

Monday Night Raw – June 3, 2024: The Team Is (Mostly) Back

Monday Night Raw

Date: June 3, 2024

Location: Giant Center, Hershey, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Michael Cole, Pat McAfee

We are less than two weeks away from Clash At The Castle and Drew McIntyre is officially the #1 contender. Before McIntyre gets to face Damian Priest though, Priest has to face Rey Mysterio this week. In other Judgment Day news, Liv Morgan kissed Dominik Mysterio at the end of/after (depending on your platform) last week's show. Let's get to it.

[Here are last week's results if you need a recap.](#)

We open with a recap of Dominik Mysterio helping Liv Morgan win/retain the Raw Women's Title, despite his efforts to do the opposite. Then Morgan kissed him, with Dominik not exactly shoving her away.

Here is Morgan to get things going. She welcomes us to the revenge tour and brags about injuring Rhea Ripley and sending Becky Lynch into early retirement, but kissing Dominik was the icing on the cake. Cue Dominik, with the fans not letting him get a word in. Dominik finally gets to the point: Rhea Ripley is going to kill her. Morgan: "She's going to kill you too."

Morgan offers to make it worth his while, because Dominik knows he's been out here to get closer to her. She rubs up against him but here is Finn Balor to say this is enough and throw her out. Morgan asks what if Dominik doesn't want her to leave but then goes, albeit with a rub of Dominik's head first. Again: Dominik doesn't really say no. The pop when

Ripley returns to wreck things is going to be off the charts.

We recap Sheamus and Ludwig Kaiser brawling last week.

Sheamus says Kaiser isn't much more than a Ken doll who carries Gunther's coat. If you want his respect, put on banger after banger.

Sheamus vs. Ludwig Kaiser

Kaiser jumps him from behind on the way to the ring and takes out the injured knee again. Back from a break and we ring the bell anyway, with Kaiser absorbing some shots to the head before taking out the knee again. Sheamus fights up and slugs away, at least until another shot to the knee takes him back down.

With the direct approach not working, Sheamus goes after Kaiser's knee for a change and they fight to the floor. The ten forearms are loaded up but Kaiser sends the knee into the steps as we take a break. Back with Sheamus breaking up Kaiser's forearms to the chest and then knocking Kaiser down for a needed breather.

The Celtic Cross is loaded up but Kaiser slips out, leaving the Brogue Kick to hit the buckle. Sheamus won't let the referee stop it and begs Kaiser to hit him, with Sheamus firing off his own chops. Now the big knee connects but the knee gives out on the Brogue Kick attempt. Instead Sheamus settles for the fourteen forearms to the chest but the super White Noise is broken up. Kaiser kicks the knee out again and gets the pin at 13:44.

Rating: B. Tell a nice story, hit each other really hard, have the injury play into the finish. This was a checklist of good stuff with Kaiser getting the biggest win of his career. I'm wondering if this leads to Sheamus joining Imperium because he can't beat them, which would be a fresh direction for him. For now though, he's still doing well out there.

Judgment Day asks what Dominik Mysterio is doing out there but he has it under control. Damian Priest doesn't seem convinced but he's ready to focus on tonight's issues instead.

Ilja Dragunov comes up to see Ricochet and tells him to be careful against Bron Breaker tonight. Ricochet is ready for Breaker and is willing to finish things with Dragunov later. Dragunov wishes him luck.

Video on Dragon Lee.

Dragon Lee vs. Finn Balor

McAfee says he can't wait to watch Lee "for a shoot brother". Balor works on the arm to start but Lee runs the ropes for a springboard wristdrag. Balor chops him into the corner but gets sent to the floor for the required dive as we take an early break. Back with Lee fighting out of a chinlock and hitting a corner dropkick.

McDonagh offers a quick distraction so Balor can grab a rollup for two, only for Lee to grab a sitout powerbomb for two of his own. Lee has to knock McDonagh off the apron before going up, only for Carlito to run in and crotch Lee down. Back up and Lee dives onto Carlito before kicking McDonagh down. The distraction lets Balor hit the shotgun dropkick into the Coup de Grace for the pin at 8:37.

Rating: C+. Lee continues to be a smooth high flier in the ring and he was more than protected by being down three to one here. It seems clear that WWE has something planned for him and putting him in the ring on Raw could help him move in that direction. At the same time, Judgment Day needed a win so it was smart to give them a bit of a boost.

Post match the beatdown is on again but Rey Mysterio and Braun Strowman come in to scare them off.

Post break Damian Priest isn't happy with the Braun Strowman

problem not being solved. Carlito can go get a match made and deal with that tonight. The team leaves and R-Truth comes in to say he knows how it is with the Judgment Day. Being in the group is hard, but it was the best time of his life. Miz comes in to say they're the reigning Tag Team Champions but that was the best time of Truth's life? Truth says Miz is obsessed with the Judgment Day and it's starting to get weird. Miz's stunned face is funny.

Here is Sami Zayn for a chat. The last time he was in Pennsylvania, he won the Intercontinental Title but he hasn't been able to enjoy it because of Chad Gable. Zayn wants Gable out here, one on one, to settle this. Cue the rest of the Alpha Academy, with Maxxine Dupri reading a message from Gable. The message insults the Academy and issues a challenge to Zayn, who accepts for the title match at Clash At The Castle.

With that taken care of, Zayn brings up everything Gable has been putting them through in recent weeks. The team is better than that but he's been there and knows they need to set themselves free. Cue Gable to jump Zayn from behind and the beating is on, with Otis not looking happy. Gable holds Zayn up and tells Otis to hit him, but Otis won't do it. Instead Gable hits him in the face and yells a lot until Akira Tozawa breaks it up.

Dupri breaks that up and Gable tells her to get on her knees and beg. Gable tells Tozawa and Dupri to leave but Otis gets in between Gable and the two of them, with the fans being VERY pleased. Zayn is back up to go after Gable but knocks him into Dupri and Tozawa for a crash out to the floor. Otis lays Zayn out and carries the other two to the back. They have something with the eventual Otis turn and the place is going to go nuts when it happens. Also, this would seem to address Gable's contract status, at least in the short term.

Bron Breaker and Adam Pearce are watching in the back, with

Breakker saying he would break Zayn in half. Breakker is happy to have worthy competition tonight, but Pearce says Ricochet requested the match. That's fine with Breakker, who gets to be unleashed.

Chad Gable praises the Alpha Academy, but Tozawa and Dupri say they're really hurt. Otis is still the #1 guy but doesn't seem too happy about it.

Ricochet vs. Bron Breakker

Ricochet has bad ribs coming in and strikes away to start but has to slip out of a gorilla press. Breakker manages to hit a running elbow to cut Ricochet off and they head outside. Ricochet's ribs are dropped onto the barricade and we take a break. Back with Ricochet DDTing his way out of a slam as we see Samantha Irvin (acknowledged as Ricochet's fiance) looking worried.

A top rope clothesline and Lionsault give Ricochet two and he superkicks Breakker down for two more. Ricochet gets caught on top though and Breakker runs the corner for the Frankensteiner (it's weird hearing that name on WWE TV). The spear finishes Ricochet off at 8:00.

Rating: B-. This was a by the book power vs. speed match with Breakker having to break his first sweat as part of the Raw roster. He took Ricochet's big shots and then went nuts with the athleticism to win. That's a great way to get Breakker over as a monster and there is a good chance that Breakker is going to get to hurt some bigger names rather soon.

Post match Breakker knocks him outside and picks up the steps but Ilja Dragunov runs in for the save.

Rey Mysterio tells Dragon Lee that they'll take Carlito out soon enough. First though, they need to take out the Judgment Day, starting with Damian Priest.

We recap the Liv Morgan/Dominik Mysterio segment, with Pat McAfee analysis.

Natalya vs. Kiana James

Before the match, James talks about how prepared she is and how much a win over Natalya would mean. Natalya takes her down by the wrist to start but James sends things into the corner. That's broken up and Natalya takes her down by the ring, setting up a basement dropkick for two. Back up and James hits a quick shot, setting up 401K (running swinging faceplant) for the big upset at 2:53.

New Day isn't worried about Karrion Kross trying to split them up. Kross comes in to say the power of positivity is dead but Kofi Kingston promises to hit hard. With Kofi gone, Kross says Woods won't have to follow Kofi after tonight.

Natalya is annoyed and runs into Sonya Deville, who asks if she wants to talk. She does indeed, as Natalya says it's time for a change. Hold on though as Deville goes to talk to Shayna Baszler and Zoey Stark, who still want nothing to do with her. Of note: Natalya and Deville could be seen talking in the background earlier tonight so this isn't out of nowhere.

Carlito vs. Braun Strowman

Carlito starts fast with the running knee lift but Strowman isn't having any of that. Cue Judgment Day to distract Strowman, who shrugs off the Backstabber attempt. A reverse chokeslam finishes Carlito at 1:24.

Post match Judgment Day swarms Strowman, who swats a chair out of Dominik's hands. Cue Liv Morgan to stand between Strowman and Dominik, with Strowman backing off. A bunch of chair shots are enough to FINALLY put Strowman down and the team wrecks his knee. Morgan walks up to Dominik but Finn Balor gets between them.

Here are Jade Cargill and Bianca Belair for a chat. They're glad to be back because they were invited here, and now they're ready to show Raw just how great they are. Cue Shayna Baszler and Zoey Stark to interrupt, saying they want the title match right now. Cue Adam Pearce to make the title match official.

Women's Title Team Titles: Zoey Stark/Shayna Baszler b. Jade Cargill/Bianca Belair

Cargill and Belair are defending with Belair slamming Baszler down to start. Belair drives Baszler into the corner and it's off to Cargill, much to the fans' delight. A slam plants Baszler so it's back to Belair, with Stark coming in off a blind tag. Stark's missile dropkick puts Belair down but it's already back to Cargill. The splash misses in the corner but the champs are fine enough to hit stereo delayed suplexes, setting up stereo nip ups.

We take a break and come back with Cargill in trouble but managing a knockdown. The double tag brings in Belair to beat up Stark, including a handspring moonsault for two. Everything breaks down and Cargill powers Baszler into the steps. That leaves Belair to hit the KOD on Stark...but Alba Fyre and Isla Dawn run in to jump Cargill for the DQ at 9:42.

Rating: C+. The ending is a bit of a surprise but maybe they aren't already moving on to Cargill/Belair vs. Fyre/Dawn. There is still room for Baszler and Stark to stick around as they didn't get pinned here, which should keep things a bit more interesting. Cargill and Belair continue to feel like superheroes though and that is going to carry them a long way.

Post match the four villains beat the champions down.

Damian Priest is ready for Rey Mysterio tonight but Drew McIntyre interrupts. McIntyre says he'll day will be better in two weeks and ignores the CM PUNK chants in the process. As for Priest though, things are personal. McIntyre leaves and

Priest says McIntyre has issues.

