi Kingston

Kofi dropkicks him at the bell and stomps the heck out of him in the corner. English gets sent outside but catches a sliding Kofi and sends him face first into the post to take over. Big E. holds up the cereal to bring Kofi back to life (needs more Lion King), which actually seems to work as Kofi kicks English in the face and gets two off a high cross body. A top rope splash to the back gets two but everyone else gets ejected. Things settle down and Kofi grabs a sunset flip, only to have English drop down and put his hand on the ropes for the big upset at 3:52.

Rating: C. English is better in the ring than he's given credit for but it's pretty difficult to have a bad match against someone like Kofi Kingston. I still don't buy the Vaudevillians as taking the titles away from New Day as Anderson/Gallows should have that spot locked up but at least the build has been set up very well.

Reigns is also banned from ringside but he's ready to come out and deal with Styles if necessary.

Luke Gallows/Karl Anderson vs. Usos

Reigns and Styles are banned from ringside. Karl and Jey get things going with Jey in control before it's off to Jimmy for a running forearm. It's Gallows pulling Jimmy down by the hair and coming in for a slam. Anderson pounds away in the corner even more as Ranallo mentions Karl teaming with Giant Bernard, who Lawler says he hasn't heard from in a long time.

Anderson finally misses an elbow and it's off to Jey as things speed up.

There's a powerslam to Karl but Gallows kicks Jey in the face and we take a break. Back with Anderson dropping a knee for two before it's back to Gallows for a chinlock. With that going nowhere, Gallows opts to just punch Jey in the corner. A superkick gets Jey out of trouble and the diving tag brings in Jimmy for the real house cleaning. Another superkick drops Anderson and sets up the Superfly Splash, only to have Gallows pull Jimmy to the floor. Gallows throws him over the announcers' table and that's a DQ at 11:39.

Rating: C-. The match was fine (albeit a bit slow paced) but the problem here is I'm sick of seeing them fight. This is the sixth time in three weeks that they've been in the same match. They're not bad or anything but it's the same problem WWE has so often: eventually people get sick of them and it's time for something fresh. Have the Hype Bros comes up from NXT get squashed by Anderson and Gotch or put the Social Outcasts against the Usos or something but stop just doing the same thing and then expecting us to care when you put this on pay per view (which you know they will).

The beating continues post match as Anderson kicks Jey in the face and the twins are beaten down with a chair. You know, the match is over so there's nothing keeping Reigns from coming out for the save.

R-Truth waters his selfie stick and gets his phone wet.

Here's our first Life Lesson With Coach Backlund. Bob asks Darren what time his watch says. Darren pulls out his phone to check the time but Backlund thinks he's making a phone call. His advice is to not call the operator and waste her time about the time. Young says no one wears watches anymore and he has everything on his desktop on his smart phone. Backlund: "I don't care if your phone is Einstein!" He wants the mail in a mailbox, a calendar on a wall and the desktop on top of a desk. Darren is told to do 200 squats and that's just fine with him. Again they weren't even in the same room, which makes this even better.

On a related sidenote: since when did wearing a watch become something so horrible? Yeah you can check your phone, or you can flick your eyes over to your wrist and see what time it is. You might even be able to do that

without then needing to check 14 things on your phone and getting distracted by something. Since when did that become some arcane way of thinking?

Goldango vs. Gorgeous Truth

Breeze and Fandango open things up but it's off to Goldust and Truth less than thirty seconds in. Neither of them want to fight though so Truth tags Breeze back in, only to have Tyler knock Truth off the apron. Fandango turns on Goldust as well and Breeze pins Goldust (off a single clothesline, the only move Goldust took all match) for the pin at 1:39.

The beatdown is on and Goldust tries to cover Truth. That's a nice gesture but if I'm Truth, I'd try to find a partner who can survive a clothesline.

Greetings From Puerto Rico. Their new name is the Shining Stars.

We look at Ric Flair being escorted out of the building in the way too complicated segment on Monday.

Charlotte calls that a travesty because Ric Flair deserves better treatment than that. Ric guarantees that Charlotte will retain the title at Extreme Rules but Charlotte looks unsure. To recap, the idea here is that Charlotte is in trouble without Flair and Ric is the one who is confident. In other words: Flair looks good and Charlotte looks almost inept. As usual, advantage Flair.

