

Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2012: You Go Out. No You Go Out. You Go Out!

Royal Rumble 2012

Date: January 29, 2012

Location: Scottrade Center, St. Louis, Missouri

Attendance: 18,121

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, Booker T

We wrap things up here with last year's show. The Rumble is back to the thirty entrant variety which is probably the best move all around. The odds on favorite is Jericho who returned very recently before this show. Other than that we've got Daniel Bryan defending his newly won world title against Big Show and Henry in a cage, along with Punk defending against Ziggler. Let's get to it.

The opening video is of course about going to Wrestlemania.

Smackdown World Title: Big Show vs. Daniel Bryan vs. Mark Henry

Bryan is champion and beat Show at TLC by cashing in his MITB case in 45 seconds. Show beat Henry at the same show and ran over Bryan's girlfriend AJ on Raw to set all this up. This is one fall to a finish and it's pin/submission/escape. Bryan immediately goes for the corner but Henry pulls him down and Show runs Bryan over for two. Show crushes Henry against the cage wall but has to stop to pull Bryan back inside. Bryan tries to run up again but Show catches him by the ankle and slams him back in.

Show loads up the WMD but hits the cage wall instead. The champion fires off some kicks but gets headbutted right back down. Bryan kicks the knee out even harder and fires off some kicks to Henry to keep the other monster down. He goes for the door but you know this isn't ending that quickly. Henry makes the stop and demands that the referee CLOSE THAT DOOR. Show superkicks Henry down and it's his turn to take over for

awhile.

Bryan gets slammed down but Henry is back up again. A few punches put Show down because a dozen chair shots usually can't, but a few punches can. Actually that's a great way to keep Henry looking strong. The fans are cheering for Bryan as Henry and Show collide to put all three guys down. Show gets back up and clotheslines Bryan down a few times before superkicking him in the face. The chokeslam is countered and Bryan hits a tornado DDT on Show for two.

The LeBell (NO!) Lock is put on Show but Henry breaks it up in about a second. The WMD gets two on Henry but Bryan makes the save, which ticks Show off. Bryan SPRINTS up the cage but Show chases after him and grabs Bryan before he can get out. Bryan sits on the top of the cage and pounds away, only to be caught again. The champion is literally hanging from Show's wrist before finally letting go and falling to the floor to retain the title.

Rating: D+. This really wasn't all that great. At the end of the day, it was a lot of the same sequence over and over again with Show and Henry not having a ton of interaction at all. The ending didn't look great either and I'm not sure why Show would just hold him out over the floor like that. This falls under the category of "...really?" as it's hard to buy Bryan keeping the belt here.

Long video on Cena and all the stuff he does for WWE. The man is insanely committed to that company.

Divas of Doom/Bella Twins vs. Eve Torres/Alicia Fox/Tamina/Kelly Kelly

The Divas of Doom are Beth and Natalya. Natalya and Tamina start things off and they collide a few times. Tamina slaps her in the face before chopping Nattie down for two. Off to Eve for that bouncing moonsault for two. Since that's a pretty lame move, Natalya charges her into the corner and brings in Beth who blocks a rolling splash with knees to Eve's back.

Off to let's say Nikki for some basic stomps to the back and a quickly broken chinlock. Jerry is asked what he likes about the Bellas and he can't even get an answer out. Not hot tag brings in Alicia who is

immediately sent into the corner and chinlocked as well. Alicia finally counters by flipping Nikki forward and makes the actual hot tag to Kelly. There's the screaming headscissors and a faceplant for two. Everything breaks down and almost everyone heads to the floor, where Kelly hits a HUGE dive to take everyone out. Back in and Beth SLAPS herself in to hit the Glam Slam on Kelly for the pin.

Rating: D+. This was your usual Divas match: they did their "sexy" spots, they had barely there outfits, Kelly screamed a lot, Beth beat up Kelly to end things. One interesting note from a year later: would they even be able to put together an eight Divas tag now? I'm thinking through the roster and I don't know if I can name eight girls on the main shows right now.

We recap Ryder getting hurt at the hands of Kane. This was during the period where Ryder went from one of the hottest things in the company and US Champion to a rag doll that Kane destroyed over and over and over in the span of a few weeks until his push was completely destroyed. Eve blamed Cena for Ryder having his back broken for some reason.

Ryder is wheeled in and patronized by Johnny Ace (remember him?). Ace has a private room set up for Ryder but Eve comes up to yell at Ace first. Not much here but it's setting up stuff later on tonight.

Kane vs. John Cena

This is when Kane had the welder's mask look. Brawl to start with Kane beating Cena down into the corner as the fans are split on Johnny. A clothesline puts them both on the floor where Kane is sent knees first into the steps. Back in and Cena can't hit the AA on Kane. That makes sense as after all, Kane is probably 175lbs lighter than Show who Cena throws around with near ease most of the time.

Kane kicks Cena down and gets two off an uppercut. A suplex gets the same and it's off to a chinlock. Cena fights up and is sent into the buckle for his efforts followed by Kane's stupid smother hold. John tries to counter into a Crossface but Kane comes out with a side slam. The idea here is that Cena can't get anything going at all. The top rope clothesline takes Cena's head off but Cena pops up and hits his shoulder

block.

The Shuffle is countered by a grab of Cena's throat and a big boot gets two. Cena blocks a superplex and hits the Shuffle off the top. That's certainly a new one. The AA is countered by an elbow to the face and Kane kicks Cena out to the floor. Booker talks about how Cena is a good kid. I don't think I ever recall Cena being called a kid since like 2004. Kane pounds on Cena in the aisle and that's a double countout so we can do this match again next month.

Rating: D+. I know that's a common theme tonight but it fits here again. These two didn't work all that well together and the story was even worse. Then again, this was nothing more than giving Cena something to do for a few months until he could get ready for the biggest match of his career. This didn't work for the most part.

The fight continues into the back where Kane finds a chair to lay to lay out Cena. To the shock of no one paying attention, Kane finds the door to Ryder's private room and kicks the door in. Ryder is taken to the ring and tombstoned as Eve screams. Cena comes out to try to save Eve but gets chokeslammed by Kane who walks away. Ryder does a stretcher job, but somehow it would get even worse for him in the coming weeks.

BE A STAR!

Zack is wheeled out and Cena is booed for it. That's the part of this story that never held up for me: why is this Cena's responsibility? Ryder was the United States Champion. He should be able to defend himself.

We get a video on the Rock just like Cena got earlier. It's shot in the back of Rock's car and is more like a mini documentary. It focuses on how insane Rock's life is and all of the stuff he does around the world.

Drew McIntyre vs. Brodus Clay

This is right after Brodus debuted as the Funkasaurus so he was still a new character at this point. Brodus dances a lot, Drew punches him in the corner, Brodus headbutts him and hits the cross body (called WHAT THE FUNK) for the pin in about a minute.

Buy Slim Jims! For the troops!

We recap Punk vs. Ziggler who is challenging Punk on Ace's behalf. This is during the "Ace is boring" phase where Punk made fun of him no matter what he did, so Ace helped Ziggler get a win over Punk to earn a title shot. Ace is also guest referee tonight just because. He's openly admitted he's going to screw Punk out of the title tonight, so HHH is going to evaluate his job status the next night on Raw, meaning Ace has to play nice.

Raw World Title: CM Punk vs. Dolph Ziggler

Punk is defending and Ace is referee. Johnny Ace is John Laurinitis but that's a hard name to spell. Before the match, Ace says he'll be the outside referee. Ok then. Wait we're still not ready to go as Ace throws Vickie out as well. We finally get going and Ziggler tries a quick Fameasser which is countered into a failed GTS attempt. Punk tells Dolph it was that close. They feel each other out a bit longer until Ziggler starts strutting.

Punk finally gets his hands on Ziggler and puts on an abdominal stretch, complete with a wrapped toe and slicking back his hair ala Ziggler. Dolph heads to the floor and gets taken out by a suicide dive but shoves Punk off the top rope once they get back inside. Ziggler drops about eight elbows in a row and a jumping version gets two. We hit the chinlock with Ziggler cranking on the head way more than necessary.

The champ starts firing off chops and strikes before getting caught in the sleeper. That goes nowhere but neither does Punk's Anaconda Vice attempt. Back to the sleeper but Dolph can't get it on all the way. Instead there's a perfect dropkick for two on Punk but the Fameasser is countered into a helicopter bomb for two. A swinging neckbreaker by the champ puts Dolph into the corner where the knee/bulldog combination actually works.

The GTS is countered into a slingshot but Punk lands on the middle rope. He comes off with a spinning cross body but Ziggler rolls through for a near fall in a cool sequence. The high kick gets two for Punk as does the Macho Elbow, drawing a Randy Savage chant. The GTS is countered again and

the referee goes down as per the requirement in a world title mach. Punk hooks the Vice but Ace is checking on the down referee. Then Punk gets a rollup and there's STILL no referee.

Ace sends the referee back in as Punk loads up the GTS, but Zigler's legs knock Ace to the floor. Ace sees the pin but refuses to count because he thinks Punk did it on purpose. Zigler counters another GTS attempt into the Fameasser for two before pounding away a bit. The champ comes back with a slingshot and the GTS gets a pin from both referees to retain the title.

Rating: B+. This took awhile to get going as we were all waiting on the Ace stuff. The feud would go on for weeks until Jericho finally showed up to give Punk someone with charisma to feud with. The near falls at the end were a lot better than Ace, but it occurs to me that this was pretty much the same match he had last year. Good stuff though.

Rumble by the Numbers:

30 Superstars

1 winner

31 Hall of Famers in the Rumble

21 main events those Hall of Famers have been in at Wrestlemania

695 entrants who have been eliminated

39 entrants eliminated by Michaels, a record (Kane is second at 35)

13 consecutive Rumbles for Kane

11 eliminations for Kane in 2001

194,107lbs that have been in the Rumble, or over 97 tons, or 430 Big Show

421,883 people who have attended the Rumble

62:12 Rey Mysterio spent in the Rumble in 2006, a record

3 wins for Austin

1 second that Santino lasted in 2009

2 women who have competed in the Rumble

1, the entrant that has produced the same amount of winners as #30 at two each

27, the entrant with more winners than any other at four

55 percent of winners that have won the title at Wrestlemania

Royal Rumble

The Miz is #1 and talks about how he's going back to the main event of Wrestlemania this year. His former apprentice Alex Riley is #2 which isn't really surprising given how RANDOM these draws are. I always liked Riley and he always got a good reaction, which is clearly why he doesn't get on TV more. Riley pounds away to start and runs Miz over with a forearm but walks into a big boot. Maybe it's the old school fan in me but I don't like a 6'0 guy using a big boot. Miz talks trash and low bridges Riley out with ease.

R-Truth, Miz's former partner, is #3. Truth fires off some kicks and avoids the Finale before hitting a kind of powerslam. Miz gets sent to the apron for the second time but Truth turns his back to watch Cody come out at #4. A quick Disaster Kick puts Truth down (Cole says it hits Miz because those two are so hard to tell apart) and Truth gets double teamed for awhile. He manages to send Cody to the apron but gets caught in the Reality Check as the clock seems to be speeding up.

