

Smackdown – November 9, 2016: What's Scottish for Average?

I apologize for the delay but my internet was out for a few hours during the middle of the show.

Smackdown

Date: November 8, 2016

Location: SSE Hydro, Glasgow, Scotland

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, David Otunga, John Bradshaw Layfield, Tom Phillips

It's another night in the same building as Smackdown is in Scotland. Tonight actually has a major match announced as Becky Lynch will be defending the Women's Title against Alexa Bliss in a match that was scheduled for No Mercy but was postponed due to an injury. Other than that we're likely going to see more announced for Survivor Series. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's AJ Styles to open things up. AJ isn't in a good mood tonight and doesn't want to hear the booing or see the tweets. He wants to talk about last week's travesty, which saw that mutant turtle James Ellsworth cost him a match against Dean Ambrose. If Ambrose wanted to be champion again so badly, he never would have lost his title in the first place. That brings AJ to Survivor Series, where he doesn't need Dean's help to win.

AJ wants to bring the Survivor Series team down but Baron Corbin interrupts. Baron says he'll deliver, but not to AJ's team. Cue the Wyatts, which now includes Randy Orton. Before anything can happen, here's Dean to bring out James Ellsworth (JBL: "HOW DID YOU GET THAT THING THROUGH CUSTOMS???"), who AJ wants thrown in Loch Ness. Styles suggests that Dean and Ellsworth are outnumbered but Corbin walks out.

Cue Shane (who I wasn't sure was still alive) to talk to team blue. He wants to see the best in the world beat Raw and thinks it's going to be a

clean sweep. Ellsworth has an idea: he can be the official mascot! Shane agrees and a six man tag is made for later tonight with the Wyatts vs. Ambrose/Corbin/Ellsworth.

Survivor Series Qualifying Match: Breezango vs. Vaudevillains

Breezango are dressed as cops for no apparent reason. Gotch immediately gives Breeze a Regal Roll and the Swanton gives English two. Everything breaks down and Fandango gives English a falcon's arrow for the pin at 1:23. That was quick.

Natalya vs. Naomi

Coach Natalya now has a whistle. Nikki Bella is on commentary and Naomi is very yellow. Natalya takes her down to start before walking into a sitout jawbreaker. There's a double crossbody to put both women down but cue Carmella to talk some trash. Natalya busts out her whistle to try and restore order but it just lets Nikki forearm Carmella. The distraction lets Naomi grab a small package for the pin at 2:02.

Corbin has walked out of the six man tag (assuming he was ever officially announced in the first place as it wasn't clear) but will face Kalisto tonight.

Ellsworth gets on Dean's nerves until Daniel Bryan comes up. Daniel has a replacement partner for them and it's....Kane. Ellsworth: "So...what's the strategy tonight?" Kane: "Don't. Tag. In."

Baron Corbin vs. Kalisto

We actually get a flashback to their feud from three months ago that never went anywhere. Corbin jumps him before the bell and lays Kalisto out. Kalisto is sent outside but Baron slips off the apron and messes up his knee. With Corbin begging off, Kalisto dropkicks the bad knee into the steps. Corbin is in agony as referees come out to check on him. Kalisto even adds a frog splash to the bad leg. No match.

Video on Alexa Bliss vs. Becky Lynch.

Baron Corbin is officially off the Smackdown team due to the knee injury.

So at this point in the show my cable went out and didn't come back on until right before the end of Crews vs. Hawkins. I saw the rest later but there was a big gap in the middle.

Women's Title: Alexa Bliss vs. Becky Lynch

Becky is defending and this is billed as the main event, halfway through the show. A lockup goes nowhere to start and the Disarm-Her sends Alexa bailing to the ropes. They trade some rollups for two each before a dropkick sends Alexa into the corner. That goes badly for the champ though as she misses a charge into the post and it's off to the armbar. More armbarring is countered into a sitout powerbomb to put both women down as we take a break.

Back with Becky starting a comeback and getting two off a Bex Plex. Bliss avoids a guillotine legdrop though and hits a backflip into double knees to the ribs. The champ pops back up and crotches Alexa on top, only to get shoved right back down. They trade rollups but the Disarm-Her goes on to make Bliss tap at 14:50....with Alexa's foot on the ropes.