Cesaro/Sami Zayn vs. The Miz/Kevin Owens

This should be good. During Miz's entrance, Owens jumps on commentary to say he's allowing Miz one last chance to be a good partner before he takes the title at Extreme Rules. Miz and Cesaro get things going with the latter grabbing a headlock. A backbreaker gets two on Miz so Owens shouts about how he can do better. That's fine with Miz who brings Owens in, followed by Sami tagging himself in as well.

Zayn hammers away in the corner and Lawler correctly says the referee should be admonishing Sami for the punches. Miz comes in and bails to the floor but Owens won't let him leave. The good guys hit some dives to take

the villains down and we take a break. Back with Sami slamming Miz and low bridging him out to the floor. Owens gets in a cheap shot though and it's time for Sami to be in trouble. A hard kick to the back sets up a camel clutch from Miz.

Owens to Byron: "YOU BETTER PRAISE ME!" The Reality Check gets two for Miz but Sami comes back with one of those clotheslines to drop the champ. There's the Blue Thunder Bomb (whose name confuses Lawler) to finally allow the tag off to Cesaro. Owens gets to eat some uppercuts and Cesaro runs to the floor for the uppercut against the barricade on Miz. The high cross body gets two on Owens but Sami's Helluva Kick hits Cesaro by mistake. Owens adds the frog splash for the pin on Cesaro at 12:45.

Rating: C+. Standard Smackdown main event tag with a nice bonus of having Sami and Cesaro screw up to add some tension there. They're actually pulling off the four way feud here as everyone wants to beat everyone else but it's all about the title (mostly) instead of personal feelings. Good match here though and the kind of thing you would expect on Smackdown.

Sami takes the Pop Up Powerbomb but Miz gives Owens the Skull Crushing Finale to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. This is what you come to know and expect from Smackdown with the watchable wrestling and meaningless storyline development as almost none of this will be brought up on Raw. You really have to take this show on a week to week basis as it really is just about whether or not the show happens to be good that particular week. Nothing much to see here though and that's Smackdown in a nutshell.

Results

Rusev b. Sin Cara – Accolade

Dana Brooke b. Becky Lynch – Jackknife rollup

Aiden English b. Kofi Kingston – Rollup while grabbing the rope

Usos b. Karl Anderson/Luke Gallows via DQ when Gallows threw Jimmy over the table

Gorgeous Truth b. Goldango – Breeze pinned Goldust after a clothesline from Fandango

Miz/Kevin Owens b. Cesaro/Sami Zayn – Frog splash to Cesaro

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Smackdown – May 5, 2016: Wholesome Smackdown Entertainment

Smackdown

Date: May 5, 2016

Location: Sprint Center, Kansas City, Missouri

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton

We've hit the ground running on the way to Extreme Rules with a fairly action packed Raw earlier this week. The big story continues to be AJ Styles vs. Roman Reigns but now we also have the Usos and Karl Anderson/Luke Gallows much more closely involved. It should be interesting to see what they can throw in here before the pay per view in two and a half weeks. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

We open with the Highlight Reel but first we get a recap of the Ambrose Asylum being canceled and the ensuing brawl. Ranallo: "Payback is a Mitch!" Jericho brags about injuring Dean Ambrose and keeping him off the show tonight. That's about it for Dean though as here's Jericho's guest: Sami Zayn.

Before anything is said, we look at a clip of Cesaro vs. Owens on Monday with Sami and Miz getting involved and likely setting up a fourway for the title. Jericho says Sami isn't a decent human being for holding up the Intercontinental Title but Sami thinks the scarf makes Jericho look stupid. Sami certainly wasn't trying to steal the title but here are Miz and Maryse to interrupt.

This is Miz's Intercontinental Title so Sami better not lay a finger on her again, which is exactly what Sami does again. Jericho says he would freak out if anyone touched his \$15,000 jacket like that. Sami: "You paid \$15,000 to look like a walking Christmas tree?" That's enough for Jericho who walks out so Miz threatens Zayn for trying to go after the biggest fish in WWE. Sami touches the title again and says he wants to go for a swim. Zayn wants to go right now but Miz bails to the floor.

