

Smackdown – July 19, 2016: Draft Notice

Smackdown

Date: July 19, 2016

Location: DCU Center, Worcester, Massachusetts

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Jerry Lawler

Now this is a big one. Tonight we're not only going live but also splitting the shows into two rosters again for the first time in a few years. There's only been one other draft like this in company history and it wasn't the greatest show in the world. The interesting things here tonight are the potential returns of former stars as well as the guaranteed NXT callups. Oh and a rematch from last night's World Title match as a bonus. Let's get to it.

We open with the Commissioners and the GM's on the stage and a quick explanation of the rules:

1. Raw gets three picks to every Smackdown two.
2. Tag Teams are selected as a unit unless a GM wants either.
3. Raw has the first pick.
4. Six NXT picks will be made.

Stephanie cuts Foley off and picks Seth Rollins number one. So much for the title meaning a lot.

Daniel Bryan picks Dean Ambrose to put the Shield boys on different shows.

I won't bother saying the specifics so I'll just say which show.

Raw: Charlotte

Smackdown: AJ Styles

Raw: Finn Balor

Before we get to another pick, it's time for a match.

John Cena vs. Luke Gallows

The rest of the Club, Enzo and Cass are at ringside. We go to a quick commercial but this time they're showing the match during the commercial on a split screen. Gallows powers him down and is apparently too heavy to take the AA. Cena gets in a dropkick and we come back from the break. A spinning side slam gets two for Luke but he walks into the ProtoBomb and the Shuffle. Gallows breaks up the AA with a superkick (GET THAT MAN A T-SHIRT!) but the other four get in the ring and the match....is allowed to continue with Anderson and Styles being sent to the floor. An AA gives Cena the pin at 5:27.

Rating: C-. This didn't have time to go anywhere and I'm hoping the airing the match during the break doesn't become a regular thing. If there's one concept WWE never got, it's the idea of giving the fans a breather. You can't present every single moment as must see and expect the fans to stick with you through the insane amount of content WWE pumps out.

Time for more picks.

Raw: Roman Reigns

Smackdown: John Cena

Raw: Brock Lesnar

Smackdown: Randy Orton

Raw: New Day

Darren Young/Zack Ryder vs. Rusev/The Miz

Challengers vs. champions. Backlund atomic drops Miz to start and Ryder adds a slingshot elbow for two. Miz pulls Zack off the ropes for a crash before it's off to Rusev for some shots to the back. Miz gives up the hot tag to Young for his still generic offense. A quick Gut Check gets two

but Rusev suplexes Darren, only to throw Ryder into a Rough Ryder on his partner. Zack dropkicks Rusev off the apron and the crossface chickenwing makes Miz tap at 4:05.

Rating: C-. No time here and I have a feeling that's going to be the case for almost all matches tonight. That's how things should go though as the wrestling isn't the point here. Young making Miz tap sets up the title match just fine, though I don't see much of a reason to get hyped for Ryder vs. Rusev. Maybe it was the losing to Sheamus in two minutes flat.

Xavier Woods vs. Bray Wyatt

Everyone is at ringside. Bray stands in the corner with his back to Bray before bending backwards. He even kneels in the middle of the ring to offer a free shot but Woods is afraid. Woods seems to be hypnotized so Bray beats him down and chokes a bit. The release Rock Bottom plants Woods again but he makes a quick comeback, only to walk into Sister Abigail for the pin at 4:47.

Rating: D+. This was all about the story instead of the match and that's the right idea. Bray squashing Woods is the right idea too and it's cool to see someone freaking out at the sight and thought of Bray. That almost has to play into the finish on Sunday but it also makes the titles more interesting. If Woods is teasing a split, they'll have to drop the belts soon and that's not happening Sunday.

Kevin Owens vs. Kane

And never mind as Sami Zayn runs out to attack Owens. Kevin sends Sami in for a chokeslam from Kane but he chokeslams both of them for fun. No match.

Back to the picks!

Raw: Sami Zayn

Smackdown: Bray Wyatt (not the Wyatt Family)

Raw: Sasha Banks

Smackdown: Becky Lynch

Raw: Chris Jericho

Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte/Dana Brooke

Dana starts for the team but Sasha knocks Charlotte outside and hits the double knees off the apron. Back in and Dana misses a charge to set up the Bank Statement, only to have Charlotte break it up and hit Natural Selection for the pin at 2:21.

More picks:

Raw: Rusev w/Lana

Smackdown: The Miz w/Maryse

Raw: Kevin Owens

Smackdown: Baron Corbin

Raw: Enzo Amore/Big Cass

Chris Jericho vs. Cesaro

Cesaro uppercuts him to the floor and hits a running version up against the barricade. Back in and we hit the pinfall reversal sequence until Jericho slams him off the top. The Lionsault is countered into a Russian legsweep off the middle rope and it's time for a Swing. The spinning springboard uppercut is countered into the Codebreaker for the pin on Cesaro at 4:53.

Rating: C+. In case you didn't get enough of these two during the build to Money in the Bank. I'm really not wild on the idea of Jericho winning here as they don't seem interested in actually doing anything with him despite giving him a bunch of wins. Cesaro continues to be that guy who keeps losing and WWE keeps expecting him to be over, which to be fair he kind of is.

Back from a break with Becky Lynch attacking Natalya before a match. Ok then.

Draft time.

Raw: The Club

Smackdown: American Alpha

Raw: Big Show

Smackdown: Dolph Ziggler

Raw: Nia Jax

Rollins says he'll win tonight.

Time for the final five televised picks before 30 more will be made on the WWE Network.

Raw: Neville

Smackdown: Natalya

Raw: Cesaro

Smackdown: Alberto Del Rio

Raw: Sheamus

WWE World Title: Dean Ambrose vs. Seth Rollins

Ambrose is defending and Rollins jumps him during the big match intros. We take a break before the bell rings with Dean being posted. Back with Ambrose saying ring the bell, allowing Rollins to hammer away in a hurry. A backbreaker sets up the chinlock before Rollins sends him outside for a chop off. Dean gets whipped into the barricade but he backdrops Rollins into the timekeeper's area. Back in and Seth hits a low superkick for two as we take a break.

We come back again with what sounds like a CM Punk chant accompanying Rollins hitting a running forearm in the corner. Dean fights back with elbows to the face and a swinging neckbreaker for two. A quick Buckle Bomb sets up a missed frog splash but Rollins grabs a quick superplex. He loads up the Falcon's Arrow but Dean reverses into Dirty Deeds at 12:21.

Rating: C+. The match was fine but it's pure filler with Battleground and the triple threat looming. Rollins getting pinned clean is interesting as now Dean looks a lot more like an equal instead of someone who keeps getting beaten in the big matches over and over. It's a good main event, though it feels kind of worthless after last night. Like, what did any of that accomplish?

Shane and Bryan come out to celebrate and a PPV rundown ends the show.

Overall Rating: B-. These are the hardest shows to review as there's nothing to compare it to. They kept it moving fast enough and the wrestling was just there for the most part but they kept the draft picking moving and that's a very good thing. This felt like something professionally run and that's never really been the case in previous drafts. Good show here but this would have been better off after Battleground.

Results

John Cena b. Luke Gallows – Attitude Adjustment

Darren Young/Zack Ryder b. Rusev/The Miz – Crossface chickenwing to Miz

Bray Wyatt b. Xavier Woods – Sister Abigail

Charlotte/Dana Brooke b. Sasha Banks – Natural Selection

Chris Jericho b. Cesaro – Codebreaker

Dean Ambrose b. Seth Rollins – Dirty Deeds

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

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 18, 2016

Location: Dunkin' Donuts Center, Providence, Rhode Island

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

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

Opening sequence.

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

After Stephanie awkwardly dances to his music. Foley compares the feeling here to the Attitude Era because IT'S THE GREATEST THING EVER and feels like the MONDAY NIGHT WARS ALL OVER AGAIN BABY! Stephanie calling him

made the little embers turned into a fire. He's ready to bring Raw to new heights and all that jazz.