Rating: C+. This was more long than good but it also keeps them set up for another title match down the line. Becky is a good option as the first champion and they made Alexa feel like a bigger deal as she won a lot of matches coming up to this title shot. The match itself was just kind of there though with the basic arm work but the big fight feel helped a lot.

Bryan promises Shane to have a replacement chosen tonight. Miz and Maryse come in to set up some exposition. In exchange for Sami Zayn getting an Intercontinental Title shot, Brian Kendrick will be defending the Cruiserweight Title against Kalisto, and if he wins the cruiserweights come to Smackdown. As a bonus, Miz gets an Intercontinental Title shot next week.

Curt Hawkins vs. Apollo Crews

Hawkins starts fast with a jumping knee to the face and we're in the chinlock about forty seconds into the match. Crews throws him down again though and goes up top, only to miss a high crossbody. An Oklahoma roll

gives Hawkins the pin at 1:50.

Dolph Ziggler can't wait to defend the Intercontinental Title against the Miz next week on the way to facing Sami Zayn at Survivor Series.

Wyatt Family vs. James Ellsworth/Kane/Dean Ambrose

AJ is on commentary, giving us a FIVE PERSON BOOTH. My goodness people, think this nonsense through. Kane and Harper do the big power showdown to start with a backdrop sending Harper flying. It's off to Dean vs. Bray with the latter running him over with a shoulder. Orton comes in and runs Dean over before stomping on the fingers. A side slam from Kane has Orton in trouble and the fans want Ellsworth.

That just earns James a throat slit, followed by Orton breaking up a chokeslam attempt on Luke. We hit the stomping for a bit before Bray nails the backplash for two. The stomping continues and we take a break. Back with the Ellsworth chants continuing, only to have Harper cut them off by dropkicking Kane. Orton grabs a headlock followed by a dropkick but Harper gets DDT'd.

The hot tag brings in Ambrose to clothesline Wyatt, only to have the top rope elbow knocked out of the air. Sister Abigail is broken countered into a rollup for two and there go Kane and Harper to the back. A double clothesline puts both guys down so Ellsworth tags himself in. No Chin Music is loaded up (JBL: "Shawn Michaels is rolling over in his grave and he's not even dead!") but Bray easily reverses into Sister Abigail for the pin at 12:55.

Rating: C-. The ending helped this a lot as there was no reason for it to be anything other than Ellsworth getting run over. It's similar to the old Dungeon of Doom matches where the opponents had to keep the Giant out of the ring because he was going to destroy anyone who got in the ring with him. This was all that made sense and that's fine for what they had here.

The Wyatts swarm Ellsworth but Shane runs out for the save. Before anything else can happen, Daniel comes out and says he can name anyone he wants to the Survivor Series team. Therefore, he picks.....Shane. Well of

course he does because Heaven forbid a McMahon isn't involved so we can have it be about the wrestlers. This is nothing more than a way to have Shane vs. Stephanie, which is what this whole mess is all about in the first place. This actually ticks me off and that doesn't happen often on Smackdown.

Overall Rating: C+. This was fine, albeit a little forgettable. The bigger matches worked fine but I can't get over Shane getting the final spot on the team. Unless that gets changed, that's one heck of a stupid way to go for the sake of a surprise or whatever they're going for. I'm sick of the McMahons and all of the forced drama, but they're the stars of the show and that's all that matters.

Results

Breezango b. Vaudevillains – Falcon's arrow to English

Naomi b. Natalya – Small package

Becky Lynch b. Alexa Bliss – Disarm-Her

Curt Hawkins b. Apollo Crews – Oklahoma roll

Wyatt Family b. James Ellsworth/Kane/Dean Ambrose – Sister Abigail to Ellsworth

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Smackdown – November 1, 2016: It's Not Like They Had Another Choice

Smackdown

Date: November 1, 2016

Location: Prudential Center, Newark, New Jersey

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

Survivor Series is coming up soon and Raw has announced a lot of the participants on its teams for the promotion vs. promotion matches. As luck would have it, tonight we'll be getting most of the announcements for the Smackdown counterparts with the help of General Manager Daniel Bryan. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's James Ellsworth to tell us goodbye. He hasn't been able to eat and sleep since he cost Dean Ambrose that match last week. Dean comes out and calls Ellsworth his pal, whose head he's been thinking about ripping off. James begs for a chance to apologize and mentions beating AJ twice but Dean just tells him to stay out of his way from now on.