Justin Gabriel is #5 and things speed WAY up. A big spinwheel kick puts Miz down before Cody goes nuts on Gabriel in the corner. Primo is #6 to keep things low key to start. Actually he speeds things up as well and hits a sweet headscissors out of the corner to take Gabriel down. Truth hits the spinning forearm on Cody, only to be dumped out by Miz a second later. Since he's still crazy, Truth pulls Miz to the floor and lays him out on the outside.

Mick Foley is #7 to fire up the crowd a little bit. He dumps Primo almost immediately before getting beaten on by Cody. Foley looks really old and

slow here but to be fair, he is in fact old and slow. In a HILARIOUS bit, Ricardo Rodriguez is #8 but comes out in an old banged up, rusted out rental car. He's even got the Del Rio scarf to hide some of his hideous pale body. We get a HUGE Ricardo chant as Foley and Gabriel have no idea what to do here.

Ricardo takes Cody down and pounds away before proposing an alliance with Foley of all people. They actually do team up and toss Gabriel, allowing Ricardo to do a CM Punk knee slide. We keep the comedy going with Santino at #9 and Ricardo runs from the Cobra. Santino beats on Ricardo and literally rolls him around the ring before pulling his trunks up and tossing Rodriguez.

Now we get my favorite spot of the match as Santino puts on the Cobra and Mick puts on Socko and it's TIME FOR A DUEL!!! Before they can collide though it's Epico at #10 but he falls to the powers of the socks and is out almost immediately. The socks COLLIDE until Miz and Cody pop back in (neither was eliminated) and dump Santino. Miz gets Socko but Cody dumps Mick. Fun comedy bit here to give us a good first act to the match.

Kofi Kingston is #11 and hits a double springboard clothesline before hitting a double Boom Drop. In at #12 is Jerry Lawler (Cole: "WHAT ARE YOU DOING???") and he causes Miz to hit Cody by mistake. Lawler speeds things up and hits the middle rope punch with the lowered strap, only to be put out by Cody. Ezekiel Jackson is #13 and gets to do the usual power moves on each guy while the others lay around.

Jinder Mahal is #14 and the fans start chanting USA, even though the only two Americans in this match are Rhodes and Miz. Great Khali comes in at #15 and Mahal panics. Everyone gets chops and Mahal is out in just a few seconds. Jackson tries to pound away and is put out almost immediately as well. Hunico is #16 on that stupid bicycle of his and hits a spinning cross body on Miz and his Angle Slam on Cody.

Khali chops Hunico down as the ring is staying relatively empty. Booker T is #17 to surprise Cole. You would think he would have noticed that the man sitting next to him for over two hours wasn't wearing pants but he never was considered that bright. Now we get the spot of the match as Miz

shoves Kofi to the floor but Kofi holds himself up by his hands. Miz shoves Kofi into a handstand but Kingston WALKS ON HIS HANDS ACROSS THE FLOOR TO THE STEPS to get back in. FREAKING AWESOME MAN!

Dolph Ziggler is #18 as the ring is starting to get full. Hacksaw Jim Duggan makes his annual return at #19 to pop the crowd huge. He cleans house for a bit and we get a DOUBLE NOGGIN KNOCKER on Miz and Rhodes. Cody avoids a charge in the corner though and dumps Duggan in less than a minute. That's the best idea at the end of the day. Miz and Cody team up to put out Booker and Khali at the same time.

We complete the trio with Michael Cole at #20. At the moment we've got Cole, Miz, Rhodes, Kingston, Hunico and Ziggler in the ring. Kharma returns at #21 in her only WWE match ever. She hits Cole so hard she knocks his headgear off so Cole eliminates himself. Well he gets to the apron where King and Booker eliminate him. Ziggler tells Kharma to get out so she DRILLS him. Kharma dumps Hunico but Ziggler sneaks up and eliminates her (Booker calls this doing the impossible. Not really Book.) to a ton of heat.

Sheamus is #22 to give us some A level star power. Well maybe B+ level. Things speed up with Sheamus destroying everyone and tossing Kofi out. There are the ten forearms in the ropes to Cody and ten to Miz as well. The Zig Zag is countered and Road Dogg is another surprise return at #23. He gets to clean house for a bit and earns a "you still got it" chant. In far less than 90 seconds, Jey Uso is #24.

Everyone pairs off until Jack Swagger is #25. After a few suplexes everything settles down into its usual brawling phase until Barrett is #26. He throws out Roadie and stomps away on a lot of people. David Otunga gets the lucky spot at #27 and poses a lot before he comes out. Not a lot happens so Orton comes in at #28 to pick things up a bit. Remember we're in his hometown so everyone goes nuts.

Cody breaks up the RK0 on Barrett so Randy hits the Elevated DDT on both Cody and Ziggler at the same time because he can. There's an RK0 to Barrett and he's out. Chris Jericho, complete with a blackout of the arena, makes his return at #29. He's still a face at this point and dumps

Otunga to a good reaction. Big Show is #30 which was considered a letdown at the time. Dude, he was world champion a month ago. That's hardly Darren Young coming out.

As Show comes in he pulls Swagger out from the floor, giving us a final grouping of Miz, Rhodes, Ziggler, Sheamus, Orton, Jericho and Big Show. That's a pretty solid grouping. Show dumps Cody and Miz at the same time to get us down to five. Show tosses Ziggler as well to get us down to four. The big man cleans house but walks into an RK0, allowing Orton and Sheamus to pick him up and Randy clotheslines him out. Jericho dumps Orton immediately thereafter and we're down to two.

The fans are entirely behind Jericho here so Sheamus runs him over a few times. Jericho's bulldog is countered but Sheamus can't throw him over the corner. Jericho charges into the Irish Curse but Sheamus can't hit the High Cross. We get a great false finish with Jericho clotheslining Sheamus to the apron and then knocking him down to the point where Sheamus is hanging on by his leg. Sheamus comes back in with the slingshot shoulder but the Brogue Kick is countered into the Walls.

After the hold is broken Jericho gets knocked to the apron where he BARELY hangs on. They go to the top rope and both fall to the apron, meaning if they hit the floor they're out. Both guys get back in and there's the Codebreaker to Sheamus. Jericho gets Sheamus upside down but can't get him out. A shot to the face ticks Sheamus off and he catches a Codebreaker attempt to put Jericho on the apron. The Brogue Kick sends Sheamus to Wrestlemania.

Rating: A-. This is one of those Rumbles that is great fun as you watch it live but it loses some steam on a second viewing. They spent a bit too much time on nostalgia and funny ideas here but they were still really good ideas. The ending with Sheamus and Jericho ROCKED and I have no idea why they never got to have a long PPV match. This is a really good Rumble but it never reaches that excellent level that some of them get to.

Sheamus celebrates a lot to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. The Rumble is a unique show as it has a way to save itself from a bad first half. That's what happened here as the last two

matches were certainly good enough to save it from the horrible first few matches. As usual the last two guys would both get world title shots with the winner getting the opening match instead of the real main event, but going on before Rock vs. Cena is hardly torture.

Ratings Comparison

Daniel Bryan vs. Mark Henry vs. Big Show

Original: C-

Redo: D+

Bella Twins/Divas of Doom vs. Alicia Fox/Kelly Kelly/Eve Torres/Tamina

Original: D+

Redo: D+

Kane vs. John Cena

Original: D+

Redo: D+

Brodus Clay vs. Drew McIntyre

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

CM Punk vs. Dolph Ziggler

Original: B

Redo: B+

Royal Rumble

Original: B+

Redo: A-

Overall Rating

Original: B-

Redo: B

Just like last year, not much difference here.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2012/01/29/royal-rumble-2012/>

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Smackdown – January 23, 2018: That Actually Worked!

Smackdown

Date: January 23, 2018

Location: Capitol One Arena, Washington DC

Commentators: Corey Graves, Byron Saxton, Tom Phillips

It's the night after the Monday Night Raw 25th Anniversary so now we need to bring things back down to earth a bit. This time around though it's also the go home show for the Royal Rumble and we need to get things ready. There's also the issue of Enzo Amore, who Daniel Bryan will address for some reason. Let's get to it.

Here are Kevin Owens and Sami Zayn to open things up. They introduce each other as the future co-WWE Champions before Owens talks about being in a handicap match a few weeks back. There's no way that AJ can win a 2-1 match because they couldn't win a 3-2 match because they're already better than AJ.

This brings out AJ to say there's no way that's going to happen and if the two of them could shut their YEP holes for awhile, reality would set in. Sami says he knew that AJ would be out here with his macho act and brings up a clip from a few weeks back. Three weeks ago AJ asked for the handicap match and Owens accuses him of trying to back out of the match.

The next clip is AJ saying he would fight both of them in the same night. Owens suggests that AJ fight the two of them in a row tonight. This brings out Bryan to imply that the matches are about to be made but AJ doesn't know whose side Bryan is on. AJ makes the matches official instead.

I know we're coming up on Sunday's title match, but my goodness they need to get somewhere with this story. You can only tease Bryan being in cahoots with Sami and Owens for so long before you need to actually go somewhere with it. They were nice enough to give AJ and his challengers some actual mic time here but they REALLY need some advancement in this story already. I'm very tired of having Bryan and/or Shane arguing with each other and using these guys as pawns and it needs to change. Oh and what's up with people working multiple matches a night? This is two weeks in a row now.

Bryan and Shane are in their office with Shane talking down to Bryan about his choice. Daniel asks if Shane believes AJ can take care of himself but Shane says AJ isn't the one he's questioning.

Jey Uso vs. Chad Gable

Gable goes for a single leg to start and takes Jey into the corner before putting him on the ground without much effort. Back up and Jey sends him outside and we take an early break. Back with Gable getting two off a northern lights suplex but missing the moonsault. Jey sends him outside and a suicide dive drops Chad again. Gable charges into a Samoan drop but the running Umaga Attack is blocked. Instead Gable Liger Kicks him and grabs Rolling Chaos Theory for the pin at 7:44.

Rating: D+. This didn't go very far but to be fair it's not like it was supposed to be anything of note. They were going with the standard singles win to set up a tag match which has worked before and it'll work again almost any time they try it. I'm not sold on a title change but just having them give us something interesting on Sunday is a good idea.

Shinsuke Nakamura's strategy for winning the Rumble: knee them all in the face. Baron Corbin comes in to say Nakamura is all hype and nothing to show for it. He doesn't care about the fans and asks what Nakamura has done. Shinsuke says he'll do something on Sunday and offers a rumble tonight. I know Nakamura is becoming one of the favorites to win the Rumble but I still don't buy it. There's not much to build off of with him and it would seem to come out of nowhere. That's been the case before but I'm not buying it here.

Tye Dillinger, still using the handheld camera style, enters the Rumble. He can't do the Perfect Ten because he only has one hand so it's two fives instead.

Naomi vs. Liv Morgan

They fight over a backslide to start until Naomi kicks her in the face. Liv is right back with a pull into the middle buckle, followed by a cross arm chinlock. Cue Natalya, Carmella and Lana for a distraction, allowing Naomi to grab a sunset flip for the pin at 2:39.

