

# Smackdown – November 12, 2015: Tournaments Actually Are Awesome

## Smackdown

Date: November 12, 2015

Location: Manchester Arena, Manchester, England

Commentators: Booker T., Jerry Lawler, Rich Brennan

For the first time in a long time, there's actual important stuff going on tonight. We're getting the final three first round matchups in the WWE World Title tournament, which hopefully is the start of a shift back to making Smackdown mean ANYTHING. Then again it could just be laying the groundwork for the move to USA in January so they can pretend it means something and then drop it back to reality. I'll take what I can get though so let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Rollins destroying anything that ends in CL and being put on the shelf for the better part of a year.

We look at the brackets and recap Monday's tournament matches.

Here are the Wyatts with something to say, which I'm assuming will involve no selling Monday's beatdown. Harper says this is how the world works: when the Wyatts show up, blood runs cold. So that's what happened go Glacier. Tonight they're sacrificing the Usos to Bray Wyatt. Rowan says Bray brings vengeance and sorrow to all who oppose him so tonight they're bringing pain and humiliation to those who oppose them. Strowman wants us to look at his face and see our annihilation because he will pile the bodies to the sky for the eater of worlds.

Bray isn't worried about Undertaker and Kane being back because he's taken pieces of them that they can never recover. Now he lives in the monster's nightmares and would like to issue a challenge for Survivor Series: their family against his family, two on two. They have until the end of the night to respond. So after losing 4-2, they want to fight 2-2?

I think I'll take the Glacier match instead.

### Braun Strowman vs. Fandango

They're Fandangoing in Manchester. For some reason this doesn't surprise me. Fandango goes right at Braun to start and it goes as well as you would expect. Braun clotheslines him out of the air and the standing choke makes Fandango tap (the first man to do that) at 1:30.

### WWE World Title Tournament First Round: King Barrett vs. Neville

The winner faces Owens. Neville promises to finish what Wayne Rooney started on Monday. Barrett gets rolled up for an early two and it's off to a headlock. A cross body gets two more for Neville so Barrett throws him to the floor and kicks him in the face. Nice strategy. Neville is bounced off the announcers' table a few times and we take an early break. Back with Barrett getting his own near fall off a pumphandle slam.

Neville fights out of a chinlock and tries to flip out of the corner but gets kicked in the ribs to put him down again. Barrett kicks him to the floor again and gets in some posing to annoy the crowd all over again. That's becoming too lost of an art. We hit the chinlock for a bit before the Winds of Change is countered into a crucifix for two. Barrett throws him to the floor again (Lawler: "I think gravity just remembered him.") but stops to yell at the announcers, allowing Neville to run the barricade for a front flip onto the King. As in the British king.

Back in and a standing shooting star gets two for Neville but Barrett kicks him in the ribs (I'm adding him to the list of people who use superkicks) for a string of two counts. Barrett to the referee: "How much is he paying you?" Neville's lifting German gets two but a release Winds of Change gets the same. The Wasteland is countered into a DDT, setting up the Red Arrow for the pin at 15:28.

**Rating:** B. Nice long match here with both guys looking good. This is Barrett's place in the company though: he's built up for a little bit and then loses several matches in a row. There's no point in thinking anything else is going to happen so I'm not going to bother anymore. Neville is the same way but it's cool to see that he can hang in there

for a longer match.

The Usos are very excited to face the Wyatts tonight because there's been a rivalry for years.

We're going to step away from the show itself for a minute here as the version of the show I watched online before the TV broadcast includes a dark segment so here's a bonus.

King Barrett is still in the ring and says that's not exactly how he planned this. Rooney slapping him on Monday screwed him up and that's the only reason he lost here. He's been doing this for twelve years now and with all the titles he's won, he's certainly a Hall of Famer. There go the lights and we've got Undertaker. After his forty eight minute entrance (complete with thunder as he takes off the hat), Undertaker stares Barrett down.