Cue AJ to say he was going to take it easy on Ellsworth but Dean kept convincing him to do more. Dean says Ellsworth doesn't take the cheap way out like AJ, which means Ellsworth has to break up a fight. AJ shoves Ellsworth into Dean and kicks Ambrose in the head. The Phenomenal Forearm leaves Dean laying.

We look back at Randy Orton seemingly joining the Wyatt Family last week.

Ellsworth is near tears trying to apologize to Dean. Bryan says Dean gets AJ again tonight and if he wins, he's the new #1 contender but it's his

last chance no matter what. On top of that, Ellsworth is banned from ringside.

Randy Orton vs. Kane

No DQ. Orton is in his regular gear but doesn't do his pose. Randy takes it start to the floor and has a chair less than fifteen seconds in. Kane takes it away and hits Orton in the ribs and back. It's almost time for a chokeslam but here are the Wyatts for a distraction. The RKO doesn't work and Kane boots Orton down. Bray and Luke pull Kane to the floor but he knocks the slightly smaller monsters away. Now the RKO connects and puts Kane away at 2:08.

Post match Harper gives Kane the discus lariat and Orton shoves Kane into Sister Abigail. Now Orton does the signature pose.

Baron Corbin vignette.

Becky Lynch/Nikki Bella vs. Alexa Bliss/Carmella

Nikki seems to have dyed her hair black. Carmella hides from Nikki to start so it's off to Alexa, who is quickly shoved down. Stereo baseball slides have the good ones in control as we take a break. Back with Bliss getting caught in a reverse DDT but Carmella distracts the referee. A quick rake of the eyes and a DDT gives Bliss the pin on Lynch at 5:54.

Post match Carmella and Alexa brag about how awesome they're going to be in the Survivor Series match. Oh and Alexa is going to win the title next week in Glasgow. Bliss has those evil eyes that get you to notice her and it makes her seem so much better as a villain.

Bryan and Shame put Naomi on the Survivor Series team, which is officially comprised of her and the four in the tag match. Naomi leaves and Natalya comes in to say she would be a perfect leader so Bryan makes her the coach.

Survivor Series Qualifying Match: Spirit Squad vs. American Alpha

Gable gets slammed down to start and Mikey gets two off a moonsault. We hit a chinlock before a double headbutt puts both guys down. Kenny misses

the guillotine legdrop and it's off to Jordan to clean house until he misses the shoulder in the corner. The blind tag brings Gable back in though and it's Grand Amplitude for the pin on Mikey at 2:03.

Video on Goldberg's appearance last night (with the slip edited out of course).

It's time for MizTV with special guest Daniel Bryan. Daniel gets straight to the point and announces the Survivor Series team: Randy Orton, Bray Wyatt, Baron Corbin, Dean Ambrose and AJ Styles. Miz isn't pleased and asks if he was even considered. Bryan says no, but eventually changes gears and says Miz was considered until Daniel realized Miz didn't want to fight.

If he did, he would have taken up Dolph Ziggler's challenge for an Intercontinental Title shot. Miz rants against Bryan for not wanting to fight. That's enough for Daniel who turns the set over and says Miz should stick to talking while Ziggler has an open challenge for the title right now.

Intercontinental Title: Dolph Ziggler vs. ???

It's Curt Hawkins answering the challenge and he gets the city wrong on the way to the ring. Bell, superkick, Ziggler retains in seven seconds.

Ziggler issues an open challenge for any wrestler on Raw to come get a title shot, presumably for Survivor Series. Miz freaks out.

The new interviewer asks Ambrose if he's confident now that James Ellis is banned from ringside. Dean corrects her but has to talk to Ellsworth. James begs to be at ringside but Dean says no way because he's done enough already.

Bray says someone like Orton is welcome in the Wyatt Family. Harper doesn't look pleased as Orton says he's done trying to fight the devil whispering in his ear. Orton's eyes light up in a bad looking effect.

Survivor Series Qualifying Match: Usos vs. Headbangers

Jimmy punches Thrasher in the face before the bell and of course the

referee is fine with this. A Samoan drop gets two early on and we hit the choke. It's off to Mosh vs. Jey with a Downward Spiral planting Jey for two. Not that it matters as Jimmy rolls Mosh up and grabs the skirt for the pin at 1:25.

AJ isn't worried.

Dean has Ellsworth leave the arena.