The Riott Squad comes in to beat Naomi down but Becky Lynch makes the save. It turns into the mini Rumble with Naomi and Natalya standing tall. Becky throws Naomi to the apron for a staredown but here's Charlotte to

say good luck to everyone, especially the winner. That's how a champion should talk to a bunch of challengers.

Miz and Asuka are ready to win the Mixed Match Challenge.

Carmella and Big E. are ready to win as well, but first: pancakes.

Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Baron Corbin

Nakamura drives him to the ropes for the arm swing into COME ON, with Corbin warning him not to do it. Good Vibrations sends Corbin outside with Nakamura giving chase, only to get posted. Serves him right for not listening to Corbin's request. Back from a break with Corbin holding a chinlock but Nakamura fights up and starts striking away. A running kick to the head and the running knee in the corner give Nakamura two.

Kinshasa is countered into Deep Six for a pretty hot two and Nakamura is in trouble. Corbin's slide underneath the ropes into the clothesline turns Nakamura inside out for two more. A cross armbreaker out of nowhere has Corbin in trouble but Nakamura switches to a kick to the head. Kinshasa is loaded up but RKO OUT OF NOWHERE plants Nakamura as Randy Orton runs in for the DQ at 12:26. Well done there as they actually surprised me with the run in.

Rating: B. This was starting to cook and the run-in finish was perfect, especially as a way to keep both guys solid going into Sunday. Having Orton run in for the DQ made perfect sense and reminds us that he's in there too. It takes some time to warm Nakamura up but once he gets going, he's as entertaining as anyone on the show. That was starting to be the case here and the match was starting to rock.

Post match Corbin takes an RKO of his own.

We look at the media coverage of last night's show.

Video on last night's show.

Here's New Day for a six man tag but first, they all enter the Royal Rumble. It's just two of them tonight so they need a partner. That man would be the new United States Champion, with Woods singing the theme

into the trombone. Roode says his goal is to be the best US Champion of all time and his reign is going to be.....Kofi: "Stupendous!" Woods: "Delicious!" Big E.: "Exuberant!" Actually it's GLORIOUS!

New Day/Bobby Roode vs. Rusev Day/Jinder Mahal

Big E. is the odd man out here and there's only one Singh Brother thanks to an ankle injury last week. Joined in progress with Rusev holding Kofi in a bearhug and hitting a running shoulder into the corner. English misses a charge though and it's Roode coming in to clean house. The Blockbuster drops English and a spinebuster does the same to Jinder. Rusev comes in and kicks Roode into a rollup for two but it's Kofi diving in to put English on the floor. Kofi's dive into the trust fall takes the other two down, leaving English to get caught with another spinebuster. Woods' top rope elbow is good for the pin at 2:38 shown.

Royal Rumble rundown.

AJ Styles vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title but hang on a minute. Shane comes out to say Sami can't be at ringside, just like Owens can't be at ringside for the next match. If either of them interfere, they're out of the title match and fired. The bickering continues into the break and we're back for the opening bell (thank you). AJ scores with a dropkick but gets his head clotheslined off. That goes nowhere and it's a Calf Crusher to make Owens tap out immediately at 1:08, likely to save himself for Sunday.

Sami runs in to beat on AJ to break the hold, which doesn't count as breaking Shane's rules because we're between matches. AJ gets beaten down in the corner as Kevin limps off. The stomping continues as we're still waiting on the opening bell. A whip sends AJ into the steps as the bosses are watching in the back.

Sami Zayn vs. AJ Styles

Non-title again with AJ saying he's ready to go. Sami charges at him again as Owens is still at ringside due to not being able to walk to the back. The stomping continues and we hit the chinlock for a bit as a

stretcher is brought out for Owens. AJ fights back and hits his running seated forearm to get a breather. Sami gets sent outside for a slingshot forearm but AJ goes after Owens instead as we take a break.

Back with Sami hammering away even more and grabbing another chinlock. AJ snaps off a super hurricanrana to get a breather as we see the bosses watching in the back for the third time. The fireman's carry backbreaker gives AJ two and the Helluva Kick is blocked with a raised boot. The Pele scores on Sami for two but Sami grabs a Michinoku Driver for two. Frustration is setting in as he takes AJ to the top, only to get dropped face first onto the top turnbuckle.

AJ takes him outside where Owens is STILL being loaded onto the stretcher. That's enough for Styles as he slides into a knee to Sami's face and turns the stretcher over. Back in and the Helluva Kick connects followed by the Blue Thunder Bomb....WHICH GETS THE PIN AT 15:44????? I've been watching Sami since his WWE run started and I don't ever remember that getting a pin. I was actually surprised when that worked.

Rating: B-. I'm still trying to get over that finish as the Blue Thunder Bomb winning is so unthinkable. This was similar to Gable vs. Uso earlier in the night where you build some drama with the idea that the underdog has a chance. I don't think AJ is going to lose the title but it's nice to try to get something set up.

Owens and Zayn pose over AJ to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. Bickering bosses aside, it was nice to have Smackdown doing something good for a change. They did a solid job of setting up some stuff for the Rumble and that's what was needed after last night. They added four more names to the Rumble and made me more interested than I was coming into the show. Good night here, especially with all of the previous weeks of mess.

Results

Chad Gable b. Jey Uso – Rolling Chaos Theory

Naomi b. Liv Morgan – Sunset flip

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Baron Corbin via DQ when Randy Orton interfered

New Day/Bobby Roode b. Rusev Day/Jinder Mahal – Top rope elbow to English

AJ Styles b. Kevin Owens – Calf Crusher

Sami Zayn b. AJ Styles – Blue Thunder Bomb

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WWE Announces #1 Moment in Raw History

<https://wrestlingrumors.net/1-moment-monday-night-raw-history/>

Again?

So WWE has put together the top 100 moments in Raw history with the top 25 being voted on by the fans. This Monday a countdown video was released and the top five were:

5. The First Stunner to Vince
4. Chris Jericho Debuts
3. Occupy Raw
2. Pipe Bomb
1. Austin and the Beer Truck

I'm kind of stunned that the Pipe Bomb was allowed to be mentioned but it had to be on there. The beer truck...ok I guess, but it never struck me as being head and shoulders above everything. Actually it was the beer truck that was also voted the #1 moment at the ten year anniversary.

I'd have gone with Foley winning the title for the first time. It's emotional, memorable, entertaining and FREAKING LOUD. That one sticks with a lot of people and almost every big name in the company is right there for it.

Smackdown – January 9, 2018: Maybe the Conspiracies Are Real

Smackdown

Date: January 9, 2018

Location: Legacy Arena, Birmingham, Alabama

Commentators: Corey Graves, Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton

Things are getting a little dicey around here as the battle of the bosses continues. The big story is Daniel Bryan making a handicap match for the Royal Rumble where AJ Styles will defend the Smackdown World Title against the combined forces of Sami Zayn and Kevin Owens. This seems to hint at a Bryan heel turn, which would seem to hint at WWE being really stupid. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the end of last week's show with Bryan making the handicap match. Again: if they're trying to make Bryan a heel as we go into Philadelphia and ultimately New Orleans, they're dumber than I thought they were.

Renee Young brings out Styles for an interview. AJ kind of regrets saying make it a handicap match but he'll live with the consequences. He's looking forward to the Rumble where he can hit them so hard and so fast that he'll walk out as champion. AJ knows what he's up against because they can tag in and out but this is the house that he built.

Cue Sami and Kevin with Owens getting right to the point: AJ has no chance of walking out with the title. Sami: "YEP!" Kevin promises to walk out as the first co-WWE Champions. This brings out Shane McMahon to say he's confused about Bryan's decision but he'll support it. As for tonight though, we'll have another handicap match with Owens and Zayn facing Styles, Randy Orton and Shinsuke Nakamura. You can see the screwy finish coming but it's a nice idea and makes sense with this story.

Shane and Bryan shake hands in the back.

Becky Lynch vs. Ruby Riott

Becky takes Ruby down to start but Morgan offers a leg trip. That just gets Riott knocked to the floor and we take an early break. Back with Riott holding a bodyscissors and driving knees into the ribs. Becky comes back with some forearms but Ruby kicks her in the ribs again. Not that it matters as the Disarm-Her makes Ruby tap at 8:10.

Rating: C-. Just a nice win for Becky to get back in the swing of things.

That makes sense, but why in the world did they have Riott lose here? Like, you have Liv Morgan and Sarah Logan RIGHT THERE and you pick the leader and the most important member of the team to take the loss? That's the short sighted/lack of thinking that gets on fans' nerves and seems like something that could be solved by simple common sense.

Earlier today, Sami Zayn surprised Becky Lynch when she was signing autographs to be her Mixed Match Challenge partner.

Bludgeon Brothers vs. Ascension

Breezango isn't here due to having a match later against Rusev Day. An assisted sitout powerbomb ends Viktor at 34 seconds. I think they're ready for the Usos already.

US Title Tournament First Round: Zack Ryder vs. Mojo Rawley

The winner faces Bobby Roode, at ringside, in the second round. Rawley charges straight into a pair of knees in the corner but easily takes Ryder down to ram his face into the mat. Zack is right back up for some right hands in the corner, only to eat the running punch in the corner to give Mojo the win at 3:34

Rating: D-. This wasn't the biggest shock and amazingly enough, the battle of the former Hype Bros isn't very interesting. Rawley winning was the only logical conclusion here as Ryder continues his descent down the WWE ladder. There's some potential for Rawley, though there's no reason to believe he's getting by Roode in the next round. Nothing match, as expected.

Jinder Mahal is ready to win the United States Champion to get 2018 off to a good start. Xavier Woods better know how to play Taps on his trombone.

Classic Raw clip: Austin and the zamboni.

Earlier today, Natalya was showcasing her selfie taking skills when Shinsuke Nakamura popped up. They'll be Mixed Match Challenge partners.

Here are Shelton Benjamin and Chad Gable to demand justice for not

winning the Tag Team Titles last week. Chad asks the fans if they know what it takes to be a winner. They've given up everything to succeed but no one here in Birmingham would understand that. Shelton brings up the University of Alabama winning the National Championship last night but the people here had nothing to do with it. The University of Georgia was robbed because of a bad referee call, just like they were last week.

After the required ROLL TIDE chant, Shelton talks about the referee interfering last week when it wasn't even his match. The other referee came in due to jealousy because he doesn't know what it takes to be a champion. Chad says they lost to instant referee last week. Chad: "So generic referee #2, get out here right now." Instead they get Daniel Bryan who says no, because the referee's decision is final. AS IN THE RULING THAT WAS OVERTURNED???

Benjamin calls him out on that but Bryan just says they didn't win because they pinned the wrong Uso. Chad asks if this is Dr. Phil and thinks Bryan is taking out his Shane frustrations on them. The ranting continues until Chad asks if they have to beat the Usos twice in one night. Bryan: "THAT'S IT!" There's going to be a 2/3 falls match for the titles at the Rumble. Is the Rumble going to be another six hour show? There are two Rumbles (that's two hours) and five more matches, one of which is 2/3 falls. That's quite the lengthy night.

AJ and Orton talk strategy with Orton saying he wants the title. Nakamura comes in and gives the belt a Too Sweet. Nakamura: "Good talk."