Sami Zayn vs. The Miz

Non-title with the bell ringing after a break. Feeling out process to start as they fight over wristlocks and armbars. Sami grinds him down with a headlock. Back up and Sami gets in one of those kind of awkward looking clotheslines of his to send Miz to the floor. A moonsault off the barricade drops Miz again but here's Kevin Owens for a distraction.

We take a break and come back with Owens on commentary and Miz dropping a top rope axhandle for no cover. Owens: "You should be very proud of yourself Miz. You jumped up to the top rope, jumped off the top and hit him with your fists. You're an athlete!" Sami low bridges him to the floor for the big flip dive and a staredown with Owens. Kevin runs in for the DQ at 8:39.

Rating: C. Not much to this one but it was there for the angle instead of

the wrestling. They've got something here with this four way feud with the title on the line and the match at Extreme Rules should be a lot of fun. There really isn't a bad option for the title at this point and that's a very rare situation to have.

Post match Sami gets double teamed until Cesaro runs down for the save, ripping his suit off on the way down the ramp. Cesaro cleans house but accidentally takes out Sami in the process. This time it's Cesaro holding up the title.

We look back at the end of Raw with the big brawl between Styles/Gallows/Anderson and Reigns/Usos, capped off by Reigns powerbombing AJ through the table.

Anderson and Gallows are a bit disappointed in AJ for not blasting Reigns with the chair on Monday. AJ wanted to keep it clean though because he wants to win the title his own way. Anderson and Gallows respect that but Roman doesn't respect AJ. Styles likes their suggestions of going extreme and thinks it's time for a chat with Roman.

Greetings From Puerto Rico.

We look at Enzo Amore's injury on Sunday.

Vaudevillains vs. Social Outcasts

Dallas/Axel here. Bo starts fast with a powerslam on English for two. Axel comes in to go after Gotch but gets backdropped out to the floor for the save. The Whirling Dervish ends Dallas at 1:51.

Post match Colin Cassady comes out to go after the Vaudevillains and cleans house before Axel gets in to call Gotch and English SAWFT. That earns him a much deserved East River Crossing and Cass shouts a lot.

We look back at Shane and Stephanie gaining power on Sunday and their first night of sharing power on Raw.

Natalya/Becky Lynch vs. Charlotte/Emma

Natalya headlocks Charlotte to the mat to start and it's off to Becky

with Lawler yelling about the cheating going on. This show has been so much easier to sit through with him as a heel like he always should be. It's already back to Natalya who charges into a boot in the corner and Emma comes in for some stomping. Emma slams her face first into the mat and it's Charlotte putting on a chinlock.

Natalya finally sends Charlotte into the corner and makes the hot tag to Becky for some armdrags and dropkicks. The comeback is shortlived though as Becky is sent to the floor for a crash, allowing Charlotte to do her headscissor faceplants. Back from a break with Becky getting two off a rollup until a big boot puts her down again.

We get the eternally painful standing on the hair before Charlotte drops a knee. An enziguri puts Emma down though and the hot tag brings in Natalya for the house cleaning. The stepover dropkick sets up the discus lariat (which Ranallo seems to dub Nattie By Nature) on Charlotte but Natalya gets sent into the corner for the Emma Sandwich. Emma takes too long though and it's the Sharpshooter to make Emma tap at 13:48.

Rating: B. I had a really good time with this one as the division really has evolved to make the whole thing feel important. Perhaps above all else, one of the major reasons has been the ring time. Look at this match. When is the last time you saw a women's match get almost fifteen minutes on a random Smackdown? That being said, it also helps that things have been entertaining with a well done tag formula to make everything work. It also helps that the wrestlers are all skilled enough to make the match that much better. Everything is working at this point and that hasn't been the case for years.

AJ comes in to see Roman Reigns and the Usos. He wants to know if Reigns will be at ringside tonight and Reigns says he'll be wherever he wants because he's the champ. In that case, AJ will be at ringside too.

Darren Young has asked Bob Backlund to be his life coach. That's fine with Backlund, if Young will put everything he has into this.