Here is Jey Uso who comes through the crowd...and then stops to talk there. Last year was the Bloodline civil war and that took a lot out of him. That taught him he could fight on his own and now he's Main Event Jey Uso. For now though, he wants to thank everyone who YEETED with him on this journey. Jey gives a young fan his sunglasses but says it's time for him to deliver something to the fans. Like say, winning Money In The Bank. This felt rather different and showed Jey's future plans.

Lyra Valkyria says Becky Lynch is disappointed after last week but she'll be back around. That's how real winning is done, which Liv Morgan doesn't understand. Valkyria has shown she can stand on her own two feet and likes Jey Uso's idea of Money In The Bank. Cue Iyo Sky to jump her though and the big beatdown is on.

New Day vs. Authors Of Pain

The rest of the Final Testament is here with the Authors. Woods dropkicks Rezar into the corner to start but gets knocked down by the power. Akam comes in to drop Woods again and it's back to Rezar for a neck crank. Woods' jumping enziguri and a superkick should be enough for the tag but Karrion Kross distracts Kofi. What A Rush finishes Woods at 2:28, as Kofi never got into the match.

Alba Fyre and Isla Dawn want in on the Women's Tag Team Title picture. Say at Clash At The Castle.

Here's what's coming next week.

Damian Priest vs. Rey Mysterio

Non-title. Priest kicks him in the face to start but Mysterio manages to send him outside for a breather. Back in and Priest pulls him out of the air for a swinging Downward Spiral as

things slow right back down. We take a break and come back with Priest slowly continuing the beatdown and promising to put Mysterio down for good. A hard forearm sends Rey outside (Priest: "Stay out there. Stay down.") but he's back in to send Priest face first into the buckle.

Mysterio sends him face first in again but Priest nails a superkick to put Mysterio down. Back up and a springboard seated senton hits Priest, allowing Mysterio to hammer away in the corner. That's broken up with a rather hard drive across to the other corner, setting up one heck of a clothesline to give Priest two.

They go up top with Mysterio having to escape a super Razor's Edge. A super hurricanrana sets up the 619 and Dropping The Dime gets two. Cue the Judgment Day to go after Mysterio, with Dragon Lee coming out to even things up. Mysterio dives on them all but walks into South Of Heaven for the pin at 16:26.

Rating: C+. This picked up near the end but it felt like they were in slow motion for some reason. Priest would do something and then stand around a lot, almost like he didn't want to do anything to Mysterio. What matters is Priest gets a nice win over a star like Mysterio, as he could use the extra lifts to make him feel more like one of the top stars around here.

Post match Drew McIntyre runs in to lay out Priest but Finn Balor cuts off the Claymore. McIntyre takes out the team and loads up the announcers' table but walks into South Of Heaven through the table to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. This show did a nice job of setting things up for the pay per view, as we got at least two matches all but set for the show, while also mixing in some good enough wrestling. This week was about getting the Judgment Day back on track and they had a fairly strong night all things considered. On the whole, WWE is getting their TV down to a formula and the good thing is it's a formula that makes for

some solid week to week shows. I don't feel bored watching Raw most weeks and I didn't again here, with the stories being interesting enough to keep me engaged for three hours.

Results

Ludwig Kaiser b. Sheamus – Kick to the knee

Finn Balor b. Dragon Lee – Coup de Grace

Bron Breakker b. Ricochet – Spear

Kiana James b. Natalya – 401K

Braun Strowman b. Carlito – Reverse chokeslam

Bianca Belair/Jade Cargill b. Shayna Baszler/Zoey Stark via DQ when Alba Fyre and Isla Dawn interfered

Authors Of Pain b. New Day – What A Rush to Woods

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Smackdown – May 31, 2024:

Needs More Salmon

Smackdown

Date: May 31, 2024

Location: MVP Arena, Albany, New York

Commentators: Corey Graves, Wade Barrett

We are just over two weeks away from Clash At The Castle and the show needs to start coming together. In addition, we still have some fallout from King And Queen Of The Ring, including the official coronation of Queen Nia Jax. Finally, the Bloodline is in action tonight, which feels rather important. Let's get to it.

[Here is King And Queen Of The Ring if you need a recap.](#)

King And Queen Of The Ring recap.

Here is Nick Aldis to introduce Nia Jax for her coronation. Jax brags about the win and demands that Bayley come to the ring right now. Cue Bayley but Piper Niven and Chelsea Green jump her from behind. Bayley gets crushed but Green tells Jax to be ready to face Niven at Summerslam instead. This was to the point and that's what it needed to be.

AJ Styles goes on to see Nick Aldis and asks for some time to say something, but he only wants to say it once. Aldis agrees.

Naomi checks on Bayley in the trainer's room and Bayley is good to go tonight.

Tommaso Ciampa vs. Austin Theory

Both partners are here too. Ciampa elbows him in the face to start and hammers away, only to walk into a brainbuster onto the knee. Theory gets in some knees in the corner and a hanging neckbreaker to the floor puts Ciampa down again as we take a break. Back with Ciampa fighting out of a chinlock but getting elbowed in the face for his efforts.

Ciampa fights up again and hits a hard clothesline, setting up a reverse DDT for two. Theory gets in another shot but A Town Down is blocked. Waller goes to yell at commentary for some reason and seems to claim credit for Theory's success. That allows the distracted Ciampa to roll Theory up for the pin at 8:45.

Rating: C+. We continue the fairly slow build towards DIY challenging for the Tag Team Titles, though the champs having some issues makes it a bit more interesting. The idea of "tag teams in singles matches" has been done for years and it's only going to get them so far. For now though, it's better than DIY losing another match.

Naomi comes in to see Nick Aldis and, after a mini argument with Blair Davenport, gets a tag match with Bayley against Chelsea Green and Piper Niven. With the women gone, LA Knight comes in to ask if Aldis knows where he can find Logan Paul. Well that's interesting.

We look at Cody Rhodes defeating Logan Paul to retain the WWE Universal Title at King And Queen Of The Ring.

LA Knight says Logan Paul isn't here this week, but Knight IS here, so he'll make it clear: he wants the US Title. Carmelo Hayes comes in to suggest he's a better candidate for a title shot.

Andrade vs. Apollo Crews

Earlier today, Andrade turned down an invitation to Legado del Fantasma. Andrade snaps off a dropkick to start and slowly stomps away but here is Angel for a distraction. A dropkick sends Andrade to the floor and us to a break. Back with Andrade hitting a high crossbody to leave both of them down. Andrade strikes away and the running knees gives hit Crews for two. Crews is back with the gorilla press drop into the standing moonsault for two. Andrade isn't having this and elbows him in the face, setting up the double underhook

swinging DDT for the pin at 7:04.

Rating: C+. This was a match where the commercial took away so much of the energy, as there is only so much you can do with seven minutes including a break. Crews' athleticism continues to be impressive but his ship has long since sailed. As for Andrade, a feud with Legado is better than nothing, but it's not the most thrilling concept.

Post match Andrade walks past Legado del Fantasma so Angel seems ready to deal with this.

Solo Sikoa tells the Bloodline to deal with it when Paul Heyman comes in. Heyman has been trying to make things better for the team but he sees random acts of violence with no bigger plan. He thinks they need Cody Rhodes in check for when Roman Reigns comes back but Sikoa says we already do. Heyman: "With all due respect, who is we?" The answer is cut off by Kevin Owens coming to the ring, with Sikoa telling Heyman to go deal with this. Heyman is starting to snap under the pressure and that opens up a lot of possibilities.

Apollo Crews jumps Angel.

Kevin Owens is in the ring and says he was in Saudi Arabia to help Randy Orton in person. Orton has had his back for weeks now and...here is Paul Heyman to interrupt. Heyman is sounding rather nervous as he says he hopes to come to a mutual understanding with Owens. The fans want Roman but Heyman says no one wants him here more than Heyman himself.

Heyman talks about how Reigns respects Owens but Solo Sikoa and the new members of the Bloodline are going to hurt him. He begs Owens to back off but Owens doesn't quite buy the kind offer. Owens thinks Heyman sees Sikoa as his next cash cow. In four years of fighting the Bloodline, Owens has been superkicked thirty times at once and thrown off high things, but he's never going to stop fighting to get rid of them.

He neither wants nor needs Heyman's help, so Heyman goes on a rant about how he might be trying to redeem himself. Heyman says he is a Hall of Fame wise man and is worried about Sikoa taking over the entire Bloodline SO WHY WILL NO ONE LISTEN TO HIM??? Heyman goes so nuts that he throws the mic and hits Owens, who appears ready to destroy him. Cue the Bloodline but the Street Profits (set to face the Bloodline tonight) run in to even things up. Angelo Dawkins hits a big flip dive to take out the Tongas. And there is Heyman snapping, which is not going to go well for him. I'm not sure how soon Reigns is going to come back, but dang they have a wide open field with this thing and it's great.

Bloodline vs. Street Profits

Joined in progress with Ford firing off shoulders to Tama in the corner and Dawkins coming in for a double belly to back suplex. Loa gets in a cheap shot though and hammers away on the floor as Paul Heyman is looking terrified on the floor. A slingshot elbow hits Ford but he gets over for the tag to Dawkins. House is quickly cleaned but it's back to Loa off a blind tag to run Dawkins over. A Saito suplex connects and Dawkins is taken outside for a ram into the announcers' table.

We take a break and come back with Tama hammering away as Heyman is looking even worse. Dawkins manages to suplex his way out of trouble and it's a double tag to bring in Ford and Loa. The Profits take over and grab a Doomsday Blockbuster, with Tama having to make the save. Tama gets in a blind tag so Ford's frog splash to Loa means nothing. Back up and Ford walks into the jumping Downward Spiral for the pin at 12:12.

Rating: B-. This was a way to make the Bloodline look good because the Profits are a pretty established team for them to take down. I'm not sure if the feud continues whenever Bobby Lashley is back, but it might be time for the Profits to move on to something else. For now though, the Bloodline looks good and that's what matters.

Indi Hartwell is upset at Jade Cargill and Bianca Belair for injuring Candice LeRae...but not upset enough to agree to face Cargill.

Michin is asked about AJ Styles but Nia Jax interrupts. That doesn't work for Michin, which REALLY does not work for Jax.

Chelsea Green/Piper Niven vs. Bayley/Naomi

Green runs from Bayley to start and hands it to Niven, who crushes Bayley in the corner. That doesn't seem to matter much as Bayley fights up and hits a clothesline on Green. Naomi comes in and knocks Green to the floor, with the villains being beaten down as we take a break.

Back with Niven missing an elbow, allowing the tag back to Naomi. A running basement dropkick in the corner sets up a split legged moonsault, with Niven having to make a save. The Rear View gets two more with Niven making another save with a backsplash. Niven puts Green on top for the pin at 8:30.

Rating: C. Another pretty to the point match here, with Niven getting to look strong as we are coming up on a show in her home country. Bayley is going to need a title challenger and putting her in there against Niven for the title could be a heck of a moment. The match was just good enough, with Naomi taking the fall to build Niven up that much more.

LA Knight runs into AJ Styles in the back and says if the rumors are true, he respects Styles. With Knight gone, Styles runs into Cody Rhodes and they shake hands. Styles hugs the OC, who have his back out there tonight.