Rusev Day vs. Breezango

English and Rusev are both in the Rumble (the Rusev Rumble on Rusev Day that is). Fandango suplexes Aiden to start and brings in Breeze for a double kick to the head. We take an early break and come back with Breeze getting superkicked in the ribs but avoiding a Swanton. The hot tag brings in Fandango for some chops but Rusev comes in for the kicks to the chest. A spinwheel kick puts Fandango down and a kick to the head drops Breeze. The distraction lets Fandango roll Rusev up for the pin at 5:20. Not enough shown to rate but do we need more proof of the "get over when we tell you to" theory?

Shane tells Bryan that his matchmaking of late has been off the way and unfair. He asks if Bryan is ok but Bryan points out that Shane is one to talk about being crazy with his decisions, especially given his family history. Shane leaves without arguing that much. They're really going to try to turn Bryan aren't they?

Pay per view rundown. That's looking like a long show.

AJ Styles/Shinsuke Nakamura/Randy Orton vs. Kevin Owens/Sami Zayn

The threat of an RKO sends Owens bailing to the floor before coming back in for some right hands. It's off to Sami vs. Nakamura as the announcers talk about the Freebird Rule for the potential of co-WWE Champions. A kick to the face sends Sami outside and an attempt at the Styles Clash sends the villains walking up the ramp.

Cue Shane, because we haven't seen him enough tonight. The match is restarted (it never stopped) with no countouts. Back from a break with AJ fighting Owens off and hitting the fireman's carry backbreaker. The hot tag brings in Orton for the snap powerslam on Zayn, followed by the hanging DDT. Orton loads up the RKO but Owens chairs him in the ribs for the DQ at...oh of course Shane comes out to say restart it with No DQ.

AJ knocks Owens up the ramp and into the back with a chair, leaving Sami trapped. The chase is on but Sami can't quite make it over the barricade. Orton loads up the steps and then drops Sami back first onto the announcers' table. Kinshasa drops Zayn and the RKO is good for the pin at 14:54.

Rating: D+. What do you want me to say here? The good guys had a big advantage and used that advantage to win, including a pair of restarts in the process. This was everything you would have guessed the match would be and really didn't deviate from that premise. There's not much these guys can do when EVERYTHING in this story has been about Shane vs. Bryan, which at the moment can't be an actual match. I'm still begging for the big swerve where it's Shane as the heel, but that's getting more and more unlikely with each passing week for reasons I don't want to understand.

Overall Rating: D. I don't remember the last time I saw a show that had

so much illogical booking or instances of just going completely against whatever fans seemed to want. The big focus was on the Shane vs. Bryan feud, Ruby lost clean, Rusev took the pin in the tag match and Bryan's "referee's decisions are final, even when they're overturned decisions" line actually brought pain to my head.

I have no idea what's been up with the writing lately but between this and "Asuka can't speak English", I'm having a really hard time accepting that there's any kind of quality control is going on in WWE as of late. It's like they're going out of their way to say stupid stuff and go completely against the logical stories they could be telling, especially with Shane vs. Bryan. If WWE really thinks that pushing Shane as the top face AGAIN is the right call, especially over Bryan, good for them on officially losing their minds.

This show felt like several cases of one dumb idea after another with very little that actually made me want to watch another week. It's a rare instance of Raw being flat out better than Smackdown, which says a lot when Raw wasn't all that good this week. The booking is going in a very questionable direction and the little things they're choosing to do and say go in the face of anyone who has watched for more than a few weeks. Hopefully this is just a funk and they snap out of it, because this was really tough to sit through at times.

Results

Becky Lynch b. Ruby Riott – Disarm-Her

Bludgeon Brothers b. Ascension – Assisted sitout powerbomb to Viktor

Mojo Rawley b. Zack Ryder – Running punch

Breezango b. Rusev Day – Rollup to Rusev

AJ Styles/Randy Orton/Shinsuke Nakamura b. Sami Zayn/Kevin Owens – Kinshasa to Zayn

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Smackdown – January 2, 2018: Cannon Fodder and Background Noise

Smackdown

Date: January 2, 2018

Location: Amway Center, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Corey Graves, Byron Saxton, Tom Phillips

It's a new year on the blue show and that means it's time to get ready for the Royal Rumble. There are a handful of names already announced and there's a good chance that we're going to get more of those set up tonight. At the same time, AJ Styles needs an opponent and will be having his second non-title match tonight, this week against Sami Zayn. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's ending with Zayn costing Styles a win over Kevin Owens.

Opening sequence.

Here's AJ to get things going by wishing us a happy new year. AJ talks about how it's a new year and a lot of people are making new year's

resolutions, including people wanting to win the Royal Rumble. He has his own resolutions though, like taking this title to Wrestlemania and walking out as champion. His other resolution is to beat Sami Zayn tonight, but AJ wants to know if Kevin will be in Sami's corner tonight.

This brings out Daniel Bryan but Shane McMahon is out before anything can be said. Shane and Bryan both get some nice chants from the crowd before Shane says there are people accusing him of taking sides in these stories. It seems to Shane though that Bryan is the one with a genuine kinship with both Sami and Kevin. Shane is going to be at ringside and if that's the case, Bryan thinks Kevin should be out here as well. If those two are going to be out here, Bryan might as well be too!

Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable

Benjamin and Gable are defending. Before the match, the Usos say they've got this place on lock because Benjamin and Gable are in the Uso Penitentiary. Jimmy has to fight out of the corner early but Shelton runs the corner to superplex him down. Gable immediately follows with a moonsault for two and we take an early break.

Back with Jimmy enziguring Gable (clearly didn't make contact) and a double tag bringing in Jey and Benjamin. Everything breaks down and we hit the dives, only to have Jey get taken back inside for the powerbomb/top rope clothesline for the pin and the titles at 5:33. Hang on a second actually as the other Uso pleads his case, saying Gable pinned the wrong one. Another referee comes out to confirm things and a replay (which confirms that the legal Uso had wrist tape but the one pinned didn't have tape) means we get a restart.

Back with the Usos starting a brawl before the bell, followed by a Samoan drop to Shelton. The running Umaga Attack misses though and the second powerbomb is loaded up. This time Jey ducks and Chad dives into a superkick. Shelton takes one as well, followed by the Superfly Splash to retain the titles at 13:30 (from opening bell to closing bell).

Rating: C. Kind of a mess with the middle but at least they did get the call right and had some proof in the form of the wrist tape. That being said, it's never really mattered a lot of the time and suddenly it does

here because the script calls for it, which is one of the biggest crutches WWE has to use these days. The Usos are on the roll of a lifetime at this point and outside of the Bludgeon Brothers, I have no idea who is supposed to take the titles from them. It's not like they have any real competition at this point and I don't see that changing in the near future.

Renee Young asks Owens and Zayn if tonight is going to be different. Owens talks about having a different breakfast yesterday and being in a different city this week. Tonight though, the outcome is the same: AJ loses. They talk about this being the Sami and Kevin Show (which Sami calls the Seven Show by mistake, though it's not a bad name) before saying tonight, they prove its their show. These two are still great and you can pretty much guess what's coming for the Rumble but at least we're getting some outstandingly heelish promos from these two. Sami adding YEP after anything Owens says is great too.

Bludgeon Brothers vs. Breezango

Rematch from last week where Breezango got destroyed until Ascension came in for the save. Breezango gets jumped before the bell and the beating is on in a hurry. Ascension comes out as well and takes a beating of their own. Again, the lesson learned here: stop putting effort into angles and segments because WWE is going to grind you into dust no matter what you do. No match.

A blindfolded Xavier Woods is swinging a kendo stick in the back when Kofi and Big E. come in. They have a surprise for him, which he can't guess at first...until he guesses perfectly. Big E: "You can see through that mask can't you?". Woods: "I did have Lasik a few years back.". Woods goes to blow out the candles but Aiden English and Rusev cut him off. English wishes that every single day was RUSEV DAY.

Mojo Rawley is going to beat Zack Ryder in their tournament match next week. Probably so, though Mojo is no Rusev.

US Title Tournament First Round: Xavier Woods vs. Aiden English

Before the match, Rusev sings about how great of a champion English is

going to be. English jumps him from behind but gets sent to the floor for a superkick. Back in and English hits him with an elbow, followed by a singing chinlock. Woods fights up and hits something like a torture rack into a Lumbar Check. English takes him up and tries what looks like a super piledriver, only to get backdropped down. The top rope elbow sends Woods on at 5:49.

Rating: D+. Nothing to see here but Woods winning is an interesting choice. Unfortunately it looks like he's going to lose to Jinder Mahal in the second round, which isn't the biggest surprise. Also, Rusev isn't going anywhere in the tournament at all because, much like the Fashion Files, WWE doesn't seem interested in someone who gets over against their schedule.

Post match Kofi throws a pancake and apparently hits one of the commentators in the head.

The Welcoming Committee (which apparently is still a thing that you're supposed to remember) is ready to take care of the Riott Squad tonight.

Karl Malone (former WCW main eventer) is here. No mention is made of his wrestling career.

Natalya/Carmella/Tamina vs. Riott Squad

Morgan nips out of Natalya's headlock to start and has to bail from the threat of a Sharpshooter. Back from a break with Carmella fighting out of Logan's chinlock and bringing Tamina in for a hard clothesline. Riott breaks up the Superfly Splash though and Logan cartwheels into a knee to the back of the head for the pin at 5:29. Not enough shown to rate but this was just a quick win for the Squad. I can appreciate them trying to build the team up before the Rumble but it's not like any of these three have a chance at winning.

Post match Riott says everyone here believes in magic (local basketball team name) but everyone here is really miserable. Logan and Morgan are officially in the Rumble. Cue Charlotte to say there's a woman who wants to teach the Squad a lesson. This brings out Naomi, followed by the returning Becky Lynch to clean house.

We run down the Rumble card.

Baron Corbin says he's entering the Rumble and going to Wrestlemania. He's right. It's just probably going to be in the battle royal.

AJ Styles vs. Sami Zayn

Non-title. Shane, Owens and Bryan are at ringside. Sami takes AJ down early to start and gets two off a backdrop. A dropkick gets two more and we take an early break. Back with Sami holding a chinlock to keep AJ grounded. AJ fights back up, only to get his throat snapped across the top rope. Sami gets caught on top but punches his way to freedom, followed by the Blue Thunder Bomb for the same near fall that the move always gets.

Styles is right back up and grabs the Calf Crusher, only to have Sami make it to the ropes in fairly long order. The Phenomenal Forearm doesn't work but the referee gets knocked to the floor. As expected, AJ grabs a rollup for two as the referee dives in after being held up by Owens. Shane shoves Kevin down and Owens is ejected, followed by Bryan saying Shane should go with him. The distraction lets Sami hit the Helluva Kick for the pin at 13:44.

Rating: C+. I don't think the ending was any kind of a surprise and that's all well and good. What worries me is the battle of the bosses, as I could easily see this turning into some kind of a mess where the wrestlers are overshadowed for the sake of a story that a lot of people aren't interested in seeing. The wrestlers are talented so just let them do their thing. We don't need to see Shane get this kind of focus and it's been going on for MONTHS now.