Barrett: "Can I help you?" Undertaker is on the wrong side of the tracks because this is northwest England. Barrett is the Preston Panther and doesn't like people coming to his place and staring at him. He explains the process behind the Bull Hammer but says he has bigger fish to try. The cheap shot doesn't work and Barrett takes a chokeslam.

Undertaker leaves to no music but stops and turns around, much to the fans' delight. There goes the throat slit and Barrett takes a Tombstone. The fans want one more and who is Undertaker to turn them down. Nothing much here but it was cool for the fans live and that was the entire point.

#### WWE World Title Tournament First Round: Ryback vs. Kalisto

Kalisto says it's the size of the fight in the dog but Ryback says feed him more. Some kicks to the legs stagger Ryback and Kalisto slips out of a gorilla press. A very early Salida Del Sol gets two and Ryback throws him to the floor on the kickout but is very staggered. Back from a break with Kalisto getting caught in a spinebuster and a pair of powerbombs. Ryback stays on the back with a hard knee and a delayed vertical suplex but Kalisto knees him in the head to break it up.

Some stomps to the ribs set up a bearhug on the mat as Ryback has easily slipped into the default heel role. Off to a waistlock for a bit before a big boot puts Kalisto down again. Another big boot misses though and Kalisto knocks him to the floor with a dropkick. Kalisto tries an Asai moonsault but gets caught and kind of slammed on the outside. Back in and the hurricanrana driver is countered into Shell Shock but Kalisto rolls through into a sunset flip for two. The Meathook gets the same and Ryback sets up a belly to back superplex, only to get caught in a super Salida Del Sol for the big upset at 13:11.

**Rating:** B-. If they want to set Kalisto up as the next lucha star, this was a great starting point. The match told a really good story of Kalisto hanging around and never giving up until he pulled it off. One thing that's going to work in his favor is his finisher as he can hit it from pretty much anywhere, unlike the 619 which took a lot of unrealistic luck. Good match here and what could be a big starting point for Kalisto, though I wouldn't get my hopes up.

They shake hands post match and Ryback raises Kalisto's hand. Ryback did a really good job here of playing the heel without going over to the dark side.

Video on Wrestlemania tickets going on sale.

Here's MexAmerica before Del Rio's match. Colter says this should be the Divided Kingdom because all of the countries hate each other. Del Rio brings up the two soccer team in this city and suggests they unite. They promise to unify the World and US Titles into the MexAmerica World Title. This gimmick started off as lukewarm and has gotten even worse. Colter is great on the mic but there's nothing for him to work with here.

#### WWE World Title Tournament First Round: Stardust vs. Alberto Del Rio

Stardust now has Ascension style attire. Stardust starts fast with right hands and a clothesline to send Alberto outside but Del Rio sends him shoulder first into the post. Stardust: "OW! MY SHOULDER!" See? It hurt his shoulder. Back from a break with Del Rio kicking him in the head, followed by the corner enziguri for two.

After a quick armbreaker over the ropes, Stardust comes back with some clotheslines but walks into the Backstabber for two. A quick Disaster Kick gets the same for Stardust and he's polite enough to climb up top with his back to the ring so Del Rio can kick him down into the Tree of Woe. The top rope double stomp advances Del Rio at 10:24.

**Rating:** D-. This is definitely the worst match of the tournament so far. The shoulder stuff before the break didn't go anywhere and the ending had the same stupid problem that Del Rio's finisher always has. There was no logical reason for Stardust to go up top other than to get kicked back down so Alberto could do his finisher. It was a lame squash until then and then the ending made it even worse. Bad match here and I expected better from both guys.

Here are the full second round brackets:

Roman Reigns

Cesaro

Alberto Del Rio

Kalisto

Kevin Owens

Neville

Dolph Ziggler

Dean Ambrose

We recap Becky Lynch beating Paige on Raw with a handful of trunks, earning her a post match beatdown.

Roman Reigns talks about the WWE Championship being his Mount Everest over the last year. The higher you get, the weaker the footing is. Every time you go 100 feet forward, you fall back another 50. This Monday he has Cesaro who is going to uppercut his face off. Reigns isn't going to stop no matter what though, because that's the kind of man he is. As for HHH's offer on Monday, he doesn't take handouts because he isn't like

Seth Rollins. He's bringing the big fight to this tournament so he can be the sole survivor.