Here is Styles, with the OC, for his big announcement. Styles talks about how he has dwelt on Nick Aldis saying he had to earn another title shot for a week. At this point in his career, he can't do that though, and we pause for some applause. He just got to have his son's graduation party and it made him wonder how many of them he missed. Maybe it's time

he became a phenomenal father. Styles thanks the OC for being there and they do the pose one more time. There's one more thing though, and Styles would like Cody Rhodes out here.

Cue Rhodes, with Styles saying their match at Backlash was one of their best ever. This is still the house that Styles built and Rhodes says they shared their first text after that match. Styles called Rhodes his little bro, but Rhodes says Styles is a good big bro. They have a hug and Rhodes holds Styles' arm up, only for Styles to channel his inner Mark Henry and beat him down.. The Styles Clash from the steps to the floor drops Rhodes to end the show. They weren't exactly hiding what they were going for here and that works well enough, as having another title match between them at Clash will be a fine way to go.

Overall Rating: B. This was a show with good enough action, but the main positives came from the storytelling. Odds are we have a Smackdown main event set for Clash, plus Heyman losing his mind and Bayley probably set to defend against Niven. As usual lately, WWE knows how to move things forward while having completely acceptable (at worst) wrestling and that makes for a very easy watch.

Results

Tommaso Ciampa b. Austin Theory – Rollup

Andrade b. Apollo Crews – Double underhook swinging DDT

Bloodline b. Street Profits – Jumping Downward Spiral to Ford

Piper Niven/Chelsea Green b. Bayley/Naomi – Backsplash to Naomi

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King And Queen Of The Ring 2024: Needed A Pre-Knuck

King And Queen Of The Ring 2024

Date: May 25, 2024

Location: Jeddah Super Dome, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves

It's tournament time, as we have the finals of the King and Queen Of The Ring tournaments. That makes the show's title about as appropriate as you can get, but there are some other things going on as well. Cody Rhodes is defending the WWE Title against Logan Paul and Liv Morgan is challenging Becky Lynch for the Raw Women's Title. Let's get to it.

Kickoff Show: Women's Tag Team Titles: Indi Hartwell/Candice LeRae vs. Bianca Belair/Jade Cargill

Cargill and Belair are defending and Cargill sends Hartwell flying with a fall away slam to start. Belair comes in and gets slammed onto Hartwell before firing off the shoulders to LeRae's ribs. LeRae slips out of a gorilla press as Belair's bad knee gives out and the villains have a target. Belair gets taken into the wrong corner so LeRae and Hartwell can take turns on the knee, with LeRae hitting a jumping stomp.

LeRae grabs a half crab (and looks rather bored) but Belair powers out and gets the tag to Cargill. House is quickly cleaned with splashes in the corner, setting up a Batista Bomb for two. Cargill is draped over the middle rope for a Swanton from LeRae and a missile dropkick connects. Unfortunately it sends her into the corner for the tag to Belair, who comes in to clean house. A DDT into an assisted German suplex finishes LeRae to retain at 7:58.

Rating: C. There was a clock airing during this match, counting down the time until the show proper started. They might as well have had a countdown until the champs retained here, as this was little more than a guaranteed successful title defense. Nothing to see here other than the champs getting in a nice workout over some low level challengers.

The opening video looks at how winning the tournaments can be the start of something big.

Raw Women's Title: Becky Lynch vs. Liv Morgan

Lynch is defending and wearing something close to a tuxedo as she wrestles Liv, looking quite a bit like Britney Spears, to the mat in an image I wasn't expecting. Back in and Liv breaks up the middle rope legdrop before crashing into Lynch for two. We hit the seated armbar for a bit before Lynch fights up, only to get sent into the corner. A double knockdown gives both of them a breather.

Back up and Lynch hits a missile dropkick for two but it's too early for the Disarm-Her. Liv plants her down for two but misses a charge into the corner, allowing Lynch to hit something like a clothesline for two. Oblivion is countered into a reverse hanging DDT for two more and they're both down again. Back up and Morgan hits a running knee for two before it's time to slug it out.

The cross armbreaker is countered into the Rings Of Saturn but Lynch stacks her up, only to get pulled right back in. Lynch

gets an armbreaker but here is Dominik Mysterio, with the distraction letting Liv reverse the Manhandle Slam into a Codebreaker. Liv goes up but gets superplexed back down. With the referee checking on Liv, Dominik slides in a chair, seemingly to Becky, but gets on the apron to distract the referee. That's enough for Liv to hit a DDT onto the chair, followed by Oblivion for the pin and the title at 14:38.

Rating: C+. The story here is the title change, but also the way in which Liv won it. I'm curious to see just how things going, as Rhea Ripley is not going to be happy with what just happened. Liv getting the title, only to get smashed by Ripley when she gets back, is a smart way to go, as Lynch was little more than a placeholder champion in the first place.

Dominik knows he screwed up.

We recap the Intercontinental Title match, with Sami Zayn (the soul) defending against Chad Gable (the mind) and Bronson Reed (the body). This is mainly about Zayn vs. Gable, with Reed being there as a wrecking ball as a danger to both of them.

Intercontinental Title: Sami Zayn vs. Chad Gable vs. Bronson Reed

Zayn is defending and gets a heck of a reaction while Otis is here with Gable. We start fast with both challengers being sent to the floor, where Zayn hits a slingshot dive onto Reed. Gable jumps him from behind though as the OLE chants are out in full force. Back in and Reed runs Zayn down before release Rock Bottoming him onto Gable. Zayn gets tied in the ring skirt and pummeled by Gable, who missile dropkicks Reed.

Back up and Zayn sends Gable to the floor and hits a big running flip dive onto both of them. A sunset bomb gives Zayn two on Reed but the Blue Thunder Bomb just isn't happening. Reed is back with a superplex to Zayn but misses a moonsault. Gable's moonsault hits Reed for two, with Zayn having to make a save. Zayn's tornado DDT gets two on Reed with Gable making

the save and getting an ankle lock.

Reed goes to make a save but gets ankle locked, leaving Zayn to ankle lock Gable at the same time. Another save is broken up and Zayn hits a rather impressive Blue Thunder Bomb for two on Reed. Back up and Reed Samoan drops both of them to the floor, setting up a heck of a suicide dive.

The Tsunami misses Zayn, who rolls some German suplexes to Gable. Reed German suplexes them both at the same time but they get together to put Reed down. Gable is ready for Otis to interfere but Otis can't bring himself to hit Zayn. Instead Gable slaps Otis and tells him to wake up, only for Otis to clothesline Gable, intentions unclear. That leaves Zayn to Helluva Kick Reed for the pin to retain at 13:48.

Rating: B. There were some rather impressive spots here, with Zayn showing off some nice power stuff against Reed. What matters here though is Otis accidentally (maybe) taking out Gable, which is likely going to be an issue going forward. Zayn retaining is the right call as he only won the title about a month and a half ago, so he very well could be in for a long reign to come.

We recap the Queen Of The Ring finals, with Lyra Valkyria from Raw and Nia Jax from Smackdown.

Queen Of The Ring: Lyra Valkyria vs. Nia Jax

Valkyria can't grab a crucifix to start but can flip out o a whip into the corner. Jax gets sent outside and there's a running dropkick to stagger her. Back in and Jax tries the Samoan drop but gets reversed into a sleeper. That's broken up with a ram into the corner, followed by an elbow to the back for two. Valkyria gets tied in the Tree of Woe and then knocked back out, setting up the chinlock.

The comeback doesn't last long as Jax plants her with the Samoan drop for two more. The Annihilator misses (Jax: "OH

THAT HURT!") and Valkyria hits a bulldog on the floor for a breather. Back in and Valkyria grabs a tornado DDT for two, followed by a middle rope Fameasser for the same. Jax splashes her in the corner though and tries a super Samoan drop. That's reversed into something resembling a sunset bomb but Jax hits an Annihilator to the standing Valkyria for the pin and the crown at 9:44.

Rating: C. There was only so much that Valkyria could do here as she doesn't have the size or power to hang with Jax. Valkyria got her big run to the finals before getting crushed by Jax with that insane Annihilator. There is a good chance that Jax wins the title at Summerslam, but it's a long road to get there.

Post match HHH comes out to crown Jax. With HHH gone, Jax says get ready to get really mad.

Becky Lynch yells at Dominik Mysterio and doesn't know what's going on with anyone. She has a rematch though and she's going to take it on Raw.

We recap Gunther and Randy Orton's paths to the finals of the King Of The Ring.

Tiffany Stratton and Carmelo Hayes are here watching.

King Of The Ring: Gunther vs. Randy Orton

They lock up to start until Gunther backs him into the corner for the clean break. Orton backs him into the corner as well but the break isn't quite as clean with some rather nasty grappling. Gunther grabs an armbar for a bit before Orton is back up with a headlock. A headlock takeover puts Gunther down as we're somehow five minutes into this. Back up and Orton blocks a chop and hammers away but the RKO is blocked.

Gunther starts slowly working on the (taped up) knee before grabbing an armbar to mix things up a bit. The slow beating is

on, with Orton being dropped hard to bang up the back even more. They fight over a suplex until Orton gets him over for the double down. Back up and Gunther runs him over with a clothesline for two but Orton snaps off a powerslam. The hanging DDT connects but another RKO is blocked, allowing Gunther to hit the top rope splash for two.

A top rope double stomp misses though and Orton hits the RKO, sending Gunther rolling out to the floor. Orton drops him onto the announcers' table and then hits a backdrop, only to have Gunther dropkick him in the bad knee on the way back in. A half crab stays on the bad leg but Orton kicks him away and hits another RKO for two (because the knee won't let Orton cover properly), only to be rolled up for the pin at 21:48. Ignore Orton's shoulder being six inches off the mat.

Rating: A-. This was a long and slow paced match with Gunther working on the knee and then tying it together in the end. What matters here is the fact that Gunther got a bit win and gets to move on to Summerslam, where he gets his major title match. The shoulder being up at the end was awful, but the rest of the match was hard hitting enough to make up for the problem.

Post match Gunther brags about winning and promises to win the World Title at Summerslam.

Crown Jewel is in Riyadh on November 2.

HHH congratulates Liv Morgan, Nia Jax and Gunther on their wins. As for a big announcement, Drew McIntyre is cleared to return to the ring and will face Damian Priest at Clash At The Castle for the World Heavyweight Title. That almost had to be set up so at least they didn't wait too long.

We recap Logan Paul vs. Cody Rhodes for the Smackdown World Title. It was originally title vs. title but instead it's just for Rhodes' title as Paul backed out. Rhodes accused him of being self centered and not willing to go further than he has

already gotten. There is also the question of whether or not Paul has actually given up his brass knuckles.

Smackdown World Title: Logan Paul vs. Cody Rhodes

Rhodes is defending (Paul's US Title isn't on the line) and Michael Cole has Paul's brass knuckles. A Saudi actor is guest ring announcer and we're ready to go. Feeling out process to start and fight over a top wristlock. Paul trips him down but Cody is back up with a slingshot gordbuster. A crossbody misses for Cody though and he falls to the floor, where Paul hits a slingshot dive.