Post match AJ tells Owens and Zayn to stop acting like children. He's tired of everyone else getting involved so let's just make it a handicap match for the title at the Rumble. A smiling Bryan makes the match to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. I let out a heavy sigh on that ending. Unless that Bryan stuff is a red herring (and I have a feeling it is), they're actually pushing the idea of Bryan as the heel in this whole mess. I

don't need the focus on Bryan vs. Shane when there is so much talent in the title scene at the moment already. Why we need to sit through those two getting all the attention is beyond me, but it does make me wonder how much WWE cares about the effort those wrestlers are putting in.

As for the rest of the show...eh. Like really, just eh. It's a show that existed with some watchable matches but everything is kind of on hold while we wait on the big pay per view. The lack of Orton and Nakamura (Where were they anyway?) was odd tonight and left us with more time to focus on the younger guys, which doesn't always mean the best results. Like I said, what is the point in people like Rusev and Breezango getting over if they're just going to be used as either cannon fodder or background noise?

Results

Usos b. Chad Gable/Shelton Benjamin – Superfly Splash to Benjamin

Xavier Woods b. Aiden English – Top rope elbow

Riott Squad b. Natalya/Carmella/Tamina – Cartwheel knee to Tamina's head

Sami Zayn b. AJ Styles – Helluva Kick

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Smackdown – December 26, 2017: There Is No Time For Humbug On Rusev Day

Smackdown

Date: December 26, 2017

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

We're still in Chicago to wrap up the year and the big story seems to be finding AJ Styles' next challenger for the Smackdown World Title. We also need to find out what's going on with the United States Title, which was left in the middle of the ring by champion Dolph Ziggler. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Daniel Bryan to open things up. Before he says much though, we see a clip of Ziggler leaving the title in the ring last week. The title is now vacant and we'll be having a tournament to crown a new champion.

Fans: "RUSEV!" Bryan says the first match is tonight with Baron Corbin facing Bobby Roode but here are Chad Gable and Shelton Benjamin to ask about the Tag Team Title situation. Fans: "RUSEV DAY!"

Shelton says they never got a one on one rematch with the Usos, which of course brings up Rusev and Aiden English being added to the match. They get in the ring and HERE THEY COME! English and Rusev come out with English singing about why they deserve to face the Usos. English: "Just listen, and we will disclose."

They didn't lose at Clash but more importantly, Rusev Day is the day after Christmas! Gable: "It's Boxing Day!" Rusev: "No you fool. IT'S RUSEV DAY!!!" Now it's New Day with a True False Challenge. Big E.: "Did

the team of Chad Gable and Old Jason Jordan get pinned at Clash of Champions?" New Day gets in the ring to dance with Bryan but Rusev, and the RUSEV DAY chants, cut them off. After mentioning Bryan needs Shane McMahon's approval, a triple threat #1 contenders match is made for right now.

Rusev Day vs. New Day vs. Chad Gable/Shelton Benjamin

The Usos come out for commentary and it's Xavier, Chad and English starting things off as we're in the WCW formula again. Chad gets sent into Rusev but everything breaks down with everyone being sent outside. Xavier hits a big flip dive to take the pile down, followed by Big E. powerbombing him onto English for two. Gable German suplexes English and Big E. at the same time (that's not normal) and it's off to Shelton for some stomping.

Rusev comes in for some stomping and more chants in his honor, only to have Big E. run everyone over. A suplex cuts Woods off but English kicks Xavier down. The hot tag brings in Rusev for the house cleaning, including a spinwheel kick to drop Big E. Rolling Chaos Theory takes Rusev down and Woods' missile dropkick gets two on English.

A Rock Bottom/Backstabber gets two on Gable but Woods jumps into a knee to the head. Gable adds a moonsault for two in a good false finish. English blocks another Rolling Chaos Theory and Woods kicks Gable in the head. A quick reverse AA gets two on Gable with Benjamin making the save. Rusev breaks up a Tower of Doom and powerbombs Gable and Benjamin down, allowing English to add a top rope splash for a VERY close two on Chad.

The second hot tag brings in Rusev for a kick to Woods, setting up a double Accolade for the two of them. Benjamin makes ANOTHER save as the false finishes are strong with this one. Big E. spears Benjamin through the ropes but Shelton escapes the Big Ending. One heck of a running knee staggers Big E. and it's the powerbomb/top rope clothesline to give Gable the pin at 13:51.

Rating: B. Questionable ending aside, that was a heck of a match with some insane false finishes. Gable/Benjamin vs. the Usos should be a lot of fun but at the same time, the fans want Rusev right now. Maybe he wins

the US Title, but my goodness they're running a risk of blowing what should be a solid opportunity.

The title match is next week.

Shane McMahon comes in to see Daniel and talks about Bryan saying Shane is becoming Vince. Shane defends his father, which certainly doesn't sound like a speech to make people believe that Vince is a business genius who can totally pull off the XFL II. On top of that, Shane isn't cool with the US Title Tournament because Corbin should get a one on one singles match.

Bryan likes the idea of giving multiple people chances and Shane can go with that. What he can't go with is AJ vs. Kevin Owens (non-title) tonight in the main event Bryan has made. There's been talk of favoritism being shown to Kevin and Sami Zayn, which Shane needs to prevent. Bryan thinks we should finish the year with another entry in a great rivalry. Shane reluctantly agrees.

Breezango vs. Bludgeon Brothers

Ascension got Breezango this match as a present. Breezango goes straight at them, earning Fandango a spinning Boss Man Slam and Breeze a face plant on the apron. Back in and Harper's big boot drops Breeze, followed by an assisted sitout powerbomb for two with Rowan pulling him up. The beating continues but the Ascension runs in to attack the Brothers for the DQ at 2:06.

The Ascension say Breezango aren't ready for an interview but they're ready to challenge the Brothers to a rematch next week. Breezango doesn't look happy.

Video on the Women's Royal Rumble, including the Women's Revolution history.

Ruby Riott vs. Naomi

Naomi goes right at her to start and hits a springboard kick to the face. Liv Morgan and Sarah Logan offer distractions though, allowing Riott to kick Naomi in the leg. The Riott Kick is good for the pin at 57 seconds.

The post match beatdown is on but Charlotte makes the save. The numbers game gets the better of Charlotte as well though, only to have Tamina, Lana, Natalya (So we're just dropping the turning her back on Smackdown story?) and Carmella make the save. The Squad loses a quick fight and gets chased off. As usual, Carmella shows no interest in cashing in on the downed Charlotte.

AJ Styles talks about challenging himself in 2017. He started the year as WWE Champion and he's ending it the same way. Owens isn't outworking him and AJ is ending the year on a high note.

US Title Tournament First Round: Bobby Roode vs. Baron Corbin

Corbin sends him into the corner to start and hammers away, including some forearms to the chest. A spinning side slam gives Corbin two and he follows it up with a hard running clothesline on the floor. Back in and Roode hits some clotheslines followed by the Blockbuster for his first near fall.

End of Days is broken up and Corbin's slide underneath the ropes only earns him a spinebuster. The Glorious DDT is countered into Deep Six for two more. Corbin takes him up top for a superplex but Roode slips out and shoves him down. He dives right into a chokeslam but counters that into a rollup for the fast pin to put Corbin away at 8:39.

Rating: C+. Nice back and forth match here, though I'm still not completely sold on Zigler being gone. Roode winning is another interesting call as Corbin, the former champion, seemed to be pretty close to a lock to move on at least to the second round. The near falls were good here and it was an entertaining little match, which is about all you can ask for here.

US Title Tournament First Round: Jinder Mahal vs. Tye Dillinger

Tye sends him outside to start and we take a very early break. Back with Jinder holding him in a chinlock until Tye fights up with the left hands. The Tyebreaker is broken up so Tye goes up, only to have Jinder roll through a high crossbody for two. Jinder grabs a fireman's carry but tosses him up for a gutbuster and another near fall. Tye gets crotched in

the corner though and the Khallas sends Jinder on at 5:58. Not enough shown to rate but this is where Mahal should have been seven months ago and a lot of the damage has been done.

Kevin Owens and Sami Zayn have a bottle of champagne to celebrate tonight's win. It's the same bottle that Daniel Bryan wouldn't accept from them but tonight there's no cheating guest referee. After tonight, there's a party which only the two of them are invited to.

Randy Orton officially enters the Royal Rumble. Shinsuke Nakamura comes in to say that sounds like a good idea so he's in too.

AJ Styles vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title with Sami Zayn at ringside. Owens charges into a dropkick at the bell and Styles hits his jumping knee. An early Calf Crusher sends Owens bailing to the ropes and Owens kicks AJ out to the floor in a heap. Back in and we hit the chinlock, followed by a kick to the back as we take a break.

We come back with AJ fighting out of another chinlock but eating a hard clothesline. A neckbreaker on the knee gives Owens two more but the Cannonball misses. AJ wins a slugout with the Phenomenal Blitz into the seated forearm. The Pele drops Owens again but a springboard is countered into a gutbuster.

Owens goes up for a middle rope Vader Bomb elbow for two more as frustration is setting in. There's another neckbreaker to send Owens outside but AJ dives onto Zayn this time around. Another distraction lets Owens superkick him down for two so here's Shane to eject Sami. That means the referee misses Owens getting rolled up, allowing Owens to grab his own rollup for the pin at 16:30.

Rating: B. These two have surprisingly average chemistry together so this was one of their better performances. In theory this sets up Owens as a potential challenger, but odds are the focus is going to be on Shane (again) for reasons that I'm not clear on. You would think AJ Styles and the World Title would be enough but why do that when you can put the focus on the McMahons?

Shane apologizes to AJ, who doesn't seem pleased to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. The first hour lacking commercials didn't do it any favors but this was definitely a solid night with a lot of stuff taking place. You can feel the Ryan Ward influence at times as they knock down so much stuff in a show every now and then. Things should be picking up for the Rumble season and that's a great thing for everyone. Tone Shane way down and you might even have a great show.

Results

Chad Gable/Shelton Benjamin b. New Day and Rusev Day – Powerbomb/Top rope clothesline combination to Big E.

Bludgeon Brothers b. Breezango via DQ when Ascension interfered

Ruby Riott b. Naomi – Riott Kick

Bobby Roode b. Baron Corbin – Rollup

Jinder Mahal b. Tye Dillinger – Khallas

Kevin Owens b. AJ Styles – Rollup

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Smackdown – December 19, 2017: Christmas Comes Early

Smackdown

Date: December 19, 2017

Location: Prudential Center, Newark, New Jersey

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

It's the first show after Clash of Champions and the bosses have some splanin to do. This past Sunday, Shane McMahon refused to count the fall in the tag match but Daniel Bryan one upped him with a fast count. Other than that, it's time to start the build to the Royal Rumble, which could mean several different things. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Sunday's tag match. No title matches, including the main event, are mentioned.

Here's Bryan to get things going. After mentioning the women's Royal Rumble, he plugs tonight's main event. Cue Shane and it's time for the awkward conversation. They talk about Sunday's match and Shane says the emotions got the better of him. When he was about to count the three, he thought of Owens beating his father up and the two of them screwing Smackdown at Survivor Series.