### Usos vs. Wyatt Family

The lights go out and the Wyatts just appear at ringside for a nice change of pace. Harper and Rowan hit the ring and clean house before the bell. Jey breaks up a double chokeslam and the brawl goes outside as we're still waiting on this to officially start. The bell rings with Jey and Rowan getting things going with Erick throwing him to the floor for a clothesline from Harper and we take a break.

Back with Jey in Rowan's head vice and losing his shirt. It's off to Harper who eats a right hand to the jaw so Rowan comes in to rip at Jimmy's nose. Jey can't slam Rowan and the fans want Harper. Rowan misses a charge and it's off to Jimmy for two off an enziguri. Jey's running Umaga attack is broken up by Rowan as everything breaks down. Jimmy gets two off a high cross body to Harper and a Whisper in the Wind to send Rowan outside.

Harper kicks Jimmy in the face and plants him with a Batista Bomb, only to have Jey come back in with a Superfly Splash for two. Luke no sells a superkick but a second knocks him to the floor. A double superkick does the same to Rowan and there's the double dive. That's enough for Bray so he and Strowman come in for the DQ at 12:12.

**Rating:** C+. This was the normal fun match that these teams have and it's nice to see them not have the Usos job so soon after coming back. The idea of having all four Wyatts come together to clean house is cool but doesn't matter considering it's going to be two on two at Survivor Series. Good match here but the time and ending held it back.

The Usos are beaten down until Undertaker's voice promises to make the Family rest in peace at Survivor Series. If (presumably) Braun and Bray win, that beatdown on Monday is forgotten, which is best for everyone.

**Overall Rating:** B+. It's amazing how much more easier this show is to watch when it actually matters. The show felt important for a change as the brackets were filled out. I don't think it's going to happen but

there's a chance that they might do the semi-finals here next week. It was a fun show this week with some important matches and a major Survivor Series match being set up.

### Results

Braun Strowman b. Fandango – Standing choke

Neville b. King Barrett – Red Arrow

Kalisto b. Ryback – Super Salida Del Sol

Alberto Del Rio b. Stardust – Top rope double stomp

Usos b. Wyatt Family via DQ when Bray Wyatt and Braun Strowman interfered

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# **Smackdown – October 8, 2015: The A-List Superstars**

## **Smackdown**

Date: October 8, 2015

Location: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Booker T., Jerry Lawler

Things look a bit different coming out of Raw as New Day got all aggressive and violent to end the show. They even left John Cena and a few others laying in their first real display of dominance. It should be interesting to see where they go from here as they've been so goofy but now they have a new edge. Let's get to it.

Here's New Day to brag about what they did on Monday. No one has ever dominated like they did. Not the Shield, the Wyatts, the NWO, the Dungeon of Doom or Los Boricuas. Philadelphia doesn't know what it's like to win and Eagles head coach Chip Kelly (Big E: "Chip?" Woods: "Yes. Grown man and his name is Chip.") even called them for some tips after they lost to the Washington Redskins this past week. However, now they have to deal with the Dudleys, who have politicked their way into ANOTHER title shot at Hell in a Cell.

It's time for the chants but here's Zigler (in trunks again) to interrupt. Normally Dolph would be out there one upping every single one of New Day's jokes but tonight is about revenge. The Authority has allowed him a match against any member of New Day he wants so he picks Big E., who cost him a US Title shot on Monday. Dolph even has a way to guarantee it's a fair fight: John and Juan Cena! Actually it's just the Dudleyz. You think a star like Juan would work this show?

### Big E. vs. Dolph Zigler

Zigler dropkicks him down and hits the running DDT as we take a quick break. Back with Big E. running him over with a clothesline (Woods: "TRICEP MEAT! WE TOLD YOU THE STOCK WAS RISING! HE IS THE CEO OF TRICEP MEAT INC.!") before choking on the ropes. Woods of course gets an interview with Zigler before throwing it back to Kofi in the studio. Zigler fights back but his cross body is countered into a backbreaker for two. We hit that trombone with Woods playing Zigler's music and Big E. slaps on a chinlock.