Back in and a faceplant gives Paul two, followed by a standing moonsault for the same. Paul goes up but gets super armdragged down (with Cody kind of crashing on the landing), but being able to hit a Disaster Kick to send Paul outside. Paul manages to get a shot of Prime but Cody hits him in the face with it. Hold on though as Paul's Prime goon shoves Cody, which is enough of a distraction for another goon to slip Paul some brass knuckles. Cole: "YOU SIGNED A PRE-KNUCK!"

Paul hits him in the ribs but goes after Cole, allowing Cody to get in a quick shot of his own. Cody hammers away back inside and grabs the Figure Four but Paul gets out. Back up and the Buckshot Lariat misses, allowing the Cody Cutter to connect for two. Paul reverses a Vertebreaker and grabs a Cross Rhodes for two of his own in a nice near fall. Cody puts him down again but the Cross Rhodes is countered. They head back outside with Paul loading up the announcers' table (apologizing to Cole in the process) but takes too long, allowing Cody to hit a Cody Cutter off the barricade.

Cody won't let the referee count though, as Paul "needs to learn". Paul uses the delay to put Cody on the announcers' table and, after a shot of Prime (dig the 360 camera shot), hit the top rope splash through Cody and the table. Back in and a frog splash gives Paul two and, after telling Cody he

hates him, he hammers away. The referee gets splashed in the corner and now Cody hits the Vertebreaker for no count. Paul hits him low and loads up the knuckles...but the actor grabs his leg. That's enough for Cody to grab three straight Cross Rhodes to retain the title at 24:16.

Rating: B+. It's been said over and over again but Paul is WAY too good at this for someone who was barely a part timer until just a few months ago. Paul losing due to some shenanigans from an actor is a nice enough way to protect him and he's still US Champion. They had a heck of a match here and managed to follow the near classic in the previous match.

Cody gets to celebrate with the fans and kiss the mat to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. This show took its time to get going but the last two matches were both awesome, with the Intercontinental Title match being more than good enough to hold its own. As usual, these shows are much better when they're regular WWE events that happen to be in Saudi Arabia and that was the case again here. Summerslam is partially set and now we get to see how things are set up to fill in the rest of the show. I had a nice time with this show and now we get to see where the summer goes, which could be quite the positive trip.

Results

Bianca Belair/Jade Cargill b. Indi Hartwell/Candice LeRae – Assisted German suplex to LeRae

Liv Morgan b. Becky Lynch – Oblivion

Sami Zayn b. Chad Gable and Bronson Reed – Helluva Kick to Reed

Nia Jax b. Lyra Valkyria – Annihilator

Gunther b. Randy Orton – Rollups

Cody Rhodes b. Logan Paul – Cross Rhodes

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King And Queen Of The Ring 2024 Preview

It's time to go back to Saudi Arabia for what will be...well if nothing else the show with the longest title in a long time. The show is built around the namesake tournament finals, plus a few other matches. This week saw WWE add some major stakes to the tournaments by putting World Title shots at Summerslam up for grabs, so they are about more than just the crown. Let's get to it.

Kickoff Show: Women's Tag Team Titles: Bianca Belair/Jade Cargill vs. Indi Hartwell/Candice LeRae

I try to start these things with the Kickoff Show matches, followed by the most obvious results. This one should cover both of them, as even with Belair suffering a knee injury, it is hard to imagine that the titles are in jeopardy. Hartwell

and LeRae have been treated as little more than annoyances, so having them be a major threat to the super team is a stretch.

In case you didn't get it, of course I'll go with the champions retaining here as there is no reason to believe anything else will happen. Belair and Cargill are going to lose the titles someday, but they already have Shayna Baszler and Zoey Stark waiting on them. Why should I believe that a far weaker team has any serious chance of beating them in a match made the previous night? The champs retain here without much effort.

Queen Of The Ring: Nia Jax vs. Lyra Valkyria

This is one of those matches where it could go either way and the more you think about the options, the more interesting things get. In this case, I could see either of them getting a title shot at Summerslam. Bayley vs. Jax and Valkyria vs. Becky Lynch both make sense, but now the question becomes which of the paths WWE is going to take. That's more that I would have bet on coming in so well done.

With that being said, I'll go with Jax getting the win as WWE wants her to be a big star and needs to give her an important win of some kind. Valkyria has already been turned into a thing by making it this far and doesn't need the win, so go with what makes sense and give Jax the win. I could see Valkyria winning and it would make me rather happy, but I'll go with Jax winning here to make her that much bigger of a monster.

Intercontinental Title: Sami Zayn(c) vs. Bronson Reed vs. Chad Gable

The more I think about Zayn's mind vs. body vs. soul promo from Monday Night Raw, the more I like it. This is a feud that has gotten a lot of mileage out of something that feels like it should have wrapped up weeks ago and that is heavily due to what Gable has been saying. He has sold me on the feud and

that is a great feeling, though it doesn't mean he'll be leaving as champion.

I'll go with the conventional wisdom here and say Zayn manages to retain the title. As much as it would benefit Gable to win the thing, Zayn losing the title, even with potential Otis interference, doesn't feel right here. Zayn retains the title here, likely pinning Reed in the process, but I could see one more big match between Zayn and Gable, hopefully with the latter winning.

Raw Women's Title: Becky Lynch(c) vs. Liv Morgan

This is an interesting one as Lynch is a placeholder champion until Rhea Ripley comes back and rips Morgan to pieces. That opens up an interesting question though, as it could be Ripley coming back for Morgan with the title or Morgan and the title in two separate stories. In theory that would mean Lynch retains here, as Morgan vs. Ripley does not need to be for a championship.

While Morgan needs to win the title to avoid being labeled as a choker, I don't think she does it just yet. There might be a screwy finish here of some kind, but I'll go with Lynch retaining and the feud continuing. Morgan has quite the set of skills and a VERY loyal fan base, but I don't know if that is enough to see her win the title here, as much sense as it would make.

King Of The Ring: Gunther vs. Randy Orton

NOW we're getting somewhere as this could go either way. We would be looking at either Gunther vs. Damian Priest/Drew McIntyre or Orton vs. Cody Rhodes, both of which could make for some awesome moments. Gunther has been waiting to move into the main event scene for a long time now, but Orton has been there for so long that there is always a chance of him sliding right back in. That opens up some interesting options as they both could easily win this.

As much as I could see it being Orton, I'll go with Gunther, who already has his own history with McIntyre, should that be the path they take. Gunther has mostly cleared out the midcard scene and needs some fresh blood, while Orton could lose every night for years and still be fine. I'll go with Gunther winning here, as it's almost hard to imagine him losing again so soon after WrestleMania.

SmackDown World Title: Cody Rhodes(c) vs. Logan Paul

We'll wrap it up here, with Rhodes getting another title match where the result might not be in doubt, but there is something here to make him look that much better. Paul is just enough of a wild card that he could have a shot at a miracle, but what matters is that he has a chance. That shouldn't be much of a surprise as Saudi Arabia seems to be really big fans.

So yeah of course I'm taking Rhodes to retain here, as there is almost no reason to believe otherwise. Rhodes is still relatively early in his title reign that he needs to have another big match with an almost guaranteed win, which is where Paul comes in. Paul can put on some of the most exciting and entertaining matches in WWE today, so having him as the next designated victim is a smart move and could boost him up as well. But yeah, Rhodes retains here, as he should.

Overall Thoughts

WWE has benefited quite a bit from these tournaments, as they have allowed the company to produce quite the string of solid matches over the weeks. Having tournaments lets WWE map things out for weeks to come and now we've reached the big payoff. The rest of the card is stuff that should be good but they'll have their work cut out for the to beat some previous events.

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Smackdown – May 24, 2024: Preview TV

Smackdown

Date: May 24, 2024

Location: Jeddah Super Dome, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Commentators: Wade Barrett, Corey Graves

We're in Saudi Arabia with a taped show before tomorrow's King And Queen Of The Ring. That should make for an interesting show, as we find out the other finalists in both tournaments. WWE has never run a regular TV show from the country before but the crowd should be into things. Let's get to it.

[Here are last week's results if you need a recap.](#)

We open with a look at where Jeddah is in Saudi Arabia. They did that with Backlash and it's a nice idea.

We see an announcement from earlier this week, with HHH saying that the winners of the King and Queen Of The Ring tournaments will receive World Title shots at Summerslam.

Queen Of The Ring Tournament Semifinals: Bianca Belair vs. Nia Jax

Lyra Valkyria, facing the winner in the finals, is watching

from ringside. Jax powers her down to start but Belair is back up with some running shoulders. Some right hands in the corner rock Jax, who misses a charge and goes shoulder first into the post. Belair adds a big slingshot dive and we take a break.

Back with Belair in trouble and Jax crowning herself with a very small crown. Jax goes after the possibly injured knee with a Stretch Muffler but Belair slips out. A Samoan drop plants Belair for two instead but she's fine enough to get up top or a high crossbody. The knee is banged up on the landing so Jax knocks her down again. The Annihilator is teased but Belair is right back up with a powerbomb out of the corner for two. Belair's knee won't let her get the KOD and a backsplash sets up the Annihilator to finish Belair at 11:15.

Rating: C+. They told a story here with the knee and that was good enough for what they needed to do. Jax going against Lyra Valkyria in the finals is a fine way to go, with Valkyria having her David vs. Goliath match. Jax has run through a bunch of stars on the way there (or escaping against Jade Cargill) so she makes sense for the spot in the finals.

Post match Jax talks about buzzing through people, promising to do the same thing to Valkyria tomorrow. She says "buzz/buzzed through" about five times in a minute.

Post break Bianca Belair's knee is banged up when Tiffany Stratton comes in to call her a loser. With Tiffany Stratton gone, Indi Hartwell and Candice LeRae come in to mock her as well. Jade Cargill scares them off and a match is teased.

Here is A-Town Down Under for the Grayson Waller Effect. They waste no time in teasing LA Knight as their guest but Carmelo Hayes interrupts. Hayes thinks they were talking about himself instead of Knight, with Waller agreeing that Hayes is a better guest. The three of them mock various veterans such as Knight, Bobby Lashley and Baron Corbin until Knight interrupts. The beating is on but the Street Profits run in for the save.

Sounds six manish.

Video on Blair Davenport.

Street Profits/LA Knight vs. Carmelo Hayes/A-Town Down Under

Hayes and Ford trade wristlocks to start until it's off to Dawkins for a facebuster. Knight comes in so Hayes bails over to the corner for the tag to Theory. Knight fights out of some cheating and hands it back to Dawkins for an enziguri in the corner. A quick dropkick sends Knight outside and Hayes knocks him down again as we take a break.

Back with Dawkins pulling Hayes out of the air and hitting a t-bone suplex. The tag brings Knight back in to clean house, including the rapid fire stomps in the corner. Hayes blocks the BFT and hits the First 48 as everything breaks down. Knight drives Hayes over the announcers' table, leaving Ford to frog splash Waller for the pin at 9:10.