Bryan cheated too though, and Shane wants to know why. Daniel says he did it to protect Shane from himself, which Shane says he doesn't need. What Bryan did on Sunday was to protect their idea: making this place the land of opportunity for everyone, not just the people Shane likes. Shane warns Bryan that Sami and Kevin will turn on him when they've gotten what they can out of him. Bryan accuses Shane of doing what's best for business, and if that's the case, fire him now because he doesn't want to see Shane turn into Mr. McMahon. Shane teases firing him but says he'll let Daniel run the show tonight.

Usos vs. Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable

Non-title. Gable takes Jimmy down to start but the Usos take him into the corner for some alternating splashes. Back with Jey enziguring Shelton down and the hot tag bringing Jimmy in. The Samoan drop plants Chad, followed by a wicked Umaga attack in the corner. A superkick looks to set up the Superfly Splash but Shelton makes the save. Rolling Chaos Theory sets up the powerbomb/top rope clothesline combination for the pin on Jimmy at 7:42.

Rating: C-. They needed to do something with Benjamin and Gable so hopefully this sets up their definitive title shot. I don't think we'll actually get new champions out of this but at least we're setting something up here. The Usos need some new challengers and it's pretty clear we're going to be seeing the Bludgeon Brothers there sooner or later. Odds are Gable and Benjamin lose in short order, but at least the match should be good.

We look back at the women's Royal Rumble announcement, including a bunch of reactions from wrestlers.

Here's Charlotte for a chat. She talks about how excited she is and can't wait for the match. She'll be waiting to defend her title at Wrestlemania against the winner, but here's Naomi to interrupt. She officially enters the Rumble and promises to see Charlotte at Wrestlemania. This brings out the Riott Squad with Naomi ripping on the three of them. Naomi goes a step further by challenging them to a match after the break.

Naomi/Charlotte vs. Ruby Riott/Sarah Logan

Joined in progress with Charlotte chopping Logan but missing a big boot. Logan chop blocks her down and hands it off to Ruby for a leg lock. Charlotte finally breaks out and knees Logan in the ribs, allowing the hot tag to Naomi. A long series of rapid fire forearms and a kick to the head rock Logan as everything breaks down. With Charlotte taking Riott down, the Rear View ends Logan at 3:36.

Rating: D. No time to go anywhere here but is there a reason the Riott Squad lost again? I mean other than to separate them from Absolution of

course (One loses, the other doesn't. That's totally different!). Charlotte not being in the Rumble is going to make it a bit more difficult to get to 30 but at least there's a real prize for the winner.

New Day, in Christmas gear, gives out presents, including flapjacks and shirts. Rusev and Aiden English, dressed as Santa and Frosty respectively, show up to plug the Happy Rusev Day shirt. Rusev only has a naughty list and English sings a challenge ("Oh Rusev Day, oh Rusev Day. We challenge you to a contest!"). Rusev stomps on the pancakes so Big E. says he just flapped the wrong jack.

Here's Dolph Ziggler to say he knew he belonged around here with the US Title being proof. It's not even his first reign and we see a clip of him winning the title at Capitol Punishment (That was SIX YEARS AGO???). We see his Intercontinental Title wins as well, followed by winning Money in the Bank and the successful cash-in. Ziggler says people need something to remember him by, so he lays the title down and walks away. If that's how they get rid of Ziggler, fine, but what was the point of taking the title off Corbin?

Sami and Owens present Bryan with a bottle of champagne but he tells them to go get ready for their match before he fires them himself.

New Day vs. Rusev/Aiden English

We get a LOUD Rusev Day chant before things get going. I'm sure they'll be punished later. English (Frosty) and Kofi (gingerbread man) start things off with Kofi being sent outside for a little dance. Rusev (Santa) gives chase, leaving English to take a dropkick. Big E. (elf) grabs the bag of presents and throws some shirts to the crowd. There are some homemade Happy Rusev Day underwear as well though, allowing English and Rusev to jump them from behind.

Back from a break with Kofi in trouble as the fans want pancakes. Rusev charges into Kofi's boot and a tornado DDT takes him down. Woods (reindeer) comes in off the hot tag but the Honor Roll is countered into a fireman's carry spinebuster for two. The pancakes are put on the table and English covers them with whipped cream. Woods won't go into them so English does instead. English is ready to fight ("FOR RUSEV!!!") but

charges into a shot to the face. The top rope elbow ends English at 8:38.

Rating: C. I'm usually into these Christmas matches but sweet goodness Rusev and English need to run with this thing while they can. The fans are eating it up like pancakes with whipped cream and they're losing every single week. Even if it's just for a little while, let them see where they can go. It's better than putting Woods in a white suit and calling them Speed Force.

Randy Orton/Shinsuke Nakamura/AJ Styles vs. Jinder Mahal/Kevin Owens/Sami Zayn

Rematch from Tribute to the Troops. Orton and Mahal get things going but everything breaks down before anything happens. Everyone winds up on the floor with Orton bouncing Mahal off the announcers' table. Back in where Nakamura is driven into the wrong corner so Sami can start in on the arm. Nakamura lays on Sami's chest on the ropes and pulls his chest hair out for a rare bit of offense. Orton drapes Sami over the top rope for two and it's back to Mahal. The referee tells him thirty seconds and about thirty seconds later we go to a break with Owens stomping on Orton.

Back with Orton fighting out of a chinlock and bringing AJ in to...get sent outside in short order. Sami gets in some right hands for two of his own as the villains start taking turns on Styles. AJ DDT's his way to freedom and brings in Nakamura for the real house cleaning. A series of kicks and knees to the head rock Sami and that means Good Vibrations. More strikes look to set up the exploder but Nakamura settles for a cross armbreaker instead.

Owens is right there with the backsplash for the save but gets sent outside. Everything breaks down again with AJ slingshotting onto Owens with the forearm. The Singh Brothers break up the Kinshasa but only get ejected instead of drawing a DQ. Not that it matters as Mahal eats an RKO, drawing them back to ringside. That means a double draping DDT, a Phenomenal Forearm for Owens and Kinshasa for the pin on Sami at 15:21.

Rating: C+. Standard house show main event here and that's fine enough. I like the idea of Nakamura getting some feature time for a change as he could become a big time player in the main event scene soon enough if

need be. That being said, was there ANY reason for Sami to take the pin here instead of Mahal? Come on already.

A long celebration seems to set something up but just ends the show instead.

Overall Rating: C-. Well it's nice to see how much effort they put in this week. This show was their version of a Smackdown Christmas special, meaning one match felt different than any other week. It's not bad and it didn't drag along like Raw, but don't expect any kind of major developments here. I know it's the holidays and this is all they can really do given how few people will be watching, but that doesn't make it any less dull.

Results

Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable b. Usos – Powerbomb/Top rope clothesline to Jimmy

Charlotte/Naomi b. Riott Squad – Rear View to Logan

New Day b. Aiden English/Rusev – Top rope elbow to English

Randy Orton/AJ Styles/Shinsuke Nakamura b. Sami Zayn/Kevin Owens/Jinder Mahal – Kinshasa to Zayn

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Clash of Champions 2017: OUT! OUT! AND STAY OUT!!!

Clash of Champions 2017

Date: December 17, 2017

Location: TD Garden, Boston, Massachusetts

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

It's the final pay per view of the year and this time the focus is on champions. Well, at least some of it is as the rest of the focus has been on Kevin Owens/Sami Zayn vs. Shane McMahon, who has put together Randy Orton/Shinsuke Nakamura to fight for him. Let's get to it.

Kickoff Show: Mojo Rawley vs. Zack Ryder

They were partners who kept losing so Rawley turned on him. Rawley has new music as well. Ryder dropkicks him at the bell and we start in a hurry. They head outside with Ryder slugging away until Rawley rams him back first into the barricade. A spinebuster plants Ryder again and a running splash in the corner gets two.

We hit the chinlock for a bit before Ryder gets shoved off the ropes and outside again. Back from a break with Ryder caught in another chinlock. A big boot gets two more but Ryder is back up with some forearms in the corner. Mojo gets serious and chop blocks the knee, setting up the running right hand for the pin at 7:12.

Rating: C-. Fairly entertaining glorified squash here and that's all it could have been. Ryder was always going to lose this and that's the right idea with Rawley potentially becoming a midcard act as a result of the split. It served its purpose and if Rawley gets something out of it, even better.

The opening video is split between looking at the title matches and the

tag match. This show's name is going to be its undoing.

US Title: Bobby Roode vs. Dolph Ziggler vs. Baron Corbin

Corbin is defending. They circle around to start until Corbin is sent outside, leaving the challengers to trade rollups. Ziggler sends Roode outside as well and it's Corbin with a hard clothesline to take Bobby down. Dolph takes some right hands as well and it's Corbin standing tall early on.

Back in and Roode is whipped hard into the corner as we're firmly in the two in/one out triple threat formula. After a good stomping on Roode, Ziggler comes back in and takes one of his own. At least the champ is consistent. It's Roode coming back in with a Blockbuster for two on Corbin. Ziggler runs in for a Fameasser on Roode, forcing Corbin to dive back in for a save.

Roode hits a swinging Rock Bottom but walks into Deep Six. With everyone else down, Roode goes up for some reason, only to get caught on the bad end of a Tower of Doom. Ziggler throws Corbin outside but the superkick is countered into Roode's spinebuster. The jumping DDT gives Ziggler two though and everyone is down again. A charging Corbin is low bridged and Ziggler eats the Glorious DDT but Corbin pulls Roode out at two. Back in and Corbin loads up End of Days, only to have Ziggler grab the Zig Zag for the pin at 12:03.

Rating: C+. I...what? Like seriously what? Ziggler was there to take the fall and winds up winning the title? Was this just for the sake of shutting him up on Twitter? The match was every triple threat match you've seen with a nice sequence in the middle, but my goodness Ziggler winning does nothing for anyone.

Daniel Bryan thinks his referee shirt is a little big when Shane McMahon comes in to say his, which of course is customized, fits fine. Shane wants to know what's up with Bryan as of late as he just added himself to the match out of nowhere. They're both going to be in the ring tonight and more discussions will be had later on.

Corbin is livid and promises to get the title back.

Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable vs. Rusev/Aiden English vs. Usos

The Usos are defending and it's one fall to a finish. Before the match, English sings the Twelve Days of Rusev so the Usos sing about having all twelve days on lock. There are four in the ring at a time here so it's Gable, English, Kofi and Jimmy starting things off. Four straight rollups lead to a quadruple tag as everything breaks down. Of course a bunch of them wind up on the floor with Jey diving onto Big E. and English.

Benjamin runs the corner to superplex Jimmy down with Big E. having to make a save. New Day takes over inside and loads up some Unicorn Stampedes, only to have Rusev come back in and run everyone over. Cue the RUSEV DAY chants, meaning WWE will destroy him in short order. Gable and English put on holds at the same time with a staredown thrown in.

English of course wins by singing, because that's what a good man does. A hard suplex drops Jey and we settle down to Gable and Benjamin working Kofi over in the corner. Byron won't shut up about English's singing and Graves keeps berating him, meaning advantage Graves. English has to make a save and gets in a shoving match with Gable. Double hot tags bring in Jimmy and Big E. as this is WAY messier than it needs to be.