Zack Ryder vs. Rusev

This has become WWE's version of Goldberg vs. Jerry Flynn. Ryder gets in

a few dropkicks before Rusev slams him down. The Accolade wraps it up at 1:15.

Rusev and Lana do the Kalisto dance until Kalisto runs in for a corkscrew cross body before running away.

Fandango teaches Goldust to dance when R-Truth and Tyler Breeze come in. Goldust is having some issues but Truth says Fandango is the one off beat. A danceoff ensues but Fandango would rather have a tag match next week.

Usos vs. Karl Anderson/Luke Gallows

AJ and Reigns are at ringside. Jey and Karl get things going with the former getting in an uppercut and crucifix for two. A dropkick puts Anderson down again but Karl knocks Jey out to the floor. Karl goes after Reigns though and it's a DQ at 2:20.

They brawl to a break and I think you know what's coming.

Roman Reigns/Usos vs. Karl Anderson/Luke Gallows/AJ Styles

Thankfully we don't miss anything during a break. I'm so glad that's becoming more of a trend. Styles and Reigns get things going with the champ getting in a quick shoulder and drawing quite a few boos. Reigns powers out of a sunset flip into a fireman's carry, followed by a hard uppercut for two. Anderson comes in for some right hands as we get those phantom dueling chants. A big boot to the face drops Karl with Ranallo's name drop of the mafia confusing Jerry. Jey comes in to face Gallows and a kick to Luke's face allows the tag off to Jimmy as the twins start taking over.

Gallows kicks Jey in the face and we get that awkward staredown in front of the ring. They actually don't take a break though as it's AJ coming in and taking a quick enziguri. Reigns comes in off the cold tag and starts cleaning house with a running clothesline to Anderson. The corner clotheslines set up the Superman punch but it takes Gallows off the apron, followed by a suicide dive from Jimmy. The second Superman punch hits Karl in the jaw but AJ takes Reigns out before the spear. Anderson's

spinebuster gets two, only to have the spear put Karl away 7:30.

Rating: C+. Fine main event tag match here though I could have gone with some more time. It's good to have Reigns get a win to reestablish himself and the World Champion getting the pin on Anderson isn't going to hurt Karl in the slightest. I'm liking this feud so far and the rematch should be a lot of fun too.

AJ points at the title to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. This was a much more efficient show with everything working like it should have. They're not even hiding the fact that Smackdown is meaningless anymore as wrestlers make the matches and Shane/Stephanie never acknowledge that this show exists. All you can ask for is some good wrestling and storyline supplements which is exactly what we had tonight. Fun, easy show here with the women having a really nice match.

Results

Sami Zayn b. The Miz via DQ when Kevin Owens interfered

Vaudevillains b. Social Outcasts – Whirling Dervish to Dallas

Natalya/Becky Lynch b. Charlotte/Emma – Sharpshooter to Emma

Rusev b. Zack Ryder – Accolade

Karl Anderson/Luke Gallows b. Usos via DQ when Roman Reigns interfered

Roman Reigns/Usos b. Karl Anderson/Luke Gallows/AJ Styles – Spear to Anderson

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Monday Night Raw – May 2, 2016: The New Era Of Greatest Hits

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 2, 2016

Location: Scottrade Center, St. Louis, Missouri

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

We're past Payback, meaning we have less than three weeks before Extreme Rules with a main event of AJ Styles vs. Roman Reigns II for the World Title. The big story tonight though is the balance of power as Shane and Stephanie McMahon will be running the show together for the foreseeable future. I'm sure this will be fascinating. Let's get to it.

This week's recap, narrated for a change, talks about last night's main event and the announcement of Shane and Stephanie sharing power.

Opening sequence.

Here's Stephanie, carrying a present, to get things going. Before she can get anywhere though, here's Shane with 100% less presents. The bickering starts early but Stephanie's gift is for Shane. It's....the the picture of Vince holding Shane as a child that was broken up before Wrestlemania.

Before Shane can talk about his ideas for the night, here's Kevin Owens to interrupt things. He has an idea of his own: a rematch for the Intercontinental Title. Owens appeals to Stephanie's business sense and

mentions having a contractually obligated rematch. This brings out Cesaro to say that Owens and Zayn cost him the Intercontinental Title last night. Shane makes a #1 contenders match right now.