Rating: C+. I can always go for a good six man tag as it lets extra people get in the ring without getting too messy. The Profits get a boost and might be in line for another title shot down the line, which is a good way to keep them strong. At the same time you have Knight vs. Hayes coming up, which is a match both of them need to win. Nice stuff here as they covered a few stories at once.

Yesterday at the King And Queen Of The Ring Kickoff, Logan Paul gave up his brass knuckles.

Cody Rhodes runs into Randy Orton and wishes him luck in the King Of The Ring. Randy: "Thanks Code Man." Orton is apparently confused, as that's Cody Rhodes, not Cody Lambert.

Summerslam in 2026 is going to be two nights. We don't know where Summerslam 2025 is going to be, but we know the 2026 schedule.

Here is Cody Rhodes for a chat but Logan Paul interrupts

before he can say a word. Paul says he's smarter than Cody but he doesn't need brass knuckles to win the title tomorrow. Cody accuses him of being a cosplaying scared little kid and thinks Paul is carrying another set of brass knuckles. Apparently Michael Cole has the only set of knuckles Paul has ever had, but Cody suggests Paul get checked by a referee.

Paul says check Cody first, with the referee saying Cody is clean. Paul on the other hand has brass knuckles, but says these aren't even his pants. That makes Paul leave, saying he doesn't need them to win anyway. Cody cuts him off and says the knuckles are the difference between them. Paul will do anything to win but Cody wants to be the best. He believes Paul is a wrestler but until he gives it his all, he'll never be on Cody's level. Giving Paul something to think about is interesting, as that could be some long term seed planting.

Randy Orton is ready for Tama Tonga and isn't worried about facing the numbers advantage from the Bloodline.

Bayley runs into Nia Jax, who tells her to keep the title clean until Summerslam.

The Street Profits want the Tag Team Titles but DIY come in to say they want the titles. Tommaso Ciampa even pours out the cup.

Bayley vs. Chelsea Green

Non-title and Piper Niven is here with Green. An early shot staggers Bayley and Green hits a missile dropkick for two. Bayley is sent outside early and we take a quick break. Back with Green getting two off a Rough Ryder but Bayley hits the Rose Plant for the pin at 4:44. We might have seen a minute and a half of the match.

Post match Niven wrecks Bayley.

AJ Styles asks Nick Aldis for one more World Title shot but

Aldis can't do it. Styles has to earn the shot and that takes time. Styles says he doesn't have time, but Aldis can't help.

Video on Andrade, who is ready to show us who he is.

Legado del Fantasma doesn't like Andrade.

Paul Heyman talks to Solo Sikoa and reminds him that Tanga Loa isn't here tonight due to travel restrictions. Sikoa says he knows he's bringing dangerous people into the Bloodline, but he's in charge until Roman Reigns comes back. If Heyman has problems with that, he needs to fix them himself. Heyman brings up a problem with Tama Tonga, who pops up and scares Heyman half to death. Tama is ready to win the King Of The Ring.

King And Queen Of The Ring rundown.

King Of The Ring Semifinals: Randy Orton vs. Tama Tonga

Gunther is watching in the front row and Solo Sikoa/Paul Heyman are here too. Tonga slugs away in the corner to start but Orton is back with a fall away slam. They head outside where Tonga flips out of a drop onto the announcers' table and takes out Orton's knee as we take a break.

Back with Tonga working on the knee, including another shot to set up a sleeper. Orton breaks that up with a drive into the corner but Tonga grabs it again. Another break lets Orton snap off the powerslam but the knee gives out again. The hanging DDT is countered with a backdrop to the floor, where Orton drops Tonga onto the announcers' table. Back in and the hanging DDT connects but Sikoa gets up on the apron. That's broken up in a hurry and the RKO gives Orton the pin at 11:07.

Rating: B-. While I'm not surprised that Orton won, I'm a bit surprised that he won that way. Tonga losing clean so soon is a little weird, though losing to Orton is hardly some career killer. There was no way it would be Gunther vs. Tonga for the

finals though, so it was more a matter of how Orton would get there rather than how he would get there.

Post match Sikoa jumps Orton but Kevin Owens runs in for the save.

Overall Rating: B-. The wrestling wasn't quite as hot this week but it helped that the show had a list of things it needed to accomplish. This show took care of the two tournament finals and the Women's Tag Team Title match (on the apparently two hour long Kickoff Show, because that's a thing) while also setting up some things for later. In other words, it's a WWE show under the HHH formula and as a result, it went pretty well. Tomorrow is what matters, and for once this show had a direct hand in setting that up.

Results

Nia Jax b. Bianca Belair – Annihilator

LA Knight/Street Profits b. A-Town Down Under/Carmelo Hayes – Frog splash to Waller

Bayley b. Chelsea Green – Rose Plant

Randy Orton b. Tama Tonga – RK0

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Smackdown – May 17, 2024: Those Things Help

Smackdown

Date: May 17, 2024

Location: VyStar Veterans Memorial Coliseum, Jacksonville, Florida

Commentators: Corey Graves, Wade Barrett

We are just over a week away from King And Queen Of The Ring and that means it is time to start getting ready for the tournament finals. Other than that, we need to get ready for the World Title match between Cody Rhodes and Logan Paul, meaning it's time for a contract signing. Let's get to it.

[Here are last week's results if you need a recap.](#)

We open with a King And Queen Of The Ring recap.

Queen Of The Ring Quarterfinals: Bianca Belair vs. Tiffany Stratton

Belair powers her into the corner a few times to start but Stratton gets smart by pulling her down by the hair. Back up and Belair runs her over with a shoulder, followed by a gutbuster. A standing moonsault gives Belair two and Stratton is sent outside, where she uses the hair to pull Belair down again. Belair is sent knee first into the steps and we take a break.

Back with Stratton grabbing an Indian Deathlock and bridging up to stay on the bad knee. Belair makes the rope and the knee is ok enough to snap off a fall away slam. The KOD is countered and Belair puts her down for two of her own. A

handspring elbow is countered into a German suplex to plant Stratton again. With nothing else working, Stratton goes evil by raking the eyes and taking out the knee again. The Prettiest Moonsault Ever is blocked though and Belair grabs the KOD for the win at 13:24.

Rating: B. It's almost weird seeing Stratton lose when she is looking like such a star, but at the same time, Belair is on a different level and has been one of the biggest stars in WWE for a long time. I could very easily see her winning the world title and it wouldn't be a shock. Stratton's big moment is coming though, as I would be rather surprised if she wasn't Women's Champion before the end of the year.

Post match Belair says her knee is banged up but nothing is stopping her.

We look at Logan Paul being named as Cody Rhodes' next challenger.

Logan Paul runs into LA Knight and tensions flare.

Jade Cargill is ready for the irresistible force because Nia Jax is just standing in her way. Bianca Belair comes in and they're ready to face each other if we get there.

We look back at Solo Sikoa telling Paul Heyman that Roman Reigns has put Solo in charge of the Bloodline.

Tama Tonga is ready to go and makes various noises as he leaves the Bloodline's locker room. Paul Heyman asks Solo Sikoa if he talked to him today. Solo: "All the time wise man. All the time."

LA Knight is ready for Tama Tonga. Carmelo Hayes comes in to offer Knight the chance to welcome him to Smackdown. Knight isn't impressed and hits his catchphrase before telling Hayes to go play somewhere.

King Of The Ring Quarterfinals: Tama Tonga vs. LA Knight

The Bloodline is here with Tonga. The fight is on to start with Knight hammering away but getting clotheslined down for his efforts. A backdrop gets Knight out of trouble and there's a running knee in the corner to rock Tama. Solo Siko offers a distraction though and Tama hits a running shot in the corner.

We take a break and come back with Tama hitting a basement clothesline but missing a top rope splash. Knight clotheslines him to the floor and rams Tama face first into the apron over and over. Back in and Tonga Loa pulls Tama back to the floor, earning himself a dropkick through the ropes. That's enough of a distraction for Tama to grab the jumping Downward Spiral for the pin at 8:50.

Rating: C+. Knight winning here didn't feel like the strongest bet as Tama is being kept strong, meaning a deep run is more likely. The only way I could have seen Knight moving forward was off a DQ or something similar, but giving him the pinfall win makes more sense. At some point Knight needs to win something though, as the fans are only going to stay behind so many big losses.

Post break Knight isn't happy with the numbers game from the Bloodline and runs into Carmelo Hayes, who mocks him for the loss. Shoving ensues.

Here is Nick Aldis for the Logan Paul/Cody Rhodes contract signing. Paul comes to the ring with his entourage while Rhodes is on his own. Rhodes says thirty two years ago today, right here in Jacksonville, WarGames 1992 took place. He knows this because he's a fan, while Paul is just passing through. Paul needs to step aside and leave that US Title in good hands on the way out. Paul says he's heard this since the beginning and he's here to sign a contract. The fans are all over Paul, who calls them a horrible crowd.

Paul looks to sign, but then tears the deal up. His lawyer brings out his own contract, saying it's just for the WWE

Title and not the US Title. Aldis won't stand for this but Rhodes tells Aldis that he's got this. With that, Aldis leaves and Paul signs, saying Rhodes hasn't earned a US Title shot. Rhodes calls him a human hat rack and promises that Mike Tyson is going to knock Paul's brother out next weekend. The brawl is on and Rhodes clears Paul out before sending one of the entourage through a table. The fans hate Paul and love Rhodes so this was a hot segment.

Nia Jax isn't scared of Jade Cargill.

Queen Of The Ring Quarterfinals: Nia Jax vs. Jade Cargill

Nia shoulders her down to start but misses a backsplash. They're on the floor rather quickly, with Nia yelling at Jade's daughter in the front row. The fired up Jade sends her into the announcers' table but gets sent into the timekeeper's area. Jax grabs a chair but Jade takes it away and hits her with it for the DQ at 2:10. That was their "get Jade out of the tournament free" card but dang did it feel rather lame.

Post match the brawl is on with referees having to break it up.

DIY vs. Angel/Berto

The rest of Legado del Fantasma is here with Angel/Berto and A-Town Down Under is on commentary. Gargano hurricanranas and armdrags Berto to start and it's off to Ciampa for a clothesline. DIY hit stereo slingshot dives and the villains are down on the floor. Angel low bridges Ciampa to the floor though and we take a break. Back with Ciampa enziguring his way to freedom but Gargano gets pulled off the apron. The Garza Special (Gory Bomb/flipping cutter combination) gets two on Ciampa but he manages to knock Garza back anyway. The hot tag brings in Gargano to clean house until Elektra Lopez grabs his foot. That's enough for an ejection, leaving DIY to hit Meet In The Middle for the pin on Berto at 8:37.

Rating: C. I like DIY from their NXT days but there isn't much to them here. They're the definition of "just kind of there", with some ok matches and nothing memorable about them whatsoever. Nothing makes them stand out and while they'll probably get the PPV title match, it's going to be really hard to get invested in the match. They need something other than "we work hard" because the rest of the division is rapidly passing them by.

Commentary talks about the weird QR codes and see a clip from a therapist, I believe the same one from the Bray Wyatt White Rabbit clips, asking someone if they're ok since their last session. Graves even mentions remembering what happened the last time the QR codes started popping up.