A running Umaga Attack and a Warrior Splash gives us a double two. The Usos clean house with superkicks until Shelton powerbombs Jimmy and Gable grabs a Texas Cloverleaf. Rusev makes a save with a superkick to the back of the head and grabs the Accolade on Gable. Big E. makes the save but eats the jumping superkick. There's the Accolade on Big E. until Gable makes a very delayed save of his own. Chad starts suplexing everyone, including Rolling Chaos Theory on Big E. The Usos make a blind tag though and it's the superkick into the Superfly Splash to retain at 11:56.

Rating: B-. The action was good but egads this was messy. There was too much going on and a lot of that is due to the four in the ring at once. Hopefully they don't keep that up if they do something like this again in the future. The Usos retaining is acceptable but the titles could use some fresh blood pretty soon. Hopefully that means Rusev/English, at least before Rusev Day loses its steam.

We recap the Women's Title match. Charlotte beat Natalya to take the title but the debuting Riott Squad interfered in the rematch. The solution was a lumberjack match, including the Riott Squad at ringside.

Women's Title: Charlotte vs. Natalya

Charlotte is defending and the lumberjacks get individual entrances to fill in time. Oh and we get Big Match Intros in case you didn't get the idea yet. Charlotte wastes no time in kicking Natalya outside where Naomi gets in a shot of her own. Back in and a neckbreaker gives Charlotte two as Graves says he has 20/13 vision, making him better than Saxton. Normally this would be annoying but Saxton is so worthless that it's actually fine.

Natalya knocks the champ outside and the beatdown is on with the Squad getting annoying at the other lumberjacks trying to get in their own shots. Back in and we hit the chinlock, followed by a basement dropkick to keep Charlotte in trouble. Natalya gets sent outside and, of course, is tossed back in unscathed. Charlotte makes a comeback but decides to dive onto Ruby Riott instead.

We get the required lumberjack brawl until Naomi dives onto everyone. Back in and Natalya grabs a Sharpshooter until Charlotte gets over to the ropes. That's not cool with the lumberjacks, who pull Charlotte outside to keep up the beating. In the melee, Carmella grabs the Money in the Bank briefcase but the Squad breaks it up. Charlotte moonsaults outside onto the pile but gets posted by Natalya. Back in and Charlotte reverses the Sharpshooter into the Figure Eight to retain at 12:33.

Rating: D+. As usual, Smackdown seems to have no idea how to book this division without throwing everyone into the match at once. All the people running around got old in a hurry and there was no way around it. On top of that we still don't have the Money in the Bank cash-in out of the way, despite having the most perfect of a moment imaginable at the CHAMPIONS pay per view. This was more annoying than anything else and that's not good. On a side note though, this felt like it was planting some seeds for a women's Rumble and that could be interesting.

Post match Natalya says Charlotte used her family's name to cut corners

and talks about giving everything to the division in the last ten years. Now the WWE and the women want to turn their backs on her. Well she'll turn her back on all of them. Ok Nattie. You do that and see if we can make people care about you even less. I mean, I doubt it, but maybe your cats will be interested. Just don't talk again. Like ever. I'd rather listen to your cats being swung around by their tails.

Long video hyping up the Network because THIS SHOW IS WAY TOO SHORT IF YOU DIDN'T GET THE IDEA YET!

The Singh Brothers won't allow any interviews with Jinder Mahal. They do however note that he heard what AJ said "on the Clash of Champions Kickoff Show". As opposed to the Barney Miller marathon kickoff show?

1. Who listens to this and thinks humans talk like this?
2. What do I have to do to get a Barney Miller marathon?

Anyway they tease that they won't get involved in the title match.

Breezango vs. Bludgeon Brothers

Breeze now has short tights. Harper punches Breeze in the jaw to start and it's quickly off to Rowan. Tyler gets in an enziguri, only to have Harper smash Breeze with a big boot (which the camera missed). Breeze is dropped face first onto the apron and a double powerbomb plants Fandango. The double spinebuster ends Fandango at 1:58. I know the Brothers need to be established but they couldn't have done this to the Hype Bros? Or jobbers or something? Or can we just have Breezango win something for once?

Post match the Brothers promise more destruction.

Zayn and Owens like Bryan playing fair and promise that the YEP Movement will rage on. They walk away from a question of what if they lose.

We recap the tag match, which I can't believe isn't the main event. Owens beat up Vince McMahon so it turned into the Shane McMahon Avenging Hour. Zayn joined forces with Owens and turned into the double big bad, setting up a tag match between Owens/Zayn vs. Randy Orton/Shinsuke Nakamura.

Shane and Daniel Bryan are both going to be refereeing and if Owens/Zayn lose, they're fired. The bosses are rather divided on what to do about Owens and Zayn, meaning there's some tension around here.

Sami Zayn/Kevin Owens vs. Randy Orton/Shinsuke Nakamura

Both referees are in the ring at once as Orton headlocks Sami to start. Orton clotheslines Sami down and let's have an argument over the counts. Shane yells at Sami for punching in the corner while Bryan just stands back. Nakamura comes in and reverses a wristlock into one of his own. It's off to Owens who hammers away in the corner, only to have Shane pull him off.

Orton comes back in and completely misses a right hand but gets two anyway, triggering another argument. Eventually they agree to cover half of the ring each and we seem to have peace at the moment. Owens superkicks Orton to take over, allowing Zayn to chop away in the corner. Orton breaks a chinlock (he would know about them) and drops Sami ribs first across the top.

It's back to Owens for a chinlock of his own until a belly to back suplex gets Orton to freedom. Nakamura comes in for the hard strikes and some Good Vibrations. We hit a triangle choke on Owens but he powers out in a bit of a surprise. Sami comes in for two off the Blue Thunder Bomb as everything breaks down. Orton's throat is snapped across the top rope but he's able to crotch Sami into a superplex.

Owens pulls Orton outside so the brawl can continue, including the overactive referees. The villains start loading up the announcers' table and a splash drives him through. Orton is back up though and the hanging DDT gets two on Sami with Shane freaking out over the kickout. There's an RKO to Owens but Zayn rolls Randy up for two as Shane just stops counting. Bryan snaps so Sami rolls Orton up again with Bryan fast counting the pin at 21:00.

Rating: C+. The match was a mess due to all the people involved but egads this better be a Shane heel turn. I like the ending, but I have a bad feeling about what it's going to lead to. If nothing else it basically guarantees more Shane dominating TV, even if it's not all that

interesting anymore. Shane was a full on heel here, even if that is likely to change nothing because Shane is the cool guy or whatever their logic is.

A lot of staring ensues.

We recap the World Title match with a cool video about the history of the title and some great champions. AJ hopes to be such a champion one day and started the process when he won the title in England. Tonight is Mahal's rematch.

Smackdown World Title: AJ Styles vs. Jinder Mahal

AJ is defending and the Singh Brothers are here. Mahal powers him into the corner to start until AJ kicks him in the knee for a breather. They head outside with AJ sending the knee into the barricade and grabbing a leglock back inside. Mahal fights up and drops him ribs first across the top rope for another trip to the floor. A piece of the barricade padding is ripped off and AJ goes crashing through it as the fans are just dying here.

Mahal gets dropped onto the announcers' table and we hit the reverse chinlock with a knee in the back. It's off to a bodyscissors as this match is somehow getting even more boring, completely defying my expectations. Mahal stays on the ribs with an abdominal stretch, followed by a middle rope right hand to the jaw. AJ dropkicks the second attempt out of the air but it's too early for the Phenomenal Forearm.

Some right hands in the corner are countered into an electric chair, followed by the seated forearm. The fireman's carry backbreaker gets two on Mahal, followed by a northern lights suplex for the same. There's the Pele but the tornado DDT is countered, allowing Mahal to kick him in the face for two more. With nothing else working, Mahal loads up a super Khallas but AJ breaks it up without much effort.

The springboard 450 connects, only to bang up the ribs. The Singh Brothers try to pull Mahal outside but get beaten up for their efforts, including a Styles Clash on the floor. Back in and the Khallas gets two so Mahal tries a Styles Clash. Since that would probably result in a bad

case of death, AJ reverses into the Calf Crusher to retain at 22:57.

Rating: B. Much like in Manchester, AJ carries Mahal to a good match. NOW GET THE HECK OVER MAHAL AND GET HIM OUT OF THE MAIN EVENT FOREVER AND EVER AND EVER! I've been sick of the guy for months now and hopefully he drops down to the midcard (where he would be perfectly fine and should have been all this time) while someone interesting and/or talented gets the spot that they deserve.

Overall Rating: C-. While not the worst show ever, it certainly was one of the least important ever. The problem again comes down to the fact that the idea of a pay per view focusing on the titles doesn't need to exist when every pay per view is like this. Maybe if you have a dual branded version it could work but this didn't stand up very well on its own.

As has been obvious for weeks though, the bigger problem is how little this show needed to exist. Smackdown just doesn't have the lineup for a stand alone pay per view at the moment as they ran a six match card here with almost nothing feeling like it belonged on pay per view. The main event was good but nothing that blew away the TV match from England and the tag match was a plot device. As for the rest...yeah it existed and ate up pay per view time, which is about the extent of its positives.

The show was far from terrible, but it wasn't very interesting and didn't need to exist. Granted we're heading into the Rumble though and that's going to guarantee things pick up in a hurry. In other words, this was the throw away December pay per view which only exists because they need a show in December. At least the boring stretch is out of the way though and things can start looking forward.

Results

Dolph Ziggler b. Baron Corbin and Bobby Roode – Zig Zag to Corbin

Usos b. Aiden English/Rusev, New Day and Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable – Superfly Splash to Gable

Charlotte b. Natalya – Figure Eight

Bludgeon Brothers b. Breezango – Double spinebuster to Fandango

Sami Zayn/Kevin Owens b. Randy Orton/Shinsuke Nakamura – Rollup to Orton

AJ Styles b. Jinder Mahal – Calf Crusher

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Clash of Champions 2017 Preview

Is it really a good idea to have a pay per view entirely about champions if you only have a few title matches to put on? Or when the real main event isn't even about a title? WWE certainly thinks so, which is why we're getting "Clash of Champions 2017" tomorrow night. This show isn't exactly inspiring and seems like further proof that we don't need single branded pay per views. Let's get to it.

Kickoff Show: Zack Ryder vs. Mojo Rawley

This is the kind of thing you should be doing with the Kickoff

Show. The match isn't going to mean much but it gives you a match that was set up on TV a few weeks back. The Hype Bros weren't exactly a top level team and neither of these guys is going to mean anything despite winning here, but at least they've being given a chance to do something with their story.

Rawley wins pretty handily here and I have no idea why that should even be up for discussion. Ryder is one of the most consistently cheered midcarders around and Rawley, despite winning the battle royal at "Wrestlemania XXXIII", hasn't had the big singles moment yet. Let him win here and maybe he could start something. I mean, he likely won't, but at least there's a chance.

Randy Orton/Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Kevin Owens/Sami Zayn

We might as well get the real main event out of the way here. There's no reason to believe that anything is close to this on the levels of importance as it's been by far the most featured story in recent weeks. The bigger question is who turns here as the winners aren't really in doubt.