AJ Styles vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title. If Dean wins, he's #1 contender for a match at some point in the future. Dean knocks him outside at the bell and sends AJ face first into the announcers' table. Back in and a small package gets two on AJ and it's off to a Texas Cloverleaf. A butterfly superplex gets two on AJ but he grabs the Calf Crusher to change momentum in a hurry.

That goes nowhere either so Dean takes him outside again for a crotching on the barricade. Back in and Dean misses a Blockbuster of all things, resulting in a bad knee. We come back from a break with Dean breaking up a springboard to knock AJ outside. The top rope elbow to the floor has Styles in more trouble but he suplexes Dean into the corner to get a breather. Both guys are down so here's Ellsworth at ringside.

The distraction lets AJ get in a Pele for two as Otunga wants James to take his chin and go home. Cue security to go chase Ellsworth through the crowd as the inverted DDT is countered into Dirty Deeds which is countered into the Calf Crusher. The rope is grabbed but here's Ellsworth AGAIN so AJ finally runs him over. The Phenomenal Forearm is countered into Dirty Deeds and Dean gets the pin and the title shot at 13:57.

Rating: B. Ellsworth aside, this was a fun match which set up the right ending while also giving us some amusing JBL ranting about Ellsworth being annoying. It wasn't the cleanest finish in the world either and none of this matters if AJ retains the title. Dean getting the belt back wouldn't be the worst thing in the world either and we probably get a big TV main event out of it sometime soon. Good match too.

Ellsworth is dragged away with a very satisfied look on his face. Dean

hugs him before leaving.

Overall Rating: B-. This is a harder one to grade as there's only the main event to talk about. That being said, they covered a lot of stuff and added a lot of names to Survivor Series, which is something they have to do with only a few weeks to go. I'm more interested in where things are going now and we have a new title match coming up in the near future. Good show here as they continue to get things done when they need to.

Results

Randy Orton b. Kane – RKO

Alexa Bliss/Carmella b. Becky Lynch/Nikki Bella – DDT to Lynch

American Alpha b. Spirit Squad – Grand Amplitude to Mikey

Dolph Ziggler b. Curt Hawkins – Superkick

Usos b. Headbangers – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Dean Ambrose b. AJ Styles – Dirty Deeds

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Smackdown – October 25, 2016: Just Like Rip and Randy

Smackdown

Date: October 25, 2016

Location: Resch Center, Green Bay, Wisconsin

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

It's another big week as we have a pay per view rematch from Backlash with AJ Styles facing Dean Ambrose in a non-title match. If Ambrose wins, he gets a title shot at some point in the future. There's a good chance James Ellsworth will get involved to possibly wrap up his story. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's AJ Styles vs. James Ellsworth title match with Ellsworth winning via DQ. After the match, Daniel Bryan made Styles vs. Dean Ambrose for this week.

Ambrose is in the back talking about his match with Styles. Ellsworth comes up and offers to help but Dean thinks it's better for him to stay in the back.

Kane vs. Bray Wyatt

No DQ. They trade big uppercuts and clotheslines to start until Kane takes it outside and whips Bray into the steps. The chokeslam through the announcers' table is loaded up but Luke Harper appears and gives Kane the discus lariat. Back from a break with Kane fighting out of a chinlock (I thought these guys were different.) and stopping a charge with a big boot. Harper saves his boss from the chokeslam and Bray's release Rock Bottom gets two. Harper gets involved again so here's Randy Orton.....to RKO Kane and freak the heck out of Wyatt. Bray covers Kane for the pin at 10:37.

Rating: C-. This was much more of an angle than a match but again, the difference from Raw is this is interesting. I'm curious to see where this is going while most of the stuff on Monday comes and goes with little

interest. My guess is Orton trying to get into Wyatt's head instead of a heel turn, which works for me as I've always liked Orton vs. Kane matches.

Styles is ready to take care of Dean and warns Ellsworth to stay away. AJ also says Ellsworth looks like an action figure that melted in a microwave. That's about as accurate as you're going to get with him.

Becky Lynch makes her return from injury but is immediately cut off by Alexa Bliss. She accuses Becky of leaving out of fear of losing her precious title. The Cinderella story is ending soon and Bliss will get the title that she deserves. The fight is on but Bliss lays her out and grabs a conveniently placed can of spray paint. A yellow streak goes up the champ's back and Bliss smirks as she leaves.