AJ Styles isn't sure where he goes next after back to back losses. Next week, he's going to Nick Aldis and find out where he goes from here.

Bayley is asked about the Queen Of The Ring but Piper Niven and Chelsea Green interrupt. Chelsea blames Bayley for Niven's loss but Bayley will face Chelsea next week instead.

King Of The Ring Quarterfinals: Randy Orton vs. Carmelo Hayes

They take their time to start until Hayes gets in a single shot, which has Orton less than pleased. Orton sends him into the post a few times and then over the top for the crash to the floor. Hayes avoids being dropped onto the announcers' table, poses on the table, and then gets dropped onto it. Orton does it again and we take a break.

Back with Hayes working on the leg until Orton makes the clothesline comeback. Hayes avoids the powerslam though and Orton tweaks the knee again to slow things back down. The second attempt connects to give Orton two but Hayes hits the First 48 for the same. Nothing But Net misses though and Orton grabs the hanging DDT. The RKO is countered so Hayes tries a springboard, only to dive into the RKO for the pin at 10:27.

Rating: B-. They're giving Hayes the "he's losing but he's losing to top stars" treatment, which sounds good on paper but he's going to need to beat some people eventually. Corbin was a good start last week, but he can't have that be his one big win for the next several months. Other than that, Hayes did a good job here against a legend before ultimately falling, which isn't a bad way to spend your fourth week on Smackdown.

The Bloodline comes out for the staredown but Orton says he isn't scared because he is Randy Freaking Orton. An RKO is promised to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. The tournaments have been good to WWE TV in recent weeks as they have allowed the shows to be built up with one strong match after another. Save for a two minute Cargill vs. Jax match, that was the situation again here as the tournament semifinals are both set for next week. Add in a hot contract signing and what should be one of the last steps before the QR stuff is revealed and we should be getting somewhere. Solid show here, and if have something better than the DIY match, it goes even higher.

Results

Bianca Belair b. Tiffany Stratton – KOD

Tama Tonga b. LA Knight – Jumping Downward Spiral

Nia Jax b. Jade Cargill via DQ when Cargill used a chair

DIY b. Angel/Berto – Meet In The Middle to Berto

Randy Orton b. Carmelo Hayes – RKO

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Smackdown – May 10, 2024: Designed For Awesome

Smackdown

Date: May 10, 2024

Location: Mohegan Sun Arena, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Corey Graves, Wade Barrett

We are done with Backlash and have about two weeks to go before King And Queen Of The Ring. That means it's time to work on both tournaments, but I'm sure there will be some other matches on the show. Those could use a start as well and hopefully we get some of that covered this week. Let's get to it.

[Here is Backlash if you need a recap.](#)

We open with along Backlash recap.

Here is Nick Aldis in the ring to get things going and he bring out Cody Rhodes for a chat. Aldis knows that Cody wants to defend against the best and Cody's next challenger has been determined. Cody is game so here is...Logan Paul. Cody thinks he knows what Paul wants to talk about and yes it would be a champion vs. champion match to kick off the Logan Paul Levesque Era (that's clever).

Paul talks about a fan having a sign in the crowd saying it's his birthday, with Paul saying congratulations in meeting a superstar, as in himself. Cody is cool too, but the fans think Paul's Prime drink sucks. After listing off the nutritional facts of Prime, Paul asks how Cody can finish the story when it isn't his story.

Cody: "I bet a lot of people stand across from you and say "what a dumba**." Cody praises Paul's accomplishments and thinks winning the US Title would make him a Grand Slam Champion. The problem is Paul can't win a match without going for those brass knuckles and he'll find out reality at King And Queen Of The Ring. There's no story between them but the title match is in about two weeks so setting things up that fast is a smart way to go.

AJ Styles blames his loss to Cody Rhodes on the French fans at Backlash. Now he's ready to win the King Of The Ring tournament to get closer to a title shot.

Queen Of The Ring First Round: Nia Jax vs. Naomi

Jax runs her over to start but Naomi manages to avoid a charge. Naomi kicks her out to the floor but gets planted with a Samoan drop to crush her rather hard. We take a break and come back with Jax draping her over the top rope, only to get sunset flipped. Jax's sitdown splash misses and Naomi scores with a Disaster Kick of all things. The split legged moonsault gets two and Jax is sat up top for a super hurricanrana (that was impressive) for the same. That's enough for Jax, who hits a hard shoulder and drops the leg. The Annihilator finishes Naomi at 10:07.

Rating: C+. This was about what you would expect, as Naomi was doing her athletic stuff and sticking and running until Jax caught her with the power game. Jax going forward is the right move as someone beating her would make for a special moment. Or she could win the whole thing to give her something else to

brag about, because she doesn't do it enough already.

Baron Corbin is glad to be back after finding himself in NXT. Carmelo Hayes comes in to say he's going to send him running like Bobby Lashley (who is out injured).

Video on DIY, who want the tag Team Titles.

King Of The Ring First Round: Baron Corbin vs. Carmelo Hayes

Corbin as a good guy is bizarre. Hayes takes him down to start and kicks him in the back, earning one heck of a right hand. Corbin knocks him outside and we take an early break. Back with Corbin elbowing away in the corner but getting dropped onto the turnbuckle. There's a springboard clothesline to drop Corbin again but he's back up with a Death Valley Driver. A brainbuster gives Corbin two but Hayes manages to grab the First 48. Corbin comes back with a clothesline and a suplex into a cutter for two...but Hayes small packages him for the pin at 6:30.

Rating: C+. They didn't have much time here but dang they picked a good bit into it. Corbin losing here is a weird choice as he started fast and the fans were into him. Hayes needed a win coming off his loss to Cody Rhodes during the Draft, which makes me wonder why these two were put together in the first place.

Bayley is interested to see how far Jade Cargill can go in the Queen Of The Ring. Chelsea Green pops in to say Piper Niven will take Cargill out in the first round.

Randy Orton wants to win the King Of The Ring and it starts with an RKO to AJ Styles. He hasn't forgotten about Tama Tonga though, as they might be meeting in the tournament. An angry Orton can make for some good moments and that is what we seem to be seeing here.

Queen Of The Ring First Round: Jade Cargill vs. Piper Niven

Chelsea Green is here with Niven. They yell at each other to start before Niven's running shoulder doesn't get her anywhere. Cargill's shoulder works far better but she charges into something like a Rock Bottom out of the corner. A backsplash crushes Cargill as commentary is already sick of Green's shouting. Back in and Cargill staggers her with a headbutt, setting up a Blue Thunder Bomb. Niven trips her down in the corner and hits the Cannonball, only to take too long going up. Cargill pulls her back down, hits a pump kick, and grabs Jaded for the pin at 5:15.

Rating: C+. This is the kind of match that makes Cargill look all the more impressive, as she was knocked around by the power before going into Beast Mode to win in the end. It was a good showcase for her, but Niven deserves credit of her own. She's a good power wrestler who knows how to use her size to her advantage. Nice stuff here, with Cargill winning with the power display that makes her look even better.

Cargill runs into Bianca Belair as she leaves and dancing ensues.

Shinsuke Nakamura is here to become the pinnacle of Smackdown and no one is safe.

Queen Of The Ring First Round: Candice LeRae vs. Bianca Belair

Indi Hartwell is here with LeRae. They start fast with LeRae being sent outside, where a hurricanrana is blocked. Hartwell gets in a cheap shot though and LeRae starts in with some shots on the knee. Belair grabs a suplex but the knee gives out, though it's fine enough for her to hit the KOD for the pin at 2:55.

We look at Tanga Loa debuting at Backlash as the newest member of the Bloodline.

Paul Heyman comes in to see the rest of the Bloodline, where he mentions that Solo Sikoa is making decisions without Roman

Reigns. Sikoa brings up Heyman pulling Reigns out of the Draft, resulting in them being drafted in the third round. Sikoa has talked to Reigns, and he is in charge, with Heyman as his wise man. An awkward hug ensues. There's your big moment, as Reigns can either come back and correct the wrong he started or say "that's not what I said" or something else entirely. For now though, we should be in for a different Bloodline and that's a cool concept.

Video on Andrade.

King Of The Ring First Round: Angelo Dawkins vs. Tama Tonga

Montez Ford and the rest of the Bloodline are here too (including Tonga, not Tanga, Loa). Tonga starts fast and knocks him into the corner but Dawkins hits a heck of a running shoulder. Ford goes after the Bloodline and Dawkins hits a Sky High for two. The Bloodline takes out Ford though and a jumping Downward Spiral finishes Dawkins at 2:11. Bad finisher aside, Tama gave up a bit more offense than I would have bet on here.

Post match Dawkins gets Spiked as well, leaving Paul Heyman looking worried.

Video on Blair Davenport.

King Of The Ring First Round: AJ Styles vs. Randy Orton

Orton wastes no time in clotheslining him to the floor and we take a break about thirty seconds in. Back with Orton raining down right hands in the corner but Styles scores with a dropkick. They head outside, where Orton drops him onto the barricade but can't hit the hanging DDT.

He can however drop Styles onto the announcers' table and then does it again for a bonus. Back in and Styles is ok enough to go after the knee and we take another break. We come back again with Orton escaping a Calf Crusher attempt and kicking

him in the chest. Orton sends him to the apron, where the bad leg is wrapped around the ropes.

The Phenomenal Forearm is broken up but Styles grabs the Calf Crusher, with Orton grabbing a chinlock of all things for the break. With that broken up, Orton hits the hanging DDT but Styles is back with the Phenomenal Forearm. Orton grabs the rope so Styles loads up the Styles Clash, only to be reversed into the RK0 for the quick pin at 17:29.

Rating: B. It might not have been a classic or anything but these two on their worst day are going to have a good match. They did well here, with Orton going forward and Styles moving on to find someone else to make look good. It's a pairing that could have a good match in their sleep and it was a smart move to put them together in a spot like this.

Overall Rating: B. The good thing about having a show built around two tournaments, especially in the first round, is WWE is able to pick a bunch of awesome, or at least intriguing, matches for the first week. That is what we had here, with some fun stuff and impressive performances. Throw in setting the Bloodline in its new direction and this was a solid as well as important edition of Smackdown.

Results

Nia Jax b. Naomi – Annihilator

Carmelo Hayes b. Baron Corbin – Small package

Jade Cargill b. Piper Niven – Jaded

Bianca Belair b. Candice LeRae – KOD

Tama Tonga b. Angelo Dawkins – Jumping Downward Spiral

Randy Orton b. AJ Styles – RK0

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Backlash 2024: I Hear Voices

Backlash 2024

Date: May 4, 2024

Location: LDLC Arena, Lyon-Decines, France

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves

We're in France for the first time ever for one of these things and if last night's Smackdown crowd is any indication, the fans are going to be going nuts all night. That should help as the card is a bit lackluster, with only five matches. The main event is likely to be Cody Rhodes defending the WWE Universal Title against AJ Styles so let's get to it.