It's off to a bearhug instead before E. drops him face first onto the buckle. E.'s charge hits the post though and a Fameasser gets two. A belly to belly from E. sets up the Warrior splash for two but Dolph's

superkick gets the same. New Day and the Dudleyz get in a fight on the floor and Kofi snaps Ziggler's neck across the top. That's not enough though as he holds Ziggler's foot down so Big E. can pin him at 9:51.

**Rating:** D+. Not a great match here but it was more about the New Day's antics than anything else. I like the idea of the team having some singles success but I'm more interested in seeing how they write Cena off TV in just a few weeks. Unless they just go with "I'm going home for a few months", something big is going to have to change.

Stills of Lesnar vs. Big Show on Saturday.

We recap Heyman's promo and Lesnar beating up Show on Monday.

We look at Summer proposing to Rusev on Monday.

Summer is wedding planning but Rusev comes up and asks why she's telling everyone about their engagement. You mean the one that was announced in front of millions on Monday? His Russian accent is almost completely gone at this point. Summer has gotten him a match with Ryback tonight and if he wins, he'll probably be #1 contender to the Intercontinental Title.

#### Team Bella vs. Charlotte/Becky Lynch/Natalya

Becky armbars Fox down to start and it's quickly off to Charlotte for a double elbow into a double nipup. It's off to Natalya vs. Nikki, meaning Brie has to get in the first batch of "COME ON'S!". Becky comes in but eats a middle rope dropkick from Brie as we take a break. Back with Fox chinlocking Banks as Booker talks about how beautiful they all look. Brie throws Becky away from her corner but the BRIE MODE (minus shouting BRIE MODE thank goodness) knee misses.

Nikki breaks up the tag but gets sent into the corner, allowing the tag off to Charlotte. The champ cleans house for a bit until Nikki comes back with a Disaster Kick for two. The Rack Attack is broken up though and a spear sets up the Figure Eight. Brie makes a save and helps Nikki roll it over but Becky switches it right back and Nikki taps at 11:07.

**Rating:** C-. Not bad if you ignore the fact that this is the Wyatts vs. the Shield Boys with Natalya currently playing the third man to help in

the war. I'm hoping they add Sasha to this feud as it's finally starting to get interesting. There's really no wrong way to go with the title unless it's back to the Bellas, but NXT can only have these awesome matches for so long before everyone realizes the Bellas are in way over their heads.

Paige thinks Natalya is trying to steal her spot.

### Rusev vs. Ryback

Owens is on commentary and he's officially defending against Ryback at the pay per view. Ryback takes him into the corner to start as Owens calls Lawler stupid. Owens: "With all due respect of course. Now that I said that you can't be mad at me." Rusev throws him through the ropes and Ryback gets his hand caught in the ropes to give Rusev a target.

The hand is rammed into the steps and post but amazingly enough that's not enough for a pin. Rusev switches up to just going after the arm as Brennan asks Owens about Renee Young saying he isn't a real Canadian. Owens: "Has anyone ever told you that you look like Millhouse from the Simpsons?" Brennan: "Only you Kevin." Owens: "Well there you go." Ryback's comeback is quickly stopped and it's off to an armbar. A belly to belly gets Ryback out of trouble and he stops a charging Rusev with a boot.

Rusev counters what looked to be a powerbomb and gets two off an Alabama Slam. Off to a sleeper of all things but Ryback escapes with an over the shoulder Stunner. Shell Shock is broken up and Rusev's jumping superkick gets two (with Summer shoving the boot off the ropes). Back up and the Meat Hook and Shell Shock end Rusev at 8:25.

**Rating:** C-. You can see Rusev's star falling from here as he's now regular losing matches on Smackdown. There's a chance that they're going with Summer costing Rusev matches (not that she did but Rusev is the kind of guy who would blame her for his troubles) and they split as a result. Ryback doesn't really gain anything here but a win is always helpful.