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

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

Chris Jericho/Kevin Owens vs. Sami Zayn/Cesaro

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

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

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

Golden Truth, Titus O'Neil and Jack Swagger try to get on Daniel Bryan's good side until Stephanie interrupts. They insult each other (with jabs

about Daniel and Brie planting peaches) for a bit until Daniel says she ruined Raw.

Alberto Del Rio vs. Darren Young

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We come back again with Bray missing his backplash to Cena, allowing the hot tag to Cass. Everything breaks down again and New Day cleans house on the Wyatts. Woods hits a big flip dive to take them all out but Gallows breaks up Bada Book Shakalacka. New Day and the Wyatts fight up the ramp, leaving Enzo to clothesline Cena by mistake. The Styles Clash ends Amore at 18:58.

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

Earlier today, Seth Rollins was in the empty arena (well save for the cameramen) to talk about how they came through so many stands to fight. He was the brilliant mind and kept Ambrose around to take the beatings

and Reigns around to dish them out. After Sunday, Reigns will never be the same again. Ambrose on the other hand is a coward who is running out of places to hide. This Sunday, Rollins will prove he was always the man.

We recap the opening segment.

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

Baron Corbin vs. Sin Cara

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

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

Charlotte/Dana Brooke vs. Becky Lynch/Sasha Banks

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

Sasha gets beaten down post match.

Rusev/Sheamus vs. Dolph Ziggler/Zack Ryder

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

Rating: D+. Just a quick way to show off the idea that Rusev is awesome because we didn't know that yet. Ryder needed a win here after that mess last week against Sheamus. Ryder is going to get destroyed on Sunday and

I'm not sure where things go after that. Sheamus n the other hand continues to float, just like Ziggler. And no WWE, that's not a hint about a bonus match for Sunday.

Video on Randy Orton.

Video on Cena hosting the ESPYs.

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

Raw World Title: Dean Ambrose vs. Seth Rollins

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

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

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

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

Stephanie (of course) declares Rollins the new champion and Shane doesn't

say anything to close the show. You know you'll see more of this on Sunday.

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

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

Results

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

Darren Young b. Alberto Del Rio – Rollup

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

Baron Corbin b. Sin Cara – End of Days

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

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Smackdown – July 14, 2016: Going Out Smackdown Style

Smackdown

Date: July 14, 2016

Location: Van Andel Arena, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Byron Saxton, Jerry Lawler

This is the end of an era as we're at the final taped episode of Smackdown before it moves over to the live world of Tuesday nights on USA. We're also closing in on Battleground but we can't actually do much about the main event since Roman Reigns is still suspended. That sounds like fodder for a tag match. Let's get to it.

Earlier today, Kevin Owens found a birthday card for his son from Sami Zayn. All Sami gave his son was \$20 Canadian. That money goes in Kevin's pocket and tonight Dean Ambrose is going into the hospital.

Charlotte and Dana Brooke get out of a limo and promise to have Dana take care of Sasha Banks tonight.

Miz is ready to make Darren Young great Again on MizTV.

Dean Ambrose might be leaving Smackdown due to the Draft but tonight he's going out by destroying Kevin Owens one last time.

Sasha Banks vs. Dana Brooke

Sasha has already beaten Dana once but she has to do it again to get a title shot at Charlotte, who is in Dana's corner. Banks starts fast with a rollup for two before being sent outside where a Charlotte distraction lets Dana take over. The Samoan Driver (still needs a name) is broken up and Sasha's high cross body gets two. Dana tries a rollup but gets caught in the Bank Statement for the tap at 3:48.

Rating: D+. This was mainly rollups and uninspired brawling though Sasha's high cross body looked good. I'm not quite sure what's gained by having Sasha beat her twice in a week but at least we're not heading for a rubber match or anything ridiculous like that. I'd assume we get Sasha vs. Charlotte at Summerslam as Sasha in Brooklyn is going to work so well.

We see Shane McMahon being named Smackdown Commissioner. He's already picked his General Manager.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Rusev

Non-title. Ziggler takes it to the mat to start but Rusev runs him over and we take a break. Back with Ziggler fighting back with right hands but getting dropped with ease all over again. A powerbomb gets two on Ziggler and it's time to stand around a bit. Ziggler grabs a sleeper for a few moments before realizing that his running DDT and the Fameasser might do some more damage. Rusev gets in his superkick but here's Zack Ryder for a distraction, allowing Ziggler to roll Rusev up for the pin at 8:57.

Rating: C. This would be your weekly meaningless midcard champion loss unless there's a big surprise with Ziggler being added to the title match, though I can't picture that happening. Above all else though, it makes me wonder what the point was in having Sheamus beat Ryder clean on Monday. Who does that benefit and how does it make me want to see Ryder get a title shot at Battleground? Either don't do the match or have Ryder win again, especially if there's nothing for Sheamus to do.

We see the New Day at the Wyatt Compound from Monday.

Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. AJ Styles/Karl Anderson

Enzo and AJ get things going but it's quickly off to Cass to clean house. AJ gets backdropped and a running clothesline puts Karl on the floor. The big toss sends Enzo over the top and onto the Club as we take a break. Back with Anderson getting a shot to Enzo's throat and it's time for the beatdown to begin.

AJ starts going after AJ's knee with a springboard stomp as the leg is

over the ropes. Amore breaks up a springboard but Karl dives over to break up the hot tag attempt to Cass. A shot to the face drops AJ but it's Gallows breaking up the tag on the floor. That earns him a big boot to the face from Cass, only to have AJ grab a Calf Crusher for the submission on Enzo at 10:53.

Rating: C+. Just a glorified preview for the six man at the pay per view and there's nothing wrong with that. I'm really glad that they went with Styles instead of Gallows here as it can get really tiring seeing the same match over and over again, especially with Gallows and Anderson who were run into the ground against the Usos. Finally, it's a really good sign that Cass has Enzo around to take the losses. Cass has potential and a bunch of tag team losses would hinder that.

According to spoilers, there was supposed to be a Zack Ryder vs. Alberto Del Rio match at this point but there's no mention of such a match.

Kalisto vs. Tyler Breeze

Kalisto starts fast of course but a Fandango distraction lets Breeze drop him throat first across the top rope. We hit the chinlock on Kalisto for a bit before he makes his quick comeback with the kicks to the chest and the corkscrew cross body. Tyler gets two off a kick but the Salida Del Sol is good enough to put Tyler away at 3:15.

Rating: D+. I'm not entirely sure where this is going and I'm glad Kalisto got a pin, even though I'm a Breeze fan and would love to see him go somewhere. At least the tag team has given him something to do, even if it's a low level act. A feud with the Lucha Dragons, who are just as worthless, is at least a step up over Golden Truth.

It's time for MizTV with guests Bob Backlund and Darren Young. Miz shows us some Backlund clips from the Network. The fans give him an ovation so Miz is ready with a Darren Young video package. That would be a test pattern though because Darren hasn't had any highlights. Darren is fine with that because his highlight will be winning the Intercontinental Title. Backlund says Miz can never be a great champion because he isn't a role model. Miz rips on Backlund for sounding like Forrest Gump but Darren won't stand for someone disrespecting his life coach. A brawl is

teased but doesn't go anywhere.

Sasha Banks is getting a concussion test (an hour and a half after her match) when Charlotte and Dana come in. Charlotte says not yet on the title shot so Sasha should find a partner if she can.

Kevin Owens vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title with Seth Rollins on commentary. And pretty much never mind as Rollins interferes for the DQ at 33 seconds.

Sami Zayn runs out and I smell a tag match.

Kevin Owens/Seth Rollins vs. Dean Ambrose/Sami Zayn

The match has been announced during the break by someone not mentioned. But then again we need a GM/Commissioner/whatever else they're going to change the name to a few months after the Draft. Owens attacks Ambrose at the bell and takes him outside for a beating. Back in and Rollins cranks on the neck before it's off to Owens to miss the backsplash. Sami gets in a tag and we have a double dive to take the villains out.