We open with a quick look at Lyon, including where it is on a map of France. That's a nice little touch.

The opening video looks at the show's card, which doesn't take that long.

Bloodline vs. Kevin Owens/Randy Orton

This is Tama Tonga's first televised match in WWE and Paul Heyman (looking terrified) is here with the Bloodline. The

fans sing Orton's song to him in a cool moment and you can tell he's loving this. The brawl is on before the bell and a bunch of referees/agents come out to try and break it up to no avail. Owens beats up security so here is Nick Aldis to say that's enough. That's fine so let's make it a street fight.

The bell rings and the fight goes into the crowd, with Owens hitting Tonga in the back with a chair and the fans counting along as Orton hammers Sikoa. They get back to ringside with the Bloodline getting wrecked with trashcans, trashcan lids and kendo sticks, so let's bring in tables too. Owens splashes Tonga through one of the tables but Sikoa gets in a quick shot and Samoan drops Orton through another.

Tonga is back up to unload on Owens, with trashcan shots and a hip attack crushing him in the corner. Another table is loaded up but Owens sends Sikoa through it in the corner. Tonga blasts Owens with a clothesline as the crowd is wondering where Orton has gone. Cue Orton for the slow staredown with Tonga, including the snap powerslam. Sikoa is back up to send Orton into the announcers' table and clear it off for some more violence.

That takes way too long though and the Spike is reversed into the RKO onto (not through) the table. Owens is back up with some chairs to Tonga's back and loads up four chairs two by two. Tonga catches him up top but Owens hits the swinging superplex through the chairs for the huge crash. Owens covers but Tanga Loa (Tonga's brother) makes the save and hits Orton with the steps. Sikoa Spikes Owens for the pin at 19:35.

Rating: B+. This was absolutely wild and the fans were pushing it even further up the ladder. What mattered here was the fans having a good time as they never get to see this kind of thing live and they were milking the heck out of the whole thing. At the same time you have Loa arriving to seemingly make the new Bloodline that much better. White hot start to the show here and my goodness the crowd is already an all timer.

Post match Loa poses with the Bloodline.

We recap the Smackdown Women's Title match. Bayley won the title back at Wrestlemania and Tiffany Stratton wants the title. Bayley wanted Naomi to get the shot but Stratton interfered and then won a match of her own, setting up the triple threat match.

Smackdown Women's Title: Bayley vs. Naomi vs. Tiffany Stratton

Bayley is defending and the fans rather approve of her. Naomi snaps off some armdrags to start but Bayley is up with an exchange of rollups for two each. Stratton's handspring elbow hits Naomi in the corner and she kicks both of them down a pair of near falls. Naomi is sent outside so Stratton can stomp away on Bayley, who cuts off another handspring. Stratton plants her with an Alabama Slam as Naomi comes back in for the save.

Naomi and Stratton fight out to the floor, where Stratton hits a handspring elbow against the barricade. That earns her a dive from Bayley but Naomi Blockbusters her off the barricade for a big crash. Back in and Naomi's split legged moonsault gets two on Stratton with Bayley making the save. Bayley gets crotched on top, leaving Naomi to powerbomb Stratton into the reverse Rings Of Saturn. That's broken up with a top rope elbow, leaving all three of them down for a breather.

Bayley sunset bombs Naomi into the corner and Bayley to Bellys Stratton for two. Naomi pulls Stratton outside for a beating but gets kicked into the barricade. An Alabama Slam plants Naomi onto the announcers' table and there's the same thing to Bayley. Back in and the Prettiest Moonsault Ever misses, allowing Bayley and Naomi to pop up with a 1D of all things to get rid of Stratton. That leaves Bayley and Naomi to trade rollups until Bayley stacks her up to retain at 12:34.

Rating: B-. This was a match that had its strong points but there were more than a few moments that didn't quite click.

The crowd helped carry them a lot though and that is always a nice weapon to have in the back pocket. What mattered here was the right result, as it's too early for Stratton to win but she didn't take the fall. Good, though not great stuff.

Bayley and Naomi show respect post match.

The Bloodline comes up to Jey Uso but don't say anything.

We recap Damian Priest defending the Raw World Title against Jey Uso. Priest cashed in Money In The Bank to win the title at Wrestlemania and Uso earned the title shot by winning a four way the next night on Raw.

Raw World Title: Jey Uso vs. Damian Priest

Uso is challenging and comes in through the crowd. We get the Big Match Intros and Uso does YEET a lot before hitting Priest in the face. Priest misses a right hand and falls out to the floor but it's too early for the save. Back in and Priest knocks him down to take over as the pace slows way down. Uso ducks another right hand though and grabs a belly to back suplex.

The step up enziguri knocks Priest into the corner but Uso spends too much time yeeting, allowing Priest to send him to the apron. A high crossbody gives Uso two but cue JD McDonagh for a distraction so Priest can hit his own spear for two. Priest is really not happy with McDonagh and yells at him, allowing Uso to hit a superkick into the Superfly Splash for two of his own.

Back up and they slug it out until some superkicks put both of them down. Priest is back with the Razor's Edge for two but South of Heaven is escaped, allowing Uso to spear him for two more. Another Superfly Splash is broken up by an invading Finn Balor and South of Heaven...gets two.

Priest hits a nasty spinning kick to the head and then does it

again but a third is cut off with a superkick. More superkicks set up a spear into the Superfly Splash but McDonagh puts the foot on the rope at two. Uso dives onto McDonagh and spears Balor on the floor before going up top. This time Priest crotches him and hits a super South of Heaven to retain at 15:49.

Rating: C+. This went longer than it needed to but it never reached a terrible point or even got dull. Priest was just enough of a weak champion that you could see Uso having at least a prayer of winning, but ultimately they went with the right move. Priest getting annoyed at Judgment Day is interesting, though I'm not sure it's going to matter with a red hot Drew McIntyre and Clash At The Castle coming up.

Post match Priest is mad at Balor and McDonagh but poses with them.

Video on the European tour.

One of the French announcers announces that this is the largest gate of any arena show in WWE history.

Women's Tag Team Titles: Bianca Belair/Jade Cargill vs. Kabuki Warriors

The Warriors are defending and have Dakota Kai with them. Belair flips away from Asuka to start before having to power out of something like an Octopus hold. It's off to Cargill for some spinning backbreakers on Sane and a double powerbomb drops Sane again. Asuka makes the save and knocks Belair outside, with Sane hitting a big dive to take over. Sane hits a top rope forearm for two more as the fans are wanting the hot tag to Cargill.

Asuka misses a splash but Sane is right there to knock Cargill off the apron and cut off the tag attempt. Asuka strikes Belair down for two and she grabs an armbar, only to have Belair power up for the escape. A hard clothesline drops Sane

and the diving tag brings in Cargill, who springboards in with a crossbody. Cargill Sky High's Sane for two and plants her again with a Widowmaker. The Warriors strike away at Cargill but Sane isn't legal so there's no count.

Everything breaks down and the Warriors both grab submissions, both of which are broken up with powerbombs (that was a rather rough sequence as they did not seem to know what to do for a good while). Belair tags herself back in and it's a DDT into a wheelbarrow suplex for two on Sane. A missed charge sends Belair into the post and the assisted Insane Elbow gets two, with Cargill making the save. Cargill muscles Sand up and flips her into Jaded (that was amazing) and Belair KOD's Asuka onto her for the pin and the titles at 17:41.

Rating: C. This was a match where the aura and atmosphere helped so much. From a technical standpoint it only worked so well, with that stretch in the middle where they clearly got lost looking rather terrible. At the same time though, you have Cargill being able to muscle up a grown woman and spin her around like a doll. That's the part that is likely to be remembered here and it should be, as you do not see someone like Cargill very often. She needs a lot of ring time, but the good things she does are incredibly impressive. As for the match, it needed to be five minutes shorter and it wasn't great, but the end was right.

We recap AJ Styles vs. Cody Rhodes for the WWE Universal Title. Rhodes won the title at Wrestlemania and Styles is the first challenger, wanting to prove he can still do it.

Smackdown World Title: Cody Rhodes vs. AJ Styles

Styles is challenging. Feeling out process to start with Styles' early headscissors getting him nowhere. Back up and Cody dropkicks him down into the corner and even mocks the old Stardust post for good measure. Styles strikes away but gets caught with a backdrop for a delayed one. Rhodes grabs a

rather delayed vertical suplex, only to have his banged up shoulder sent into the post.

Styles stays on the arm until Rhodes avoids a charge to send him throat first into the ropes with a nasty crash. The announcers' table is loaded up but that takes too long as well, allowing Rhodes to fight back. Back in and Rhodes tries a delayed superplex but Styles slips out and they crash to the mat. Styles' Lionsault hits raised knees though and Rhodes slugs away. There's the snap powerslam into the Disaster Kick for two.

The fireman's carry backbreaker gives Styles two and they head to the apron, where Styles brainbusters him down to the floor. Rhodes is back up with a powerbomb through the announcers' table and they're both down again. They dive back in to beat the count and some stereo kicks to the head give us another double down. We get the big pull up in the corner for the slugout, with Rhodes' Bionic Elbow getting two. Neither can get a Tombstone so Styles settles for a suplex into the corner.

The springboard 450 gets two, followed by a Burning Hammer for...one. Styles is stunned but Rhodes fights up and hits a Cody Cutter for two. Cross Rhodes blocked but Rhodes superkicks the Phenomenal Forearm out of the air. Rhodes switches things up with a Kimura of all things, which is broken up with a powerbomb. The Styles Clash is blocked and Rhodes rolls him up for two. Another Cody Cutter into Cross Rhodes retains the title at 27:25.

Rating: A-. This match wasn't designed to have drama about the result but rather about giving Rhodes a big win to kick off his title reign. That did just fine, with Styles more than holding his own to make Rhodes look great. Awesome match here and it felt like a main event, even with Rhodes being the most obvious winner on the whole card.

Highlight package wraps us up.

Overall Rating: B. The opener and main event were both very good and the three matches in the middle were...well not great but good enough. The real story here though is going to be the crowd, as they were some of the loudest and most engaged fans I have ever seen. It is definitely an instance where the crowd carried the show that much higher and my goodness it was fun to watch. The show might not have been the most eventful but I was never bored and it was certainly memorable.

Results

Bloodline b. Randy Orton/Kevin Owens – Samoan Spike to Owens

Bayley b. Naomi and Tiffany Stratton – Rollup to Naomi

Damian Priest b. Jey Uso – Super South of Heaven chokeslam

Jade Cargill/Bianca Belair b. Kabuki Warriors – KOD onto Sane

Cody Rhodes b. AJ Styles – Cross Rhodes

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Backlash 2024 Preview

WWE is in France for this one and that is a new location for a pay per view. That being said, the card is not exactly looking strong, with only five matches announced coming into the event. While there is always the chance that something else could be added, WWE is going to have its work cut out for them to make this work. Granted the white hot crowd could help, but it's not going to get them the whole way. Let's get to it.