Survivor Series Qualifying Match: Ascension vs. Hype Bros

The winners are on the Survivor Series team along with Heath Slater and Rhyno, who were granted an automatic spot. Mojo, a former Green Bay Packer, is VERY popular here as he starts with Viktor. Ryder is quickly in for a dropkick to knock Konnor off the apron, only to have Ascension take over with some double teaming. Too much trash talking allows Ryder to get in a jawbreaker but a spinebuster stops a hot tag. A middle rope elbow misses though and the hot tag brings in Rawley for his corner splashes. Viktor misses a charge and the Hype Ryder sends the Bros to Survivor Series at 3:50.

Rating: C. Well were you really expecting anything else? Ascension might have won one tag match in a year (on Superstars in February over Fandango and Damien Sandow) so it's kind of hard to buy that they're going to win here, or anywhere for that matter. The Hype Bros are already more successful than I was expecting and that's cool to see.

Orton says if you can't beat them, join them.

Bryan is talking about the need for strong team captains when Natalya comes in. She's been thinking about the Raw women's team and thinks she should be captain. Daniel isn't sure but makes Natalya's match against Nikki Bella for the captain's spot. However, the loser is off the team

entirely.

Survivor Series Qualifying Match: Nikki Bella vs. Natalya

Nikki actually tries an Oklahoma roll to start but makes the mistake of going outside, allowing Nattie By Nature to get two. An abdominal stretch and some stomps to the ribs set up the Sharpshooter but Nikki dives over to the ropes. Natalya misses a legdrop and something like the Beautiful Disaster gets two. The surfboard goes on but Nikki powers out and grabs an STF (prepare to hear about her being a great submission wrestler) for the tap out at 6:07.

Rating: D+. I wasn't feeling this one but there's really no way around Nikki being the captain. Natalya is just there while Bella has been one of the top stars in the division for a long time now. The STF is a nice change of pace for Nikki and she even added a little twist by hooking the foot and chin at the same time.

Carmella attacks Nikki after the match and gives her a Bella Buster.

Ambrose is ready to win because karma is a bad thing.

Here are Miz, Maryse and the Spirit Squad to talk about the Intercontinental Title. Miz feels sorry for the legends that fought to make the Intercontinental Title so important. As Miz talks about Pat Patterson, here comes Dolph Ziggler to say he wants to fight. The Squad is ready so Heath Slater and Rhyno come out to even the odds. Maryse gets in the way and insults are exchanged. Miz suggests that the Spirit Squad get a Tag Team Title shot but thinks Heath is too scared. Rhyno accepts for the team and we're got a title match.

Tag Team Titles: Spirit Squad vs. Heath Slater/Rhyno

Miz and Ziggler are on commentary. Slater and Rhyno are defending and this is joined in progress with Slater caught in a chinlock. The comeback is cut off and we hit another chinlock to keep the champs in trouble. Slater fights up and dives over for the tag as everything breaks down. The commentators get in the expected argument and it's Mikey being knocked off the apron onto Miz. A Gore to Kenny retains the titles at

4:03.

Rating: C-. This was fine and a basic tag match with Slater and Rhyno beating yet another team. I don't think anyone really considers them to be great champions but they could have been a joke and are turning into perfectly acceptable champions. Also, by having them win matches like this one, it's going to mean more when they lose the belts. It's putting in effort early for a later payoff, which is a lost art in wrestling.

Hell in a Cell preview.

Ambrose is on the way to the ring when he runs into Ellsworth. Dean: "Didn't I tell you to stay in the back and sulk?" James begs to be in Dean's corner and Ambrose eventually relents, much to the audience's delight.

AJ Styles vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title with Ellsworth in the corner and a win makes Dean #1 contender. Ambrose starts fast and stomps away in the corner but AJ comes right back with some shots of his own. With a look towards Ellsworth, AJ scores with the slingshot dive to take us to a break. Back with Dean hitting the suicide dive and grabbing a Fujiwara armbar of all things. AJ rolls out but gets caught in a Texas cloverleaf, sending him crawling over to the ropes. Back up and they fight over a suplex off the apron, only to have AJ suplex him out to the floor for a crash.

We come back from another break with Dean fighting up and hitting the top rope standing elbow drop. AJ's strike rush is countered into a swinging neckbreaker but he scores with the springboard into the reverse DDT. The Styles Clash is countered into a rollup for two and the rebound lariat drops both guys. AJ comes right back with the Calf Crusher but Dean grabs the champ's head and slams it into the mat for a break.