Cesaro vs. Kevin Owens

Miz and Maryse are on commentary. Cesaro immediately starts with the uppercuts across the ring, followed by another big one on the floor. Back in and Cesaro gets two off the high cross body but Owens goes after the shoulder to take over. The superkick and backsplash get two and it's time to work on the arm a bit more. A quick strike exchange drops Cesaro but he crotches Owens on top.

Kevin cuts him off again with a Stunner over the top rope, followed by a frog splash off the apron as we take a break. Back with Owens hitting the Cannonball but running into the springboard uppercut. They head outside with Owens grabbing the title but Miz takes it away. That earns Miz an uppercut and it's time for the champ to run in for the DQ at 11:30.

Rating: C. The match was fun while it lasted but at the same time there's only so much you can do when you pretty much have a big clock counting down until Miz runs in for the DQ. That kind of stuff gets old quick, especially when this had the potential to be a really fun match between two power guys.

Post match Cesaro gets double teamed until Sami Zayn runs in for the save before holding up the title. This sets up the four way, even though there's no logical reason for Sami to still be involved after losing last night. If they had gone with the logical move of Sami winning last night, you can still bring in Owens because of the required rematch. That's too simple for WWE though so we get more illogical storytelling.

Dean Ambrose is in the back with Stephanie, who volunteers to be the guest on the Ambrose Asylum.

R-Truth and Tyler Breeze are in the back talking about selfie sticks (Truth's has leaves) when Goldust comes in. Goldust insults Breeze a bit and a challenge is issued. Truth doesn't like Goldust insulting his friend so Fandango comes in to be Goldust's partner.

Karl Anderson and Luke Gallows say AJ was close to winning last night which makes AJ want it even more. They imply they'll help in the rematch but Roman Reigns comes in to say he respects AJ but not the other two. The Usos come in and a challenge is made for a six man.

Goldust vs. Tyler Breeze

Fandango and R-Truth are here as the seconds. Truth gives Breeze a headband to start but Goldust knocks it off. Goldust: "WHY DIDN'T YOU EVER GIVE ME ONE OF THESE???" Truth doesn't notice as he's playing with the stick, which distracts Goldust enough for Tyler to get in a few shots. They start dancing at each other, allowing Breeze to grab a rollup for the pin at 1:49.

Here's New Day to talk about their upcoming title defense against the Vaudevillains, who were awarded the match last night after Enzo's injury. We see a clip of the injury, which seems to be just a concussion. If this wasn't such a serious moment, Woods would be showing us all the nasty things Beyonce sent to him on Twitter last night....but unfortunately that didn't happen. What did happen though was Enzo being released from the hospital after all the other tests were negative.

This brings out the Vaudevillains with Aiden singing about how they're going to win the titles. Apparently Enzo was the realest guy in the emergency room....and here are the Dudley Boyz to interfere. They say they didn't see the Vaudevillains win anything last night after the match was ended fast. A fight is about to break out when Big Cass interrupts. He's tired of hearing about the Vaudevillains taking out his family and the brawl is quickly on.

Dudley Boyz/Vaudevillains vs. New Day/Colin Cassady

Joined in progress with Woods working over Gotch and bringing in Kofi for a kick to the chest. Big E. comes in for the splash before it's time for the Unicorn Stampede. Kofi gets in a running dropkick in the corner but Bubba kicks Woods in the face to take over. English comes in for a superkick as the heels start taking turns on Woods. A dropkick finally gets Xavier out of trouble, only to have D-Von drop an elbow on his back to stop the tag. The middle rope elbow misses though and there's the hot

tag off to Kofi. Everything breaks down and Kofi gets sent out to the floor in a heap as we take a break.

Back with Kofi still in trouble and Gotch holding him in place for a D-Von elbow drop. Kofi finally dropkicks the Vaudevillains down and it's off to Cass to clean house. English is sent flying off a fall away slam, followed by a big boot the face. Everything breaks down again with Bubba suplexing Cass, only to have Kofi springboard in to break up 3D. Cass' East River Crossing puts D-Von away at 14:32.