Women's Title: Bayley(c) vs. Naomi vs. Tiffany Stratton

So Naomi was getting a title shot and then Stratton interfered, meaning it's time for the three way match, which tends to be the case. That could mean a few things, though Bayley is still fresh off winning the title at WrestleMania and that could make for quite the difficult reason to take the title from her. At the same time, Stratton is a heck of a challenger and we could be in for an interesting match.

While Stratton is all but destined to win the title at some point in a big moment, I can't imagine that Bayley is going to lose it so soon after her big win. Therefore I'll take Bayley retaining, likely pinning Naomi in the process. Either way, this should be a fun match if the three of them can get everything together, which might be easier said than done in such a situation.

Women's Tag Team Titles: Kabuki Warriors(c) vs. Bianca Belair/Jade Cargill

This is an interesting one as it could go in a few different ways. Well ok it's going to end with either the champs retaining or new champions but they could have different ways to get there. I'm not sure if Belair and Cargill are going to win the titles, though it's hard to imagine a dream team like them losing. At the same time, the Warriors are probably the most dominant team in the history of the titles so having them

lose to a team with less than five matches between then doesn't make a ton of sense.

I'll go with the titles changing hands here, as it feels like the kind of change where something can happen to make the show feel important. Cargill getting some gold, even if it is as part of a team, will make her feel that much bigger. I'm not sure how long Belair and Cargill would hold the belts, but they can win them here and get the big moment, which should make the show feel that much more important.

Randy Orton/Kevin Owens vs. Bloodline

So this one is all about the debut of Tama Tonga, who is the new monster who is shaking things up in the Bloodline. At the same time, Paul Heyman revealed that he has not spoken to Roman Reigns since WrestleMania. That opens up all kinds of new doors in the story and I'm curious to see where it goes. Things will be getting started here though and that should be interesting.

As for the match itself, there is pretty much no reason for the Bloodline to lose here so we'll say they pick up the win. Tonga is going to be getting his big chance here and it wouldn't stun me to see him pinning Owens to wrap things up. Orton is still one of the most protected names in all of WWE and he won't be taking the fall here, though Owens likely will be doing just that as the Bloodline wins.

World Heavyweight Championship: Damian Priest(c) vs. Jey Uso

Priest is the new champion, having cashed in Money In The Bank to win at WrestleMania. In theory, that makes him a vulnerable champion who could be in danger of losing to Uso. That being said, it is almost impossible to imagine Uso actually being the one to take the title from Priest, especially this soon into his reign. They don't have much of a story to set this up and that is making things all the more difficult.

Either way, this is going to end with Priest retaining and that is all that should be happening. The fans are going to go absolutely coconuts for Uso's entrance, but he isn't going to be the best choice to win the title, especially under these circumstances. I'm not sure I can imagine Priest holding the title long term, but he isn't going to lose it to Uso in his first major defense.

WWE Universal Title: Cody Rhodes(c) vs. AJ Styles

Remember pretty much everything I said about Priest winning the title at WrestleMania and therefore having almost no chance to lose the title so soon into his reign? Repeat that here with the volume cranked WAY up. There is almost no way I can spin this as anything but a layup, as there is a grand total of no reason whatsoever for Rhodes to be in any danger of losing the title.

So yeah Rhodes retains here, as the idea of two Georgia boys fighting over the title is not the most interesting way to go. That being said, at some point Rhodes is going to face someone who wasn't coached/mentored/influenced by Dusty Rhodes and I'm not sure how that kind of a feud is going to be set up. For now though, the story works well enough and Cody will retain.

Overall Thoughts

I'm not sure what to think of this show, as it feels like little more than a glorified house show. That being said, if this week's Smackdown was any indication, the fans are going to carry this one through the roof because they do not get to see anything like this. I'd assume there are going to be some unannounced big moments to make the show feel more important, because the advertised card isn't exactly hitting that mark.

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Smackdown – May 3, 2024: They Thought It Was Special

Smackdown

Date: May 3, 2024

Location: LDLC Arena, Lyon-Decines, France

Commentators: Corey Graves, Wade Barrett

We have a rare taped show this week as the show is in France before tomorrow's Backlash. That means we could have something interesting here, but there is always the chance that not much happens here and everything is built around the special atmosphere. Backlash could use the build and maybe that is what we get this week. Let's get to it.

[Here are last week's results if you need a recap.](#)

Bayley/Naomi/Bianca Belair/Jade Cargill vs. Damage CTRL/Tiffany Stratton

Naomi (in French flag gear) starts with Sane and sends her into the corner for the running basement dropkick. Belair comes in with a handspring moonsault and a marching suplex as the fans are WAY into everything. Bayley tags herself in and

Belair is not happy, with Stratton taking Bayley down for two to make it worse.

We take a break and come back with Bayley still in trouble, including Asuka hitting a sliding knee for two. Stratton's handspring elbow in the corner sets up a handspring elbow for two of her own. Bayley fights up and sends Stratton into the corner, allowing the tag off to Cargill for the house cleaning. Everything breaks down and Asuka missile dropkicks Cargill. Kai adds a scorpion kick but gets caught in the KOD to give Belair the pin at 10:17.

Rating: C+. This was the all star tag match with the point being as many people in there as possible. Damage CTRL is flailing but Kai taking the fall is the best way out of this whole thing for them. The important part was keeping the winners looking strong and not having Stratton take the fall on her way into the title shot at Backlash. Nice opener here and Belair/Cargill feel like major stars.

A-Town Down Under is ready for their first title defense and insult the French fans.

Bianca Belair and Jade Cargill want a win and to be done with Damage CTRL. Bayley doesn't seem impressed.

We look at Carmelo Hayes being drafted to Smackdown last week and coming after Cody Rhodes in a losing effort in last week's main event. Hayes did show promise though.

Carmelo Hayes is entering the King Of The Ring tournament when Bobby Lashley comes in to offer him any advice he can. Hayes appreciates it but he has it figured out. Lashley points out that he lost last week, with Hayes asking when Lashley took his own shot. Lashley tells him to watch out who he disrespects.

We look at the Smackdown Draft Picks, with the rosters locking this Monday.

New Catch Republic vs. Authors Of Pain

The Final Testament is here with the Authors. Dunne dropkicks at Akam to start and grabs a mostly ineffective armbar. Bate comes in and strikes away but gets powered into the corner so Rezar comes in for a fight over a suplex. Everything breaks down and the villains are sent outside for a flip dive from Bate. Back in and Bate is suplexed into the corner to put him in trouble and we take a break.

We come back with Rezar grabbing a bearhug but Bate slips out and hits a dropkick. A few more shots are enough to bring Dunne back in for the comeback as the fans are going nuts with this stuff. Everything breaks down and Bate manages the airplane spin on Akam, setting up Dunne's running knee for two. Scarlett offers a distraction so Kross can take Bate out, leaving Dunne to walk into the powerbomb/neckbreaker combination for the pin at 10:28.

Rating: B-. As usual, the power vs. speed formula worked well here as both teams did their parts. This could have gone either way as they're both heading to Raw so the story might not be over. The Authors are good in the monster role and the Republic knows how to be the scrappy underdogs. Throw in the impressive airplane spin and this works.

We recap Kevin Owens/Randy Orton vs. the Bloodline.

Paul Heyman can't get Nick Aldis to call off the match so what happens is on Aldis' hands. Aldis: "Is that from the Tribal Chief?" Heyman reveals he hasn't spoken to Roman Reigns since Wrestlemania, meaning he pulled Reigns out of the Draft. Aldis isn't pleased and makes Heyman the guest on the RKOrton Show.

Here are Kevin Owens and Randy Orton for the RKOrton Show. They waste no time in sucking up to the French fans before saying how disappointing it is that their first guest is Paul Heyman. Cue Heyman, who threatens them with Bloodline violence. Owens wants to know who the real Tribal Chief even

is anymore, but here is the Bloodline for the brawl. The villains are cleared out and we have another segment designed to get people on the show, which is fine.

The Street Profits want the Tag Team Titles.

Angel vs. LA Knight

The rest of Legado del Fantasma is here with Angel and after another weird QR code, we're ready to go. Knight starts fast with a neckbreaker to send Angel outside, where he is sent into the announcers' table on the floor. A corner clothesline and suplex give Knight two inside and we take a break. Back with Berto's distraction letting Angel get in a shot of his own, only to have Knight clothesline him down. The BFT finishes for Knight at 6:42. Not enough shown to rate but Knight gets a win to get him back on track after losing to AJ Styles.

Post match Knight enters the King of the Ring but Santos Escobar seems to do the same. Violence is teased but Knight hits the catchphrase and leaves instead.

We look back at Carlito being revealed as Dragon Lee's attacker.

Carlito says he wanted one more Wrestlemania moment but Lee got it instead. That wasn't cool, so he...gets jumped by Lee instead.

Tag Team Titles: Street Profits vs. A-Town Down Under

The Profits are challenging and enter through the crowd. A quick misdirection gets things going and Dawkins is pounded down into the corner. That doesn't last long as it's quickly off to Ford for the dropkick and Waller is planted with a Rock Bottom. The Swanton sets up the big flip dive as the Profits get to pose.

We take a break and come back with Ford kicking Theory and

hitting a springboard elbow on Waller. Everything breaks down and Waller walks the ropes for a missile dropkick. The Sky High into a Doomsday Blockbuster gets two on Waller and even commentary has to praise the knockout. The referee tries to get rid of Ford, leaving Theory to roll Dawkins up, with Waller coming in for a Downward Spiral to retain the titles at 8:06.

Rating: C+. Even though the champs won the titles about a month ago, I thought there was a chance of a title change here to make the show feel special. As it is, it's nice to have Theory and Waller pick up a win over a credible team. The tag divisions are going to look a lot different starting next week and it's a good move to have the new champs start their reign with a win like this one.

Here are Cody Rhodes and AJ Styles for a face to face staredown before their title match at Backlash. Styles thinks Cody is overlooking him because he is all distracted by everything going on around him. Cody loves the spotlight because everyone wanted Dusty Rhodes' son. Then the pressure got to be too much and he left.

Styles came here and people didn't want him, so he had to prove himself over and over. Now he is ready to prove that he is that phenomenal (the fans REALLY approve). Cody talks about everything he has done to get here including a bunch of mistakes. Now though, he is ready to prove he had what it takes and that is too sweet. The handshake results in Styles slapping him in the face.

The Bloodline and Randy Orton/Kevin Owens are brawling in the back to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. They were in a weird spot with this show as they're coming up on a pay per view that does not feel important in the slightest and this show didn't do much to help it. This show felt much more like a house show than anything else, but these fans never get to see this kind of

thing live so they were going nuts all night. The wrestling was good, but there was almost nothing you needed to see here, with Heyman's reveal about not talking to Roman Reigns since Wrestlemania being the only important point. Not a bad show, but absolutely not necessary viewing.

Results

Bayley/Naomi/Bianca Belair/Jade Cargill b. Damage CTRL/Tiffany Stratton – KOD to Kai

Authors Of Pain b. New Catch Republic – Powerbomb/neckbreaker combination to Bate

LA Knight b. Angel – BFT

A-Town Down Under b. Street Profits – Downward Spiral to Dawkins

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