The hold goes on again but the power of Ellsworth makes Dean crawl to the ropes, just like Randy saved Rip in No Holds Barred. That's enough for AJ who takes James out with a baseball slide. The Pele looks to set up the Styles Clash but Dean backdrops AJ to the floor. Ellsworth superkicks Styles.....and that's a DQ at 19:57 with Dean nearly losing his mind.

Rating: B. Good match here and the ending makes sense. I'm not sure where this leads and you have to imagine that Ambrose will get a title shot somehow down the road anyway. Above all else, Ambrose can only blame himself as he invited Ellsworth to come out to ringside. It's also a good way to protect both guys, which you also don't see enough.

Overall Rating: B-. This felt like another NXT show with Smackdown banners. The wrestling wasn't great at times but they advanced almost every story and treated them all like big deals. I'm curious to see where Orton and the Wyatts go, as well as finding out what's next for AJ and Dean. I don't get those feelings on Raw and that's a big reason why Smackdown is better.

Results

Bray Wyatt b. Kane – Pin after an RKO from Randy Orton

Hype Bros b. Ascension – Hype Ryder to Viktor

Nikki Bella b. Natalya – STF

Heath Slater/Rhyno b. Spirit Squad – Gore to Kenny

AJ Styles b. Dean Ambrose via DQ when James Ellsworth interfered

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Smackdown – October 18, 2016: The Chin Who Got The Win(s)

Smackdown

Date: October 18, 2016

Location: Pepsi Center, Denver, Colorado

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga, Mauro Ranallo

This is an interesting time for Smackdown as they don't really have anything to do for the next month until Survivor Series. That means some upgraded TV shows, including tonight as James Ellsworth (The Chin Who Got The Pin) challenges AJ Styles for the Smackdown World Title. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's Ellsworth vs. Styles match to set up the title rematch.

Dean Ambrose gives Ellsworth a pep talk and his own shirt, which you can really buy at WWEshop.com.

Here's Randy Orton to open things up. Orton praises Bray Wyatt for being far more evil than Randy expected. Escaping Wyatt is like trying to get out of quicksand: the more you pull, the tighter it becomes. Bray appears on screen from inside a coffin and says he's having so much fun messing with Orton. By the way, he's here.

Randy Orton vs. Luke Harper

Harper shoves him outside to start but his suicide dive is broken up with a forearm. Back in and Luke goes up, earning himself a superplex back down. There go the lights though and we've got Bray being brought to the ring in his coffin, carried by druids in sheep masks. We come back from a break with Orton on the floor and Bray walking around near the casket. A Michinoku Driver gets two for Harper but he can't put Orton in the

casket. Instead, Orton comes back with his clothesline and powerslam but Wyatt comes in for the DQ at 7:48. Too much was spent on Bray's entrance and the commercial to rate, though it was just angle advancement.

The Wyatts load up the casket but Kane is inside. Orton and Kane clean house but the lights go out again and the Wyatts disappear. Now this is the kind of thing I can go with: the Wyatts using their supernatural powers to mess with people and stay a step or two ahead of their opponents. We don't see that enough.

AJ Styles is worried because Dean Ambrose is lurking around tonight. This could wind up being just like in WCW when David Arquette became WCW World Champion. If Ambrose tries something, AJ will find him anywhere he goes.

Naomi vs. Alexa Bliss

Alexa has Nightmare on Elm Street style attire. Naomi starts fast with right hands and those dancing kicks. Back up and Bliss eats a springboard clothesline, followed by a legdrop for two. Bliss gets sent into the buckle and heads outside as we go to a break. Back with Naomi scoring off a backbreaker and jawbreaker, only to be sent hard into the corner again. A quick Twisted Bliss gives Alexa the pin at 10:49.

Rating: D+. So what in the world was the point in having Naomi go over at the pay per view? Like really, what did that accomplish? Alexa just comes right back and wins on Smackdown like the No Mercy match never happened. This is the kind of thing that you never see on Smackdown and feels like it belongs on Raw.

Bliss says Becky's fairy tale ends in three weeks when she becomes the champion, just like the fairest of them all.

We look back at Miz beating down Dolph Ziggler last week until Heath Slater and Rhyno made the save.