Rating: B. These guys were actually rolling out there with eight people in a match that made sense. New Day continues to be awesome and should be in for a good match against the Vaudevillains, though I can't imagine they'll actually drop the titles. Enzo coming back will get an eruption and the injury makes them feel like even more of an underdog team, which fits in with them so perfectly.

We look back at the main event which set up Styles' rematch at Extreme Rules.

Now we look at the Montreal Screwjob finish to the Women's Title match. You all know the Montreal Screwjob. I mean, WWE certainly thinks you do because they're certainly not going to explain it because they know that every fan, including those under the age of 18, have gone back and looked at every bit of the company's history ever. We do however get a clip of Charles Robinson as Little Naitch from back in the day to actually explain the screwjob.

Emma vs. Becky Lynch

Apparently they've been arguing on Twitter lately. Becky quickly knocks her to the floor and does her head shaking dance, only to get pulled off the middle rope to change control. A butterfly suplex gets two on Becky and we hit a half nelson of all things. Emma sends her hard into the corner for the Emma Sandwich and a near fall. Becky gets all fired up and forearm her in the corner, followed by an exploder suplex for two. A quick poke to the eye slows Becky down though and a Michinoku Driver puts Becky away at 5:45.

Rating: C+. Would it be the worst idea in the world to let some of these other Four Horsewomen win something now and then? I mean, I know we have to wait on Sasha because of...uh, reasons, but do they also have to have Becky losing most of the time? At least it was someone like Emma getting the win and not one of the lower level women but we need to have Becky get a win here or there. Sasha actually wrestling would be nice too.

Greetings From Puerto Rico.

Here's Dean Ambrose for the Asylum with Stephanie as his guest. Stephanie talks about how happy she is so Dean shows us a shot from Wrestlemania where Reigns speared her. That was the result of Stephanie being overzealous and she does her corporate speech about how awesome WWE is because of loyalty.

Dean goes on a long rant about loyalty and asks how many sacrifices Stephanie has made. I mean, yeah she's made a ton but Shane has made all of the same sacrifices over the years. That must make Stephanie mad because now she and Shane are exactly the same. Stephanie isn't happy with this so she cancels the Asylum and brings out Jericho for the Highlight Reel once again. Dean gets in a brawl with him of course but walks into a Codebreaker. Jericho breaks Mitch over Dean's head in the ultimate act of evil.

Battle Royal

Apollo Crews, Darren Young, Alberto Del Rio, Damien Sandow, Stardust, Titus O'Neil, Zack Ryder, Sheamus, Curtis Axel, Rusev, Dolph Ziggler, Sin Cara, Baron Corbin, Viktor, Bo Dallas,

For the #1 contendership to the US Title and I think I have everyone involved. Kalisto is on commentary and it's Viktor quickly being eliminated. Sandow is sent out a few seconds later and Crews gets rid of Stardust. Darren gets eliminated and Sheamus Brogue Kicks Crews out for a bit of a surprise.

Someone puts Sheamus out off camera but he slides back in with no issue. Ziggler superkicks Corbin over the top for an elimination but Corbin pulls him outside under the ropes and beats the tar out of him. For a

nice change of pace, Corbin is smart enough to throw the half dead Ziggler back in so Rusev can get the official elimination as we take a break.

Back with Sheamus eliminating Titus (great use of his comeback) and Del Rio hitting his double stomp on Axel for a quick elimination. Cara tosses Dallas and we're down to Cara, Rusev, Del Rio, Sheamus and Ryder. A spinning cross body puts Rusev down and a springboard moonsault does the same to Sheamus and Del Rio.

There's an Irish Curse to Ryder but not enough for an elimination. Cara makes the eternally stupid mistake of going to the top, allowing Del Rio to shove him out and get us down to four. We've got the former League of Nations and Ryder, meaning Sheamus thinks they should join forces again. Ryder gets stomped down but hangs onto the top rope, leaving the League to fight each other.

Del Rio gets in a Backstabber on Rusev but walks into a Rough Ryder. Rusev spinwheel kicks Ryder down though and all four are still in it. The jumping superkick and a regular superkick are enough to get rid of Sheamus, followed by another superkick to send Del Rio to the floor. Ryder puts Alberto out and we're down to Ryder vs. Rusev, sending the fans into a short lived frenzy. Rusev charges into some knees in the corner and a missile dropkick puts Rusev down. The Broski Boot actually connects but Rusev no sells it and throws Ryder out for the win at 13:38.