Recap of Kane attacking Rollins again on Raw.

Bray asks if he'll be locked inside the Cell with Roman or will Roman be trapped inside with him. Not that it matters as the result is the same. Tonight, Reigns and Orton face the wrath of the black sheep. Strowman used to catch rabbits and then squeeze them until they crossed over. Run little rabbits.

Video on King Barrett.

### King Barrett vs. Neville

Neville flips out of the corner to start but gets slammed into the mat via a hair pull. We take an early break and come back with Barrett tossing him into a boot to the chest for two. Barrett hooks a bow and arrow as the announcers give us a quick history of King of the Ring. An enziguri puts Barrett on the floor and a moonsault to the floor takes him down again. This is almost every match we've ever seen between these two. Neville gets two off the German suplex but Barrett gets away before he can launch the Red Arrow. The Bull Hammer gives Barrett the in at 8:32.

**Rating:** D+. Neville loses again and while I could usually get behind the idea of him putting someone else over, it's Barrett. He'll probably be losing to a mascot or an actor or the returning Hornswoggle soon enough. The match was watchable enough but Neville is really in need of some momentum.

Post match Stardust, wearing a card dealer's hat, says it won't be a king, a champion, or Stardust's lady fair. He picks up another card and likes what he sees but doesn't tell us what it is. Lawler's easiest line in a month: "He's not playing with a full deck."

Breast cancer is bad moment of the week.

### Roman Reigns/Randy Orton vs. Bray Wyatt/Braun Strowman

No Harper or Ambrose at ringside. Orton and Wyatt get things going with Bray being sent to the apron but escaping the hanging DDT. Back in and Bray hands it off to Strowman who runs Orton over like he's not even there. It's off to Reigns for the big showdown and a shoulder puts Roman down like he's one of the Ding Dongs. Orton makes a blind tag but

Strowman shoulders both opponents down with ease. It's back to Bray to stomp away in the corner until Orton scores with his backbreaker. Braun misses a charge into the corner and there's the tag to Reigns.

Roman slugs away and lifts Braun for a Samoan drop but can't get it over. Instead Roman gets him in the ropes and kicks Strowman in the face, eventually Superman punching him to the floor. The camera zoomed in on Roman to make sure we couldn't see Braun down on the floor though. That's a very nice touch as they've done a great job of keeping Strowman looking like an unstoppable monster and he still hasn't been down. Why waste that on Smackdown? Roman goes after Bray on the floor but Wyatt hits him in the ribs with a chair for the DQ at 7:50.

**Rating:** C-. Another average match here that felt like it was cut really short. I still love how they're booking Strowman as he's going to get beaten one day but they need to build him up as long as they can before finally having someone take him down. The match was just another step towards the Cell match and I'm assuming Ambrose and Harper will be in part of a tag match at the pay per view.

Post match Orton saves Roman from Wyatt but gets choked out, only to have Reigns score with a Superman punch. Bray can't hit Sister Abigail and it's an RKO to Wyatt, followed by the spear to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** D+. It was another worthless edition of Smackdown this week and those are getting more and more annoying to sit through. None of the matches felt important and the whole show felt like a way to kill two hours. I've been saying that WAY too often lately and it's even worse when it's something that could be remedied. If no one is watching, give us some nice long matches every week instead of the endless recaps and 8-10 minute matches that change nothing. It's even less effort for the writers as all they have to do is let the wrestlers do their thing. Is that too much to ask for?

## Results

Big E. b. Dolph Ziggler – Pin after Kofi Kingston guillotined Ziggler across the top rope

Charlotte/Becky Lynch/Natalya b. Team Bella – Figure Eight to Nikki

Ryback b. Rusev – Shell Shock

King Barrett b. Neville – Bull Hammer

Roman Reigns/Randy Orton b. Braun Strowman/Bray Wyatt via DQ when Wyatt used a chair

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## **New Column: The Role He Was Born To Play**

Looking at why not everyone can or should be a World Champion level wrestler.

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