Curt Hawkins vs. Apollo Crews

Hawkins' theme music is him reciting his Curt Facts. After he wins tonight, Apollo is going to have to change his last name to LOSE. Apollo hits him in the face and that's enough for Curt, who walks out before the

bell. No match.

Here's Carmella for a talk about Nikki Bella. Two months ago she was basking in the glow of her first pay per view match but heard Nikki Bella's music. Before she can get much further though, here's a ticked off Nikki. Carmella says she's stealing the spotlight again but that's not surprising since Nikki's boyfriend is John Cena. Nikki doesn't think that's much of a surprise since the relationship is featured on two TV shows and all over the internet. She's right actually.

Carmella shows us clips from Total Divas and Total Bellas with Nikki being some....well being a big bunch of stuff ranging from annoying to needy to talkative to nothing out of the ordinary. The graphic says Total Need-Freak but Nikki says she wears the pants in her relationship and fights her own battles. It's all about being fearless and all the fans know she's not afraid of anything, including a Boss, a Queen or a Princess from Staten Island. Carmella: "Did John help you come up with that?" She accuses Nikki of using her looks and relationship to become famous but leaves before Nikki can do anything.

Ellsworth can't believe this is happening and starts crying over the idea of telling his grandkids about this.

Miz/Spirit Squad vs. Dolph Ziggler/Heath Slater/Rhyno

Rhyno clotheslines Mikey down to start as Otunga talks about the Spirit Squad coaching high school cheerleading. Slater and Ziggler take turns on Mikey as Miz looks on. Mikey finally gets in a few shots on Dolph and brings him into the corner for the tag off to Miz. The threat of a superkick sends Miz outside though and we take a break.

Back with Miz in control of Ziggler and handing it back to Kenny for two off a legdrop. The fans want Slater but have to settle for Dolph suplexing Mikey. Miz comes in and knocks Rhyno off the apron, only to walk into the superkick from Dolph. The big diving tag brings in Slater as everything breaks down. Rhyno Gores Mikey and Slater rolls Kenny up for two. A right hand from Miz gives Kenny the pin on Slater at 9:25.

Rating: C. This was fine and I guess sets up the Spirit Squad as the next

challengers for the Tag Team Titles. It's not exactly the Usos or American Alpha but when you have all of five teams (since Breezango has disappeared), adding in another is hardly the worst thing you can do. At least Ziggler didn't get pinned.

Natalya comes in to see Daniel Bryan and offers her services on the Survivor Series women's team. Bryan isn't sure, even though there are only five women active at the moment. Natalya: "Are you following my cat on Instagram?"

Jack Swagger vs. Baron Corbin

Corbin says this is for everyone who says WE THE PEOPLE. A shoulder block knocks Swagger off the apron and into the barricade so Corbin can drive in a bunch of forearms to the back of the head. End of Days wraps Swagger up at 1:40.

Natalya is still showing Bryan her cats when Ambrose comes in wearing a referee shirt. Bryan says thanks but no thanks. If Dean wants to, he can be timekeeper, ring announcers or whatever. Dean: "I'll do that."

Smackdown World Title: AJ Styles vs. James Ellsworth

AJ is defending and Ambrose is at ringside to do a variety of jobs. Ambrose handles ring announcing and introduces Ellsworth as weighing about 160 or 170 and as Rocky II, III and IV rolled into one. After ringing the bell about 50 times, Ambrose grabs the mic and says to stop the match because we have to take a break. Back with AJ hammering away in the corner as JBL loses his mind about Ellsworth being in a title match.

AJ starts taking his time but Dean says someone has left the lights on in their Corolla. With some frustration setting in, AJ throws James outside but Dean throws him back in. This is repeated about five times and the distraction lets Ellsworth get in a superkick. JBL: "DON'T DO IT! DON'T DO IT!" Otunga: "He hit him with No Chin Music!" The fans start getting behind Ellsworth....until he charges into a spinebuster. AJ hammers away in the corner....and that's a DQ at 13:15. Dean: "The loser of this match: AJ Styles!"

Rating: C. Obviously the wrestling wasn't the point here but I liked the idea. Would you rather have them advance Dean vs. AJ with the same stuff they've run into the ground for years now or with something fresh for a change? The last two weeks have been fun for a change and that's exactly the point. It's advancing the story in a different way, which is far better than seeing AJ and Dean with tag partners for a one off match.