Back from a break with Sami in trouble in the corner but he pretty easily gets away for the tag off to Ambrose. The standing elbow drop gets two on Owens and everything breaks down. Seth misses his springboard knee and gets taken down with a neckbreaker for two. Sami chases Owens to the floor with the threat of a Helluva Kick but Kevin catches Dean's suicide dive. Back in and Sami counters the Pedigree into a good looking tornado DDT. The Helluva Kick misses though and now the Pedigree is enough for the pin on Zayn at 13:18.

Rating: B-. Well that's a perfect way to go out for Smackdown if there ever was one. The match doesn't really change anything but it was a fun little match with the best possible combination for the pin. Sami losing doesn't change anything and it keeps the World Champion from taking a pin.

Ambrose saves Sami from an apron powerbomb and brawls with Rollins to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. I would tell Smackdown to never change but that seems a bit stupid at this point. If nothing else, Smackdown went out like it always does: with nothing too bad and enough good wrestling to warrant glancing at it while it's background noise the rest of the time. Not too bad for the final taped show, but hopefully it gets some better treatment live.

Results

Sasha Banks b. Dana Brooke – Bank Statement

Dolph Ziggler b. Rusev – Rollup

AJ Styles/Karl Anderson b. Enzo Amore/Karl Anderson – Calf Crusher to Amore

Kalisto b. Tyler Breeze – Salida Del Sol

Dean Ambrose b. Kevin Owens via DQ when Seth Rollins interfered

Kevin Owens/Seth Rollins b. Dean Ambrose/Sami Zayn – Pedigree to Zayn

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Monday Night Raw – July 11, 2016: This Close To Interesting

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 11, 2016

Location: Joe Louis Arena, Detroit, Michigan

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole, Byron Saxton

Things are back to normal this week, or at least as back to normal as they're going to be with just one more Raw after this before the Draft takes place. The only major event announced for tonight is Zack Ryder challenging Rusev for the United States Title after beating Sheamus twice last week. Let's get to it.

First of all, on a personal note, Happy Anniversary Becca. Thanks for an amazing year and I love you.

Opening sequence.

Battle Royal

Goldust, Darren Young, Apollo Crews, Viktor, Konnor, Bubba Ray Dudley, D-Von Dudley, Dolph Ziggler, Bo Dallas, Simon Gotch, Aiden English, R-Truth, Baron Corbin, Jimmy Uso, Jey Uso, Jack Swagger, Alberto Del Rio, Curtis Axel

Winner gets an Intercontinental Title shot at Battleground so Miz and Maryse are on commentary. English is put out early and he lands near Bob Backlund, who is managing Young. R-Truth puts out Viktor and Bubba (Not D-Von, Cole.) gets rid of Axel. There goes Truth and Konnor follows him out. One Uso tries to eliminate the other but they settle with a double superkick to get rid of D-Von as we go to a break.

Back with Gotch and Jey having been eliminated during the break. Del Rio gets rid of Goldust and Crews eliminates Dallas as the ring is emptying out. Jimmy and Swagger are thrown out so we're down to Crews, Bubba,

Young, Del Rio, Corbin and Ziggler. Crews low bridges Bubba out and Del Rio is the only one left standing. Ziggler drops him with a Fameasser and goes for a cover out of instinct. That's not enough to eliminate him though as Alberto comes back with a tilt-a-whirl gutbuster.

Alberto misses a charge and goes through the ropes, allowing Ziggler to superkick him to the floor which isn't an elimination. Corbin sends Dolph to the apron but can't get him out. Del Rio comes back in and gets backdropped out by Crews to put us down to four. Corbin gets rid of Ziggler but Crews gets rid of himself and Corbin, leaving Young to win the thing at 13:20.

Rating: D. You know what, why not? That's certainly a unique way to win the match and it's a nice way to have Young go somewhere after all those vignettes. I would have gone with Crews here but this could have been a lot worse. I mean, at least it's not another battle of Cleveland with Ziggler vs. Miz. It was a pretty standard battle royal though, which is only going to be so entertaining.

Backlund picks Young up to celebrate.

Shane and Stephanie McMahon are talking about why Vince McMahon is going to be here tonight. Maybe it's to give one of them a promotion. Seth Rollins comes in and thinks Vince is here to see about him as the face of the WWE. Rollins has footage for tonight and Shane thinks it should be on the Ambrose Asylum. Stephanie says no because she hates Dean (Have we ever gotten a reason other than he's apparently an embarrassment to the company?) so Seth will get to debut the Rollins Report. Great. EVEN MORE talking.

Quick look at Brock Lesnar winning his return to the UFC on Saturday before he faces Randy Orton at Summerslam. Orton will be on the Highlight Reel at Battleground.

Zack Ryder comes up to challenge Rusev again but Sheamus jumps him from behind. Apparently there's no title match tonight because Ryder will be facing Sheamus next. Three WOO's for false advertising!

Sheamus vs. Zack Ryder

Ryder goes right after him to start and knocks Sheamus to the floor for a dropkick off the apron. Back in and a running boot to the face gets two for Zack as the announcers ignore the match to play fantasy draft. Not that it matters as the Brogue Kick ends Ryder at 2:22. I knew this was coming because this is how WWE works but thanks for YET ANOTHER waste of potential for the sake of a nothing match on Smackdown.

Rusev comes out and beats up Ryder as well while shouting that he accepts Ryder's challenge. Wait, so Ryder is getting the title shot after Sheamus just beat him clean? SERIOUSLY? This is the kind of stuff you suggest in sarcasm because it's the dumbest thing you could possibly do, not what you actually do on Raw.

Breezango vs. Lucha Dragons

This is due to the Dragons messing up Breeze's vest on the pre-show. Fandango and Cara start things off and it's time for more Draft talk. Cara headscissors him down but gets caught in the wrong corner to put him in trouble. Fandango is sent into the corner as well and the hot tag brings in Kalisto, who almost immediately botches a springboard. A few kicks to Breeze go better and the hurricanrana driver makes it worse. The numbers get the better of him though and Breeze gets in a superkick for the pin on Kalisto at 4:20.

Rating: D+. I can't help it but I like Breezango. They're just a goofy little midcard heel team but it's not like there's anything better for either of them to do. If nothing else it means we're getting something out of that Golden Truth story, which went on forever and deserves to actually go somewhere. Also it's not like the Dragons mean anything at this point anyway so them losing doesn't exactly matter.

Here's Seth Rollins for the Rollins Report. Tonight he has something special for us: footage from a special sitdown interview with Roman Reigns. Please tell me this isn't going to be one of those things where he asks questions and Reigns' answers are to completely different questions and edited to sound embarrassing.

We see the footage and it's....one of those things where he asks questions and Reigns' answers are to completely different questions and edited to

sound embarrassing. Basically Reigns "admits" he did it and says he should be out of the triple threat because he's no role model. Oh and he hates Dean being champion.

Back in the arena, Rollins says Ambrose should be out of the triple threat because he deserves his rematch for the title, one on one. Cue Ambrose but Rollins yells at him for being a coward and stealing the title from him at Money in the Bank. Dean says he loves to come out here and have a good time but he's the top man in this industry. He's more than just a joke and a utility player because he's the only one still standing and the king of this company. Dean goes on about Rollins wanting another shot and offers a title shot anywhere any place. Rollins is ready right now but nah, not tonight. He'll see Dean next week.

We get a quick preview of New Day fighting the Wyatt Family at their compound. This DEFINITELY looks like the Final Deletion.

Ambrose vs. Rollins for the title is confirmed for next week.

Kevin Owens vs. ???

Sami Zayn is on commentary but Kevin won't come out until he's gone. Stephanie comes in to say get rid of Sami because she's all about solutions. Sami starts to leave but gets in a fight with Owens on the ramp. No match.

Vince arrives and says he's here to name the Commissioner of Smackdown.