Rating: C. This was actually awesome stuff (for a battle royal) with some great drama near the end, even though I'm sick of seeing the League of Nations guys in these spots. Putting the title back on Rusev would make sense as it was his best time ever in the company, but it really does feel like we're taking a big step back in time if he wins the belt again.

Here are Charlotte and Ric Flair to address the end of last night's title match. Charlotte really doesn't see the controversy in the decision so here's Charles Robinson to explain his actions. Charles says Natalya was screaming to stop it last night and that counts as a submission. Robinson gets a bit confused about whether his admiration for Ric had anything to do with his decision so here's a CHEATER chant for him.

That's enough from Charles so here's Natalya to say this is all about Ric. Well of course it is. I mean, he's RIC FLAIR. Whether he wants to admit it or not, Bret is the best there is, the best there was and the best there ever will be. Charlotte goes after Natalya but gets sent to the floor, leaving Ric to take off his gear. Natalya slaps him in the face and puts on a Sharpshooter before Charlotte gets her dad out of there. The Flairs leave so Natalay grabs Ric's Hall of Fame ring and Rolex.

After the announcers shill for WWE, Stephanie makes Charlotte vs. Natalya in a submissions match at Extreme Rules. As a bonus, Ric is banned from ringside. Stephanie's request for a WOO is denied.

AJ Styles/Karl Anderson/Luke Gallows vs. Usos/Roman Reigns

AJ and Reigns get things going with Styles grabbing a headscissors but easily being thrown off. Some kicks to the leg have Reigns in trouble so it's off to Gallows for a battle of uppercuts. Jey comes in for his running forearm in the corner, only to dive into a big boot for two. It's time for the big standoff on the floor after Jey is thrown over the top and we take a break.

Back with Anderson hammering away on Jey before it's off to AJ. The beatdown is on and Styles doesn't seem to like the idea of his buddies breaking up a tag. The distraction lets Jey get in a superkick to set up the tag off to Reigns. House is quickly cleaned with Roman beating everyone away until Anderson kicks him in the face for two.

AJ gets a blind tag but eats a tilt-a-whirl slam for his efforts. There's a Superman punch to Gallows but Jimmy comes in off another blind tag with a high cross body for two on AJ. The Boot of Doom into the flapjack sends Reigns into the barricade, leaving AJ to hit the Phenomenal Forearm to the pin on Jimmy at 11:30.

Rating: B-. Another good match here as they let things break down a bit before the ending. I like the idea of the Usos being the lower level guys who can't keep up with Anderson and Gallows while Reigns is enough to take out any of them but not enough to take out everyone at once. It's a simple story and the feud is working well but I can't imagine it ending

with anything other than Reigns standing tall again.

Post match Anderson and Gallows give AJ a chair before holding Reigns. AJ can't do it so the beatdown is on again. The Usos come in and get the chair to knock AJ down (it wasn't clear if they saw him throw it away). AJ gets back up and hits them with the chair, earning himself a Superman punch. Reigns isn't done yet though and loads up the announcers' table for a powerbomb to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. The wrestling was good tonight but it really feels like we're just heading to Payback II with more McMahons walking us through things. That's the difference between Shane and Stephanie: Shane seems like he's telling us what's going to happen and Stephanie has to explain every single thing to you because you're not that bright. The show was still entertaining and Extreme Rules is going to be fun but they really need to get to the point with the McMahon stuff, which means we're likely waiting at least another three months on any major developments.

Results

Cesaro b. Kevin Owens via DQ when Miz interfered

Tyler Breeze b. Goldust – Rollup

New Day/Colin Cassady b. Dudley Boyz/Vaudevillains – East River Crossing to D-Von

Emma b. Becky Lynch – Michinoku Driver

Rusev won a battle royal last eliminating Zack Ryder

AJ Styles/Karl Anderson/Luke Gallows b. Usos/Roman Reigns – Phenomenal Forearm to Jimmy

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