Of course I'm going with Owens and Zayn to win, but I think it's due to Shane McMahon doing something screwy, likely that Daniel Bryan doesn't see so he has to count the fall. They're completely crazy if they try to turn Bryan heel in this whole thing but dumber things have certainly happened before. Just go with what the fans want and what makes sense here though and everything will be fine. You know, like most of the time.

Women's Title: Charlotte Flair(c) vs. Natalya

This is a title match where the bigger question is what will the people outside the ring do, making it all the more odd. These two have shown that they have the chemistry to make a good match, but the Riott Squad is going to get a lot of the focus. That's fine in theory as they're more interesting than anything Natalya is going to do but it kind of misses the point of the champions idea.

I'll go with Charlotte retaining and then a cash-in from Carmella. She's going to be at ringside and you can almost guarantee some shenanigans either during or after the match. That makes more sense as she's an easier target for the Riott Squad and can defend against Naomi while Charlotte handles the heavy lifting.

Tag Team Titles: Usos(c) vs. New Day vs. Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable vs. Rusev/Aiden English

Now this one could be fun, assuming the people can get out of each others' way long enough. I'm not a fan of having so many teams (and especially so many people) being in one match but that's how matches work in WWE these days. The Usos have been rocking the heck out of the division as of late but they've traded the titles with New Day for so long now that it's time for some fresh blood.

I'm hoping that fresh blood is Rusev and English who have put together a shockingly good team in recent weeks. English has an excellent voice and that's all he needs to keep himself relevant, even on a minor scale. Throw in Rusev for the heavy, hard hitting lifting and everything should come together nicely. Just keep the belts away from New Day for a change and everything should be fine.

Breezango vs. Bludgeon Brothers

This isn't exactly how I expected to see this match happen but at least we're getting it. Breezango has gone from the hottest thing on the roster to just kind of there, mainly due to almost never wrestling. That being said, they have no business beating the Bludgeon Brothers at the moment and I don't think WWE is even considering going nuts here.

So yeah, the Bludgeon Brothers win and do so handily, as they should. Breezango is really just good for comedy at this point unless they actually get back in the ring more regularly. That's quite the shame as they're a talented team who come off

like stars, but WWE isn't the place to go with a team that got over doing creative stuff. One of these teams (or the Usos) could use a trade to "Monday Night Raw", just for the sake of getting out of each others' way. Bludgeon Brothers win and do so with ease.

US Title: Baron Corbin(c) vs. Bobby Roode vs. Dolph Ziggler

Then there's this, which has to be one of the least inspired matches in recent memory. I see no reason for this to really be taking place as there's almost no effort put into the thing. Ziggler is still one of the worst characters around (due to staleness more than anything else), Roode needs someone to work with and Corbin is just kind of there as the big power guy.

I'll take Corbin to retain as he and Roode can have some more singles matches down the line. Neither of them are exactly inspiring though and I have little desire to actually watch the match. Maybe Ziggler will be interested in trying though I'm not getting my hopes up. It's a bad match with a bad build though and that's a scary combination.

Smackdown World Title: AJ Styles(c) vs. Jinder Mahal

We'll wrap it up here, with a match that I don't think will actually close the show. It's pretty clear that the Mahal experiment is over and done with and if logic prevails, tomorrow night will be the grand finale as Mahal is done with the main event scene once and for all. I think you can guess my pick from here.

Styles will win this and certainly should. I was never impressed with Mahal in the first place and there was little reason to be. He's just not that good and while he was certainly trying, he felt much more like an experiment that got out of hand more than anything else. Styles is a proven commodity though and one more win over Mahal will...well it's not really going to do much for him but there are a lot of

fans who would like to see it.

Overall Thoughts

this really isn't doing much for me as it's a one and a half match card with the rest of the show feeling pretty slapped on. The big problem of course is that EVERY pay per view features this many title matches, making the entire concept of focusing on the titles seem like a waste of an idea. It's fine in theory, but when there are title matches almost every week, a pay per view about them doesn't do it. The fact that the real main event isn't about a title either sums the whole thing up perfectly well. There's potential for some good stuff on here, but my hopes are pretty firmly down.

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Smackdown – December 12,

2017: An Annoying Trend

Smackdown

Date: December 12, 2017

Location: US Bank Arena, Cincinnati, Ohio

Commentators: Corey Graves, Byron Saxton, Tom Phillips

It's the go home show for Clash of Champions 2017 and things are starting to pick up. The most recent weeks have focused on the Sami Zayn/Kevin Owens vs. Shane McMahon and company feud. Therefore, tonight is probably going to be more centered around the World Title match between champion AJ Styles and Jinder Mahal. You know, the title match on the show about champions. Let's get to it.

We open with a long sequence on last week's big story, seeing Shane McMahon making Orton/Nakamura vs. Zayn/Owens for the pay per view with himself at the referee. If Zayn/Owens win, they're done in WWE.

Here's Styles to open things up. He won the title a little over a month ago and wants to be a fighting champion. This Sunday he defends against Mahal and lists off what Mahal will do to get the title back, including bringing in Great Khali. Cue the Singh Brothers, who say they're not introducing Mahal tonight. We look back at Mahal attacking the two of them two weeks ago so AJ wants to hug it out. AJ: "Come hug it out with Uncle Al!"

The Brothers get in the ring and say they want to be in Mahal's corner on Sunday. One of them rants about how horrible Mahal is ("He thinks we're twins!") while the other tries to calm him down. AJ doesn't buy it and shows a still of the Brothers being in Mahal's corner this weekend in India. They swear they're done with Mahal, who comes out looking rather angry. AJ of course doesn't buy any of this (thank goodness) and lays the Brothers out.

We recap the Riott Squad debuting and picking apart the women's division. This is in no way shape or form a copy of what Absolution has done.

Charlotte vs. Ruby Riott

Non-title with Natalya on commentary. Charlotte suplexes her down for two but stops to yell at Natalya. We take an early break and come back with Charlotte hitting a Lethal Combination into the corner. Sarah Logan has to be knocked off the apron and Natalya gets forearmed as well. Natalya clotheslines Charlotte for the DQ at 5:04. Not enough shown to rate of course but this was an angle instead of a match.

Post match the Squad goes after Charlotte and loads up the steps but Naomi returns (after missing a single week) for the save. Carmella, Tamina and Lana come in to help as well with the Squad running off. Again, THIS IS THE SAME THING THAT ABSOLUTION DID ON RAW! Can we really not get a second idea?

Daniel Bryan is on the phone with Shane when Zayn and Owens come in, both wearing modified Bryan shirts (YEP instead of YES). They don't say anything but hand him a sign with Shane's face crossed off.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Baron Corbin

Non-title with Bobby Roode on commentary. Corbin drops him with a single right hand before yelling at Roode. Ziggler is back with a dropkick and avoids a charge to send Corbin into the post. Roode gets off commentary and removes the robe before getting inside. A Glorious DDT plants Ziggler for the DQ at 1:34.

Corbin takes a DDT as well.

We see a clip of this week's Fashion Files where Breezango challenges the Bludgeon Brothers for Sunday. The challenge has been accepted.

Bludgeon Brothers vs. Colin Delaney/Joe Monroe

Graves eludes to Delaney's former time in WWE as he's dropkicked into the corner. Harper's clothesline takes Colin's head off and an assisted Batista Bomb plants Monroe (with a loud scream). The double spinebuster finishes Delaney at 1:21.

Here are Owens and Zayn to occupy Smackdown. Owens does the ranting, talking about how Shane is abusing his power on Sunday. Sami says YEP to every statement Owens makes, including Owens telling everyone to come out

here and occupy the show. No one comes out until Bryan walks to the stage...with his music starting once he's out there.

Owens and Zayn praise him for inspiring this movement but Bryan wants to know what they're doing. He's nothing like them because the YES Movement was about the fans instead of him. Sami says this is about what they deserve and Owens begs him not to drink the Shane Kool-Aid. Bryan says there's an understanding between he and Shane and this Sunday he's going to be the second guest referee.

Usos vs. Aiden English/Rusev

Non-title and New Day is on commentary. Before the match, English sings the Eight Days of Rusev (including three unhindered Jinders). The Usos come out to make jokes about English's hair but here are Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable to interrupt, saying they'll win the titles on Sunday. Joined in progress after a break with Rusev bearhugging Jey. A kick to the head allows the hot tag to Jimmy as New Day does their over the top commentary. English dives into a superkick for two but Rusev makes the save. Rusev's superkick sets up a layout DDT to end Jimmy at 2:35 shown.

We look back at the opening segment.

Mahal jumps Styles before AJ has an interview.

Sunday's Kickoff Match is Mojo Rawley vs. Zack Ryder.

Pay per view rundown.

Here are Orton and Nakamura for a chat before their main event. Orton says he can't wait to get rid of these two and make sure they lose their jobs. Renee Young asks Nakamura if he's confident for Sunday. Nakamura: "Yep."

Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Kevin Owens

Bryan is on commentary to continue a trend tonight. Owens grabs a headlock for a bit before getting kicked in the chest for his efforts. A knee to the ribs cuts Nakamura down though and a backsplash gets two. We

hit the chinlock as Bryan talks about how Shane's stipulations aren't exactly fair. Nakamura fights up but can't hit the knee in the corner. Instead he gets sent hard into the barricade as we take a break.

Back with Owens stomping away until Nakamura gets in a running kick to the face. Some YES Kicks have Owens in more trouble and there's Good Vibrations for a bonus. The running knee in the corner gets two but Owens breaks up a superplex. His Swanton hits knees but Owens blocks the reverse exploder. The referee gets bumped and Bryan takes over instead. Nakamura's spinning kick to the head gets a delayed two as Orton and Zayn get in a fight. The distraction lets Owens hit a Pop Up Powerbomb for the pin at 14:29.

Rating: C+. Good match, but the sledgehammer of plot didn't help things. This was supposed to be the smoking gun that proves Bryan is going to be biased on Sunday but it feels a bit forced. Granted some of that might have been Byron Saxton hammering home the same idea over and over again, which makes anything sound annoying. I would say I look forward to this story ending on Sunday but I'd be surprised if it's done by Wrestlemania at this point.

Kevin and Sami say no one is taking their careers away because they'll win at the Clash.

Overall Rating: D+. This show did one thing very well: it made it clear that Sunday's pay per view doesn't need to exist. The main event tag match (and there's a good chance it main events) feels like a rest stop on the way to whatever the really big match is (whatever that may be) and that makes Sunday feel like something I'm not sure I need to see.

Other than that...there wasn't much to say around here. Well aside from the fact that they need something other than guest commentary to advance feuds. Other than the Bludgeon Brothers squash, there was guest commentary in every single match. This wasn't a very good show, but it did at least bolster some of the rest of the card. The problem is none of the rest of the card, including the World Title match, feels like it means anything compared to the top story.

Results

Charlotte b. Ruby Riott via DQ when Natalya interfered

Dolph Ziggler b. Baron Corbin via DQ when Bobby Roode interfered

Bludgeon Brothers b. Colin Delaney/Joe Monroe – Double spinebuster to Delaney

Rusev/Aiden English b. Usos – Layout DDT to Jimmy

Kevin Owens b. Shinsuke Nakamura – Pop Up Powerbomb

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