Kevin Owens vs. Cesaro

Time for more Draft talk! I know it's a big deal but could you please talk about the actual match for more than two seconds first? Cesaro gutwrenches him over for two to start before they trade headlocks. A hurricanrana puts Owens down but he makes the ropes to break up the Swing. Owens takes over with a whip into the barricade as the announcers talk about where John Cena will be drafted. Cesaro's suplex doesn't break their focus but Owens knocks him into the barricade as we take a break.

Back with Cesaro fighting out of a chinlock and avoiding the Cannonball in the corner. The Pop Up Powerbomb is blocked and the springboard

spinning uppercut gets two for Cesaro. Another running uppercut on the floor (with Cesaro wearing JBL's hat) but Cesaro gets crotched on top to slow him down. Owens busts out a torture rack neckbreaker for the clean pin at 12:24.

Rating: C+. I like the finisher but I could go without Cesaro losing all over again. I mean to be fair he had that awesome run against Miz and came up short, which is his standard operating procedure. It's still working, but at some point you're just wasting a lot of potential and acting like Cesaro isn't being hurt by all the losses.

Post match Owens grabs a headset to brag about how awesome he is until Sami Zayn jumps him from behind. Cesaro swings Owens in a meaningless gesture. Maybe he should, I don't know, be upset about the loss?

The Club thinks John Cena is abandoning Enzo and Big Cass by hosting the ESPYs and not being here tonight. Maybe after the win they could hop on a plane and crash the awards so they can beat up John Cena.

Heath Slater vs. Titus O'Neil

We actually get a Slater Gator reference for a name I never thought (or hoped to) I'd hear again. Titus throws him around to start but runs into a raised boot in the corner. That means it's time for a quick Bo-Train, followed by Slater getting two off a DDT. Titus starts powering back and catches a diving Heath in three straight backbreakers. The Clash of the Titus puts Heath away at 3:12.

Rating: D. Well that happened and I'm not sure what else there is to say about it. This is another short match that doesn't seem to mean much but maybe that's going to be the norm going forward. Titus winning is fine but I'm not sure where he's going after losing to Rusev so decisively.

Sasha has been waiting to shut Dana Brooke up all weekend now and wants the title after that. Tonight, she gets real.

We look back at the Wyatt Family challenging the New Day to come to their compound last week.

Now we go to the compound, where a bunch of cars turn their lights on and

try to crush New Day as they get out of their truck. The editing makes this look like it's being played in fast motion so it's almost impossible to keep track of. The Wyatts arrive in a car and the brawl is on with New Day being beaten down with a variety of weapons. Woods hides behind a tree until Bray swings an ax at him and rams him into the tree trunk.

Kofi is shoved into some mud until Big E. suplexes Rowan. Strowman (who looks even more frightening with his shirt off) and Big E. hit each other a few times until Bray comes back and drops the unconscious Woods by the car. Kofi and Big E. are beaten down again as the editing gets even faster. Woods gets back up with a trashcan lid for a save but Bray beats everyone down and asks where the power of positivity is now.

New Day is sent into a car which is quickly beaten down but they escaped somewhere in there. Bray is left alone but smiles at New Day, who are freaked out by his laughter. Rowan and Strowman come back but a bunch of people in sheep masks appear, all holding lanterns. That's enough for New Day as they bail, leaving Bray to say follow the buzzards.

Yes it's clearly a takeoff from the Final Deletion and I'm sure I'll hear about how much better TNA's version was, though this was the serious version and exactly the kind of thing that made the Wyatts creepy in the first place. This really is something that has to be seen though as words really don't do it justice. It worked though.

Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. The Club

Enzo and Cass say they want Cena's spot but they're willing to earn it. The Club on the other hand think they can take it by beating Cena up 3-1. AJ tells them to walk away but Enzo says the only place they're walking is into that ring right now. This is joined in progress after a break with Enzo trying to hold Anderson with a headlock. It's quickly off to Gallows who headbutts Enzo back into the corner as the beatdown begins.

Karl comes back in for a headlock but Cass comes in and slams Enzo onto Anderson for two. To be fair Enzo might as well just be a projectile as I don't think he's entirely human. Gallows kicks Enzo in the face and sends him shoulder first into the post as we take a break. Back with Anderson and Gallows taking turns on Enzo. Anderson finally lets Enzo get away for

the hot tag to Cass (Enzo's signature) and a fall away slam sets up the Bada Boom Shakalacka. AJ low bridges Gallows to the floor though and it's a DQ at 10:48.

Rating: C. This was just a long beating on Enzo and to be fair that's almost all he's good for in a situation like this one. I like how much they're protecting Cass though as I don't think he's been pinned yet and the Club actually lost here. The match was fine, albeit pretty basic for the most part. It's acceptable though as you don't want to burn the fans out on this match like they did with the Club vs. the Usos.

Post match the beating is almost on but here's Cena, who was in Los Angeles earlier today, for the save. Well at least he's not live via satellite. That earns him a big CENA chant which you really don't hear that often.

Dana Brooke vs. Sasha Banks

Sasha shoves her outside to start and things instantly slow down. Back in and Dana talks a lot of trash before kneeing Sasha in the ribs. Banks is sent outside so Charlotte can brag us to a break. Back with Sasha in a chinlock (Charlotte: "Very good Dana.") before stomping away in the corner. The announcers continue to talk about ANYTHING other than this match as Dana grabs another chinlock to keep things slow. Sasha fights out again and hits the double knees in the corner. Dana crotches her on top but Sasha pops right back up and grabs the Bank Statement for the win at 12:00.

Rating: C-. This was fine and another win for Sasha as that Natalya feud looks more and more pointless every single week. Dana is getting better in the ring as she's not botching everything she tries but she still is on the main roster far sooner than she probably should have been.

Post match Charlotte says that's not good enough so Sasha has to beat Dana again on Smackdown.

Here are Shane, Stephanie and Vince for the Smackdown Commissioner announcement. Vince thinks they've been doing a fair job but wonders how they could be his kids. Where's the violence and anger? How could they

not have stabbed each other in the back yet? What's up with Stephanie being all passive aggressive and Shane having no ruthless aggression?

The kids are given a chance to convince their dad that they should be in charge of Smackdown and Stephanie goes first. Stephanie goes on a rant about what Shane said on the Mick Foley podcast about how he left when he wasn't congratulated enough. That's nothing compared to what he says behind Vince's back because he's all crazy and needing to be praised.

Shane says he came back in this arena five months ago and he's eternally thankful. He's ready to change everything about Smackdown and shatter the glass ceilings that Vince and Stephanie have set up. We get a quick fan poll with Shane easily winning which Stephanie attributes to crowd manipulation.

Vince doesn't care what the people think but one of them has to run Smackdown. That will be.....Shane, while Stephanie runs Raw. Ah that's better. For a second there I thought they might actually do something interesting. Vince wants them to compete for who gets the keys to the kingdom but they'll both be naming General Managers. Great. MORE power struggles and double bosses for each show.

Vince leaves and Stephanie tells Shane she's going to make him wish he was never born. Shane thinks Stephanie is hiding something and it's fear. It's game on, but Stephanie says she's married to the only game in this business. She slaps him in the face so he kisses her on the cheek, only to have Stephanie slip off the steps as she leaves to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. I actually liked this show more than I was expecting to as it absolutely flew by. Even though it was just a big preview for the Draft next week (as it should have been), they kept it entertaining enough and set some stuff up going forward, which is all it was supposed to do. Unfortunately the ending really hurt things as it's going to be all about the McMahons even longer, which is really the last thing they needed to go with but that's how WWE works. Anyway, not a good show or anything but it was good enough for a show in a vacuum like everything else is around here at the moment.

Results

Darren Young won a battle royal after Baron Corbin and Apollo Crews eliminated each other

Sheamus b. Zack Ryder – Brogue Kick

Breezango b. Lucha Dragons – Superkick to Kalisto

Kevin Owens b. Cesaro – Torture rack neckbreaker

Enzo Amore/Big Cass b. The Club via DQ when AJ Styles interfered

Sasha Banks b. Dana Brooke – Bank Statement

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Smackdown – July 7, 2016: Pre-Draft Momentum

Smackdown

Date: July 7, 2016

Location: Huntington Center, Toledo, Ohio

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton

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

The Club is conferencing.

Chris Jericho is trying to find his blue scarf.

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

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

Opening sequence.

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

Jey Uso vs. Seth Rollins

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

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

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

Dean: "The winner of the match, the human equivalent of a root canal."

Seth bails at the threat of a fight so Ambrose can't raise his hand.

Dean: "I'll just raise this instead." And he holds up the title.

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

Zack Ryder vs. Sheamus

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

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

Baron Corbin video.

Rusev accepts the challenge.

Becky Lynch vs. Natalya

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

We recap the Wyatt Family and New Day from Monday.

Xavier Woods is worried about going to the Wyatt Compound because they have no idea what's going to happen there. Woods isn't happy with what his brothers have decided but he'll stand by them. Did the Wyatts send

them directions to get there? Otherwise we could be in for a long scavenger hunt.

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

Anderson thinks they should beat up Enzo and Cass, then hit some golf balls, have some strawberry shortcake and then BEAT UP JOHN CENA. AJ wants to fight Enzo, who says they're not a good original or a good remix. After one round with Sugar Ray Amore, they'll walk out a diabetic.

AJ Styles vs. Enzo Amore

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

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

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

just as good as always.

The Miz vs. Kalisto

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sami Zayn vs. Chris Jericho

Kevin Owens is at ringside and starts ripping on Byron before his music even ends. Owens: "Hi Sami! Hope you have a good match! I hope you break

your ankle." Jericho wristlocks him down for a bit until Sami scores with three straight armdrags. They head outside with Sami hitting his barricade moonsault but Jericho punches him in the face and mocks the OLE chants as we take a break.

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

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

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

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

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

Results

Seth Rollins b. Jey Uso – Pedigree

Zack Ryder b. Sheamus – Elbro

AJ Styles b. Enzo Amore – Styles Clash

Miz b. Kalisto – Skull Crushing Finale

Sami Zayn b. Chris Jericho – Rollup

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Smackdown – June 30, 2016: The Leftovers

Smackdown

Date: June 30, 2016

Location: American Airlines Arena, Miami, Florida

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, David Otunga, Byron Saxton

We're running out of Smackdowns on Thursday nights as we only have two more weeks before heading over to the live world for a major change. It's also interesting to see how things go without Roman Reigns around, though

the more interesting thing will be seeing how he is when he comes back. Let's get to it.

Tonight it's Cesaro vs. Sheamus vs. Alberto Del Rio vs. Apollo Crews for a US Title shot later in the night.

Cesaro arrived earlier and said he'll win after his uppercut party.

Apollo Crews says this is a huge opportunity and sometimes the impossible is possible.

Sheamus is glad Crews is in this match because he can have some fun before winning the title.

Del Rio doesn't know who Crews is but he'll win the title tonight.

Opening sequence.

Cesaro vs. Alberto Del Rio vs. Apollo Crews vs. Sheamus

Winner gets a US Title match later tonight. Cesaro and Crews actually pair off to start before Sheamus and Crews fall out to the floor. Cesaro hits a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker on Del Rio before heading to the apron for a flip dive to take out Sheamus. Del Rio sends Cesaro into the barricade and then the post before getting Sheamus to help with some double teaming back inside. The Brogue Kick is broken up as Crews comes in to cross body both heels, leaving Alberto to hit a Backstabber on Sheamus.

Back from a break with Crews breaking up the top rope double stomp, allowing Cesaro to hit a high cross body for two on Del Rio. Sheamus breaks up a Swing with the Irish Curse but Del Rio superkicks Sheamus to break up the Cloverleaf. The cross armbreaker has Sheamus in trouble until Crews makes another save. It's time for the uppercut party until Sheamus plants him with a tilt-a-whirl slam. Crews hits a cross body to put Sheamus on the floor, leaving Cesaro to Swing Del Rio into the Sharpshooter for the tap out at 9:44.

Rating: C. Crews looked good here but more importantly he looked like he belonged. I'm sure we're going to get Cesaro vs. Del Rio at Battleground

so it's nice to have them do something different before we get there. The same is true of Crews vs. Sheamus, which is just continuing because that's how feuds work in WWE.

Post match Del Rio sends Cesaro into the steps as Rusev comes out for the title match.

US Title: Rusev vs. Cesaro

Rusev is defending and Cesaro has a banged up shoulder from going into the steps. Cesaro fires off uppercuts to start but gets stomped down and kneed in the ribs. Rusev pounds on his own chest but Cesaro muscles him over with a suplex for two. The champ grabs a bearhug but Cesaro fights out and hits the springboard uppercut.

Rusev goes up top, only to get dropkicked to the floor for another cannonball off the apron. Back in and a swinging Rock Bottom puts Cesaro again and sets up more Bulgarian shouting. Cesaro uppercuts and clotheslines his way back out but can't get the Sharpshooter as Rusev kicks at the ribs. A kick to the head sets up the Accolade and Cesaro taps at 6:13.

Rating: C+. Well that happened. This whole thing took about half an hour and now we're done. I mean, Heaven forbid they let Cesaro have this match on pay per view when we can have Del Rio vs. Cesaro and maybe even Titus vs. Rusev all over again. Instead Cesaro earned a title shot and lost it in the span of about forty minutes. All nice and clean, just like that.

Post break, Rusev thinks Independence Day should be renamed Rusev Day. However, this Monday he'll be defending the US Title against Titus O'Neal. Lana doesn't seem worried and she really shouldn't be.

Special Olympics video.

Dana Brooke vs. Billie Kay

Kay is from NXT and gets a jobber entrance. I really can't imagine this is a full callup. Dana shoves her around with ease and says playtime is over. Kay gets dropped face first on the top turnbuckle before Dana chokes her in the corner. A cartwheel splash gets two but Billie gets in

a discus lariat and big boot for two. Not that it matters as the Samoan Driver ends Billie at 2:53.

Sasha Banks says she's ready for Charlotte because the Boss isn't just a nickname. If Charlotte wants to throw Dana in her way, it's just going to delay the inevitable. Summer Rae comes in to say she's sick of Sasha so a match is made for tonight.

It's time for MizTV with guest Dean Ambrose, who comes out with a paper bag in his hand. Miz yells at him for coming out early as Dean pulls out a sandwich for a snack while talking about Maroon Five: Battleground. Miz tries to correct him while Dean sucks up to the crowd. Dean plugs Battleground and talks about his own talk show. Miz doesn't think much of the Ambrose Asylum because it just had a stupid plant.

That's not cool with Dean and the fans get in an argument over which show is better. That turns into which title is better and Miz brings up Stephanie hating Ambrose as champ. A fight is teased so Miz takes off his jacket, which Dean uses to wipe his mouth. Maryse offers a distraction and Miz decks Dean before leaving. That's your main event I'm sure. Dean keeps chewing despite holding his head.

Erick Rowan/Braun Strowman vs. Aaron Hale/Mike Dewotly

Rowan hammers both of them in the head to start before it's off to Strowman, who slams Aaron onto Mike for the double pin at 55 seconds.

Post match New Day comes up on screen ala the Wyatts to ask what Bray fears. Big E. thinks it's either soap or the ghost from Conjuring 2. Woods doesn't have much to say as Big E. thinks Bray may be afraid of being exposed. Bray notices that Woods isn't laughing so he should tell his friends what he already knows. The devil calls for Woods so it's time to pray. Or maybe run.

Sasha Banks vs. Summer Rae

Post Wrestlemania Raw rematch, which somehow was Sasha's last singles match on the two main shows. Sasha wristdrags her off the top to start but gets sidestepped out to the floor. A big boot knocks Sasha off the

apron and we take a break. Back with Summer yelling a lot which is better than her wrestling a lot. Some rollups get a series of near falls for Sasha and it's time for the clotheslines because that's what faces in WWE do. Summer avoids the double knees in the corner and kicks Sasha in the head for two, only to be sent into the middle turnbuckle, setting up the double knees. The Bank Statement ends Summer at 8:52.

Rating: C-. This was a bit better than I was expecting though Summer has probably peaked as Fandango's dance partner. She's good as a jobber, though you could argue that more than half of the women in WWE are jobbers to the handful of bigger names. Summer using her legs for most of her offense makes sense too so this was almost a nice little surprise.

We look at Monday's matches with AJ Styles and John Cena failing to get into the pay per view title match.

Dean Ambrose vs. The Miz

Non-title and Miz comes out second for some reason. Dean hammers away to start as Mauro says Dean is the man with the championship. So Miz is Dean? Miz buries a knee to the ribs to take over but Dean comes back with a cross body and right hands to the head. Maryse pulls Miz out of the way of a suicide dive but Miz saves himself from the top rope elbow. See? He can be self sufficient too.

Neither finisher can hit but Dean clotheslines him on the floor and gets in more right hands. Dean is sent into the barricade and we take a break, coming back to see Miz working on the leg. It's off to a basic leglock but Miz takes too long going up, only to break up a superplex attempt and hit the top rope ax handle. A neckbreaker gives Dean a breather and comes back with his basic comeback package, including La Majistral for two. You wouldn't expect lucha rollups when you look at Dean.

Dean's middle rope dropkick is countered into the Figure Four. Ambrose gets over to the ropes and knocks Miz to the floor for a suicide dive. So much for the selling, just like Monday. The Rebound Lariat is countered into the Skull Crushing Finale for two. Miz is frustrated so he makes the mistake of trying another ax handle, only to have Dean step aside and grab Dirty Deeds for the pin at 14:35.

Rating: B. Now this was the nice surprise I was waiting for earlier. Miz losing here isn't exactly my favorite idea but at least it was to a bigger star. It really does say something about WWE when I couldn't think of anyone else to take this loss. We've seen Ambrose vs. Owens and Del Rio and Jericho so many times that it means nothing so somehow Miz is the last remaining option.

Overall Rating: D+. I don't remember the last time I saw a show that was so thrown together. This felt like they took whoever they could find and put them into a card five minutes before the tapings started. Look back at this show and tell me if you see a TV episode or most of a pretty bad house show. It looked like they had something unique going at the start but that was all done after about thirty minutes. The main event was fine but the rest of the show felt slapped together, thereby continuing the tradition of Smackdown to its final shows on Thursday.

Results

Cesaro b. Alberto Del Rio, Apollo Crews and Sheamus – Sharpshooter to Del Rio

Rusev b. Cesaro – Accolade

Dana Brooke b. Billie Kay – Samoan Driver

Erick Rowan/Braun Strowman b. Aaron Hale/Mike Dewotly – Strowman slammed Hale onto Dewotly

Sasha Banks b. Summer Rae – Bank Statement

Dean Ambrose b. The Miz – Dirty Deeds

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Monday Night Raw – June 27, 2016: Holes In Limbo

Monday Night Raw

Date: June 27, 2016

Location: Amalie Arena, Tampa, Florida

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

We're getting closer to Battleground but things have changed a bit because of Roman Reigns' suspension. It should be interesting to see if that's actually referenced during the show as they could just as easily say Rollins attacked him off air or that he was injured during last week's match. Let's get to it.

Here's Seth Rollins to open things up. He talks about the upcoming triple threat but stops to talk about the Roman Reigns scandal. What he did to get himself suspended soiled the Shield's name and then he even put out a statement about it. We see the Tweet from Reigns saying he violated the Wellness Policy and apologizing for it, which Rollins doesn't buy. What about an apology to the fans?

As for the last part where Reigns says he owns it, all that matters is Rollins owns him. Reigns doesn't deserve a second chance or forgiveness or to be in the main event of Battleground. Based on the suspension, we might as well just make it a singles match because that's what Rollins deserves.

Cue Ambrose to say everyone makes mistakes, like being Seth's friend or Rollins wearing skinny jeans. As far as Dean is concerned the triple threat is still on. This brings out AJ Style to say it should still be a triple threat with himself taking Reigns' place. Dean doesn't make the

decisions around here but thinks it's still a triple threat.

They all bicker with each other when John Cena comes out as well. He's held that title fifteen times and had his first match in WWE fourteen years ago today. Cena won the last time he beat Ambrose so let's make it a fatal fiveway. Now it's Stephanie McMahon to say she doesn't like Ambrose standing in the ring as champion. She does however like the idea of Cena and Styles in the Battleground title match. Therefore tonight it's Cena vs. Rollins and Ambrose vs. Styles. If Cena and AJ win, they can be added to the title match at Battleground.

Paige/Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte/Dana Brooks

This is Sasha's first match on Raw or Smackdown since April because WWE has no idea how to book more than one story in this division at a time. Sasha sends Dana into the corner to start but Brooke reverses and does the pat on Sasha's head. That just earns her an ejection out to the floor and we take a break.

Back with Charlotte putting Paige in a chinlock, apparently due to kicking her in the face during the break. A running flip neckbreaker allows Charlotte to taunt Sasha a bit and draw the hot hotheaded Banks in. Paige dives for the tag but settles for a superkick to the champ's face, allowing her to bring in Sasha. Everything breaks down and double knees in the corner sets up the Bank Statement to make Dana tap at 8:46.

Rating: C-. The ending made sense and it's a good sign that Paige's win over Charlotte wasn't just a one off plot device. Sasha going through Charlotte's lackey to get to the big title showdown makes sense though I could see them waiting until Summerslam to go there. Unfortunately this makes the whole Natalya series seem like a waste of time as there was no real reason to wait on Sasha getting this run. Oh and please don't have them put Ric Flair in Sasha's corner for some stupid reason.

Titus O'Neil vs. Rusev

Non-title and we actually get a match here despite Titus attacking before the bell again. Titus misses a charge in the corner and gets stomped down, setting up a chinlock that goes nowhere. A dropkick puts Titus down

and a few knees to the ribs keeps him in trouble, only to have the threat of a big boot sends Rusev outside. We get a double clothesline before Titus throws Rusev over the timekeeper's area for the countout win at 4:09.

Rating: D. Why in the world are we getting another of these matches? Titus vs. Rusev was one of the lamest title matches I've seen in a long time and now we're getting another despite Rusev already beating him? WWE really needs to comprehend the idea of a one off match. Not everything needs to be part of a big story, despite what WWE seems to think.

Stephanie runs into Kane, who is still trying to get a chance at running Smackdown. Miz and Maryse come in to complain about the lack of a red carpet and the limo driver not opening the door for them. Kane mentions his own acting career before bringing up Miz not defending the title in a long time. That's accurate actually so Stephanie makes a title match against a mystery opponent. It's like a cliffhanger you see.

As usual, every single word Stephanie says feels like it comes off a teleprompter. I don't know if it's that she sucks as an actress or what, but she's sounded like that for over fifteen years now and it almost never changes. She can rant and rave very well but anytime she tries to sound natural or spontaneous, she sounds like an eight year old in a school play.

Seth Rollins vs. John Cena

If Cena wins he's in the title match at Battleground. They start fast with Seth actually getting the better of it off some right hands. A dropkick and Blockbuster get two each on Cena but he initiates his finishing sequence to come back. Of course it's WAY too early for that so the Shuffle is broken up with a kick to the face.

Back from a break with Cena hitting the shoulders into the Protobomb again but catching the kick that would break up the Shuffle. A third Protobomb sets up the Shuffle but the AA is countered into the low superkick for two. Cena comes right back with a tornado DDT for two of his own, only to have Seth kick him in the face.

The great looking frog splash misses though and Cena heads up top but Seth runs the ropes for a superplex and rolls into a Falcon's Arrow for two. A quick AA gets two more with Seth getting his foot on the ropes. Another AA doesn't work so Cena grabs the STF but cue the Club for a distraction, setting up the Pedigree for the pin at 16:00.

Rating: B. It's nice to have these two feel fresh after all those matches they had back in the fall. Cena losing this close to clean is kind of surprising but Rollins needs wins like these to really look like a top player again after the injury. I mean I know he won the title but does that really mean much anymore? Good match here though, despite the somewhat obvious ending.

Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Carlos Kershing/Mitch Walding

Enzo says they're riding a wave and the wave is these people. Therefore he wants the fans to do the wave as soon as the bell rings. The Bada Boom Shakalacka ends we'll say Kershing at 25 seconds.

Post match Cass loads up the spelling but the Social Outcasts interrupt. Dallas says the Outcasts are H-A-R-D so Cass asks which is the hardest. A big boot drops Slater and the other two aren't so willing to get in the ring.

Bob Backlund/Darren Young segment with Backlund saying it's time for the Darren Young Era. This sounds like the last one.

Some Special Olympians got to train at the WWE Performance Center. Nothing wrong with that.

The Special Olympians are here and get a presentation to the crowd.

Becky Lynch vs. Summer Rae

Natalya is on commentary and there's no match as Becky goes right after her, earning a pretty loud BECKY chant as a result.

It's time for the Highlight Reel with guests Sami Zayn and Kevin Owens. After Jericho blames both of them for that maniac Dean Ambrose being WWE World Champion, he brings them out and brings up their careers being put

on hold because of this feud. Sami wants to end everything at Battleground because they might wind up on different shows without anything being settled.

Owens won't say anything so Sami accuses him of being a coward. Sami wants to hear Owens admit that he's jealous of Sami for getting to WWE first in NXT. Owens says he's told Sami the truth many times: what he did was to advance his own career. Everything they did was to get to WWE and Sami should have done is congratulate Owens for using him as a stepping stone. The fact that he doesn't shows that Owens is a better friend than Sami ever was, but the match is on for Battleground.

Jericho loves the idea but says Owens is just trying to follow Jericho's path. Chris doesn't think much of Sami either and would love to shut up his stupid idiot face right now, but he'll leave Owens to do that at Battleground. We get the Gift of Jericho pose but both Sami and Owens kick him in the face at the same time. The fans seem really intrigued at the idea of these two working together.

We recap the opening segment.

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. ???

Miz is defending against....Kane. I had it being Cesaro but why do that when you can do someone not quite that interesting who hasn't had a match since Wrestlemania? Kane throws him around to start but can't get a chokeslam. Instead it's a big boot to the champ's face, followed by a side slam for two. Maryse gets on the apron to break up another chokeslam attempt, only to get knocked to the floor for some screeching. Miz is nice enough to check on her and her injured ankle, drawing our second countout for the midcard champions of the night at 3:27.

Rating: D. I'm glad Kane didn't win here but tell me we're not going to see a rematch between these two at Battleground. I really don't need to see Kane getting a second title shot but since they did this match here we absolutely need to see them do it again because HOW ELSE CAN WE POSSIBLY DO A STORY???

Post break Maryse shows Miz that she was faking. Miz is impressed.

Apollo Crews/Cesaro vs. Alberto Del Rio/Sheamus

See, Del Rio and Cesaro had a match on Smackdown (not shown of course) so they're in a heated rivalry now. Sheamus wants nothing to do with Crews to start so Apollo grabs a quick suplex on Del Rio and brings in Cesaro. Some kicks stagger Cesaro and a DDT gets two for Alberto.

Sheamus comes in for the Irish Curse before slapping on a chinlock to keep things slow (not a bad thing here). Cesaro throws him down and the double tag brings in Crews to clothesline Del Rio a few times before Alberto intentionally enziguris Sheamus and walks out. A dropkick sends the steps into Sheamus, setting up the toss powerbomb to give Crews the pin at 5:00.

Rating: D+. Well ok then. I'm not sure where they're going with this but it's a good sign that Crews is just in the midcard without too many questions. I really don't need to see them waiting around while he has a nothing feud to introduce him to the roster. The short thing against the Social Outcasts was bad enough but he seems to actually have a place now. Not exactly a character or that much of a story but he's got something.

Dean Ambrose is disappointed that he didn't get a parade for winning the title but he'll settle for a match with Styles tonight. Stephanie comes in and talks about how she wants to get the title off Dean as fast as she can because he's a disgrace to the company. Oh and no one would want his autograph because he's not worth it.

Ok, this is just stupid now. Stephanie just keeps going from one side of the spectrum to the other and you can pretty much guess which one she'll be on a given week. It's either the fun loving one who dances with kids and wants to make WWE great or the one who is basically Vince with better legs. At some point you need an actual motivation for your character and "I want WWE to be respected" isn't enough.

We get that because she tells you every single week but just saying it and giving no reason for why someone isn't worthy of your praise isn't enough. Pick a side or at least tell us why you're doing something. Just having Stephanie go all over the place because she's Stephanie and the rules don't apply to her. This has been going on for years but she's a

self made woman and empowering or whatever their line is.

The Wyatts are here....and it's New Day in costumes, with Kofi as Rowan, Woods as Harper and Big E. as Bray, complete with cowboy hat, gray beard with a string to hold it on, overalls and a lantern made up of light up unicorn horns. We even get a New Day themed Wyatt style montage. Kofi throws the mask off and wants to know how Rowan can breathe in that thing. They get in the ring and Big E. plays up to being born in Tampa. Big E.: "Tampa General Hospital anyone?"

They make fun of the outfits until the real Wyatts interrupt. Bray says it's a new day and tells the fans to vilify him. How can the power of positivity help someone who just lost his job and can't put food on his table? Kofi calls the power of positivity a way of life and Big E. agrees but Bray focuses on Woods. Xavier looks a bit shook and Bray says Woods can confide in him. They're just playing one of Woods' games but there are no winners or loses. There's just malice and destruction and New Day will fall. Remember when Bray was going to be a face and he was looking awesome? Is there a reason that was canceled?

Post break New Day thinks it's a great idea to keep messing with the Wyatts. Kofi: "It was the best idea we've had since we went and saw Finding Dory the other day." Woods looks shaken and walks off.

Dean Ambrose vs. AJ Styles

Non-title and Rollins is on commentary. Feeling out process to start with Ambrose getting taken down in a headlock. Back up and Dirty Deeds doesn't work so we take an early break. We come back with AJ hitting a good looking dropkick and slapping on a chinlock. A hot shot breaks up AJ's momentum and a fisherman's suplex of all things gets two for the champ.

AJ gets the same off a faceplant but takes too much time getting to the top, allowing Dean to grab a butterfly superplex. Styles is back up though and grabs a torture rack into a spinning powerbomb, only to miss the Phenomenal Forearm. Dean wrenches his knee though and that means the Calf Crusher. You don't have the champ tap though so he grabs the rope instead.

Dean sends him outside and OF COURSE he can still do the suicide dive on the bad leg. Back in and AJ rolls through the top rope elbow, followed by the Pele. Dean is JUST FINE and hits the rebound lariat to put both guys down. This brings out the Club so AJ can get two off a brainbuster. Cena comes down to fight Gallows and Anderson but the distraction sets up Dirty Deeds to put AJ away at 15:45.

Rating: C-. Completely ignoring the leg injury aside, is there a reason why Seth didn't come in and attack Dean to keep it a triple threat like he wanted? He's supposed to be all smart and he was fine with letting Dean be in the Calf Crusher while he just sat there. I know it's not how you do a match like this, but it goes against Seth's intelligence to have Dean in that much danger and not do anything about it. This match had too many holes it in for me to work, despite it being entertaining at times.

Post match the Club beats up Cena as Rollins hits two Pedigrees on Ambrose. Is there ANY reason he's still using that move? He's not associated with HHH anymore and it really doesn't fit his style but that's what he was using before and nothing is allowed to change for a main eventer so I guess that's what we're getting for good. Cena gets a Magic Killer on the stage and Dean takes another Pedigree to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. This wasn't quite the same as last week as the wrestling was just there for the most part. The bigger problem though is how weak Battleground is looking aside from the main event. It looks like a lot of rematches and then some nothing matches like Kane vs. Miz and Titus vs. Rusev. On top of that there's also the impending Draft, which really makes so much of this stuff seem like filler. The show certainly wasn't horrible but it was really just there, and that's rarely a good sign. Oh and next week is the Fourth of July, meaning the biggest throw away show of the year. Have fun with that one.

Results

Sasha Banks/Paige b. Charlotte/Dana Brooke – Bank Statement to Brooke

Titus O'Neil b. Rusev via countout

Seth Rollins b. John Cena – Pedigree

Enzo Amore/Big Cass b. Carlos Kershing/Mitch Walding – Bada Boom
Shakalacka to Kershing

Kane b. The Miz via countout

Apollo Crews/Cesaro b. Sheamus/Alberto Del Rio – Toss powerbomb to
Sheamus

Dean Ambrose b. AJ Styles – Dirty Deeds

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Smackdown – June 23, 2016: The Smackdown Gravestone

Smackdown

Date: June 23, 2016

Location: Tucson Arena, Tucson, Arizona

Commentators: Byron Saxton, Mauro Ranallo, David Otunga

It's an interesting time in WWE as we're less than a month away from the
new era really taking hold as the Draft takes place and separates the two

shows into different entities. On top of that though, Roman Reigns has been suspended for thirty days, meaning the build towards the triple threat match at Battleground could be interesting. Let's get to it.

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

Opening sequence.

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

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

Cesaro vs. Alberto Del Rio

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

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

double stomp for the same on Alberto.

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

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

Apollo Crews vs. Sheamus

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

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

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

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

Jimmy Uso vs. AJ Styles

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

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

Rating: C. For reasons that I'll never understand, this means more Usos vs. the Club. I'm a big Usos fan but there's little interest for them as singles wrestlers and they've done everything there is for them as a tag team, especially fighting the Club for probably the tenth time in a few months. AJ looked good but this was just a step above a squash for him.

New Day vs. Vaudevillains

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

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

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

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

Kevin Owens.

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

Dana Brooke vs. Becky Lynch

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

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

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

Seth Rollins vs. Sami Zayn

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

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

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

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

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

Results

Cesaro b. Alberto Del Rio – Neutralizer

Sheamus b. Apollo Crews via countout

AJ Styles b. Jimmy Uso – Phenomenal Forearm

New Day b. Vaudevillains – Midnight Hour to Gotch

Dana Brooke b. Becky Lynch – Rollup

Seth Rollins b. Sami Zayn – Pedigree

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Smackdown – June 9, 2016: Keeping The Standard

Smackdown

Date: June 9, 2016

Location: Intrust Bank Arena, Wichita, Kansas

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Mauro Ranallo, Byron Saxton

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

Opening sequence.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Enzo and Cass clear the ring post match.

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

Muhammad Ali tribute.

The announcers talk about the Money in the Bank card.

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

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

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

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

Back in and Del Rio starts in on the arm but can't get the armbreaker. Everything breaks down and Swiss Death drops Del Rio again. Owens and Zayn are sent outside again, leaving Del Rio to take the Swing. Owens breaks up the Sharpshooter and crotches Cesaro on top, setting up the top rope double stomp from Del Rio, only to have Owens throw his partner out and steal the pin at 13:29.

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

We look at Jericho destroying Mitch.

Dana Brooke vs. Becky Lynch

Natalya and Charlotte are at ringside. Dana immediately bails to the ropes but Becky snaps off some armdrags to send her outside. Back in and Lynch misses a charge, allowing Charlotte to get in a forearm like a good heel should. Becky comes back with a kick to the ribs but she has to go after Charlotte, triggering a brawl between Charlotte and Natalya on the

floor. That earns them both an ejection, leaving Becky to make Dana tap with the Disarm-Her at 3:04.

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

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

Baron Corbin vs. Kalisto

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

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

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

We look at Ambrose ripping up Jericho's jacket. This feud really isn't

big enough to warrant this kind of attention.

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

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

Chris Jericho vs. Dean Ambrose

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

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

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

Rating: B-. Well so much for Dean's hot streak. The match was fine but that cage match destroyed a lot of my interest in this feud. Jericho only

has so much interest these days and it makes sense to have him win a match here or there since he has almost no chance of winning the ladder match. Then again that's what people were saying before he fought AJ at Wrestlemania.

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

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

Results

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

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

Becky Lynch b. Dana Brooke – Disarm-Her

Baron Corbin b. Kalisto – End of Days

Chris Jericho b. Dean Ambrose – Codebreaker

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Smackdown – June 2, 2016: Hope For The Future

Smackdown

Date: June 2, 2016

Location: BMO Harris Bank Center, Rockford, Illinois

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Mauro Ranallo, Byron Saxton

Things are rapidly changing around here as we have the new Brand Split in less than two months. More importantly for now however is the freshly heel AJ Styles who has set his sights on the returning John Cena, likely setting up a huge showdown at Money in the Bank. This show will likely focus on the build towards the ladder match so let's get to it.

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

Opening sequence.

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

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

Becky Lynch vs. Charlotte

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

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

Rating: C+. It's nice to have Becky not lose a match for a change though at some point she needs to actually win something of note. I'm assuming they're gearing up for a four way or something like it at Money in the Bank though I can't imagine they'll take the title off Charlotte this soon. Good match here though.

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

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

Golden Truth vs. Dudley Boyz

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

Truth drives Bubba into the corner to start and a double suplex puts the big man down. The Dudleyz take over and D-Von's spinning elbow to the jaw gets two. Everything breaks down and Goldust catches D-Von with a

spinebuster, only to have Tyler get on the apron for a distraction. Goldust goes to deal with him but gets rolled up by D-Von for the pin at 4:04.

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

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

Recap of Baron Corbin vs. Dolph Ziggler.

Corbin is standing outside because he won't grace the fans with his presence after they cheered what happened on Monday. The next time he comes into a WWE arena, it's to end Dolph Ziggler. Or on Raw next week.

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

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

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

Rating: B. Nice fast paced tag match here with both teams working well together and doing some things you don't normally get in the tag team formula. I'm not wild on having these tags where the good guys always

team with the bad guys leading up to the ladder match but at least it was an entertaining match this week.

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

Jack Swagger vs. Rusev

Non-title and Rusev attacks before Jack can get in the ring. Swagger says ring the bell and has the Patriot Lock on about two seconds in. Rusev bails to the floor and eats a hard clothesline but Jack's shoulder is banged up from the attack. Back in and Swagger makes a quick comeback but misses the running Vader Bomb. Instead he clotheslines Rusev again with the shoulder mostly fine. Rusev escapes another Patriot Lock attempt and sends Swagger outside for a whip into the steps. The Accolade is countered into the Patriot Lock but Rusev gets the rope and puts on the Accolade so Jack can pass out at 4:43.

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

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

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

We look at Rollins and Reigns not fighting on Raw.

AJ Styles vs. Kofi Kingston

Kofi flips him away to start but AJ snaps off some armdrags and poses a

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

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

The Boom Drop makes a rare appearance and something like a knee drop to a standing AJ gets two. Styles is sent to the apron and Woods starts playing some trombone, causing AJ to miss the Phenomenal Forearm. The SOS gives Kofi two but the Club and New Day get into it at ringside. Kofi dives over the top to take out Gallows, only to have AJ score with the Pele coming back in. The Styles Clash gives AJ the pin at 13:35.

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

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

Results

Becky Lynch b. Charlotte via DQ when Dana Brooke interfered

Dudley Boyz b. Golden Truth – Rollup to Goldust

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

Rusev b. Jack Swagger – Accolade

AJ Styles b. Kofi Kingston – Styles Clash

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