Dean gives AJ Dirty Deeds and announces Ellsworth as the man who has more victories over Styles than John Cena. Ellsworth can't stand up to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. The storytelling around here continues to feel fresh as we're getting a lot of the same stuff presented in different ways. I don't feel bored throughout this show and there's nothing as stupid as Titus Brand Rolexes. This actually works as a wrestling show and they're building to some good stuff coming up. Good little show here with a fun main event and that's all you need.

Results

Randy Orton b. Luke Harper via DQ when Bray Wyatt interfered

Alexa Bliss b. Naomi – Twisted Bliss

Miz/Spirit Squad b. Dolph Ziggler/Heath Slater/Rhyno – Rollup to Slater

Baron Corbin b. Jack Swagger – End of Days

James Ellsworth b. AJ Styles via DQ when Styles wouldn't stop attacking in the corner

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Smackdown – October 11, 2016: How To Lose A Seven Foot Superstar

Smackdown

Date: October 11, 2016

Location: SAP Center, San Jose, California

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

It's the show after No Mercy and that means it's time to start getting ready for Survivor Series. There isn't another Smackdown only pay per view until later in the year so we'll get to see some stuff with both brands interacting. Other than that we'll need a new #1 contender for AJ Styles. Let's get to it.

We open with a pay per view recap, focusing as the Smackdown World and Intercontinental Title matches.

Here's Dolph Ziggler to get things going. The fans tell Ziggler that he did it and Ziggler says WE DID IT. Ziggler didn't know how things were going to go until Sunday and check your cable guide if you don't believe him. (My cable guide for this show says "and a look at Dolph Ziggler's exit from WWE." Well done if that was a fake out.) He didn't know if Sunday was going to be his last time but he pulled it off one more time.

Cue Miz and Maryse with Miz going on a rant about how this is just the second act of the story. This is the Empire Strikes Back before he beats Ziggler once and for all. Miz gets in a great line about how people like him get the girl and the gold and he's already got the girl. Ziggler shows us a clip of Miz crying on Sunday but Miz says he isn't done with

Ziggler...and neither are there. Cue the Spirit Squad and it's time for a handicap match.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Spirit Squad

Non-title with Ziggler clearing the ring in about thirty seconds before we go to a quick break. For a bonus, we can actually see what's going on during the breaks via a split screen. Back with the Squad in control and Kenny putting on a chinlock. Mikey gets caught in a sleeper before a double DDT plants both cheerleaders. A superkick knocks Kenny silly (Mauro: "OH MY GOD! HE KILLED KENNY!") for the pin at 6:43.

Rating: D. So Ziggler has the big moment on Sunday and tonight he's fighting two over the hill male cheerleaders. Ziggler seemingly can't help but get away from the low level comedy which so often drags his character down. It's bad enough that his name is Dolph Ziggler but he has to fight goons like these two? Hopefully this is a one off moment because it's already taken away a bit of the momentum.

Post match Miz goes after Ziggler but Heath Slater and Rhyno of all people make the save.

We see a WW2K17 version of Miz vs. Ziggler from Sunday. Ignore Ziggler's tights being the wrong colors.

Shane McMahon and Daniel Bryan have a special announcement for Survivor Series: a five on five Raw vs. Smackdown Survivor Series match, a five on five Raw vs. Smackdown tag team Survivor Series match and a five on five Raw vs. Smackdown women's Survivor Series match. I'd much rather them beef up a big pay per view than make it into its own show again.

Naomi vs. Carmella

Carmella jumps her before the bell and we take a break. We come back joined in progress with Carmella holding Naomi in a chinlock and talking trash as Alexa Bliss is shown watching backstage. Naomi's dancing kicks have Carmella reeling but she pulls Naomi off the middle rope to take over. Cue Nikki Bella (who Carmella attacked earlier today) for a distraction though and Naomi rolls Carmella up for the pin at 2:57 shown.

That's becoming way too common of a finish again.

Alexa says she can beat Naomi any day of the week and twice on Sunday. Bryan comes in and says she can prove that next Tuesday.

Jimmy Uso vs. Chad Gable

Gable takes him to the mat and works on an armbar but gets superkicked in the ribs. The Samoan drop keeps Jimmy in his comfort zone and we hit a chinlock. Gable pops right back up and hits a spinning top rope clothesline to show off a bit. A cross armbreaker over the ropes has Jimmy in trouble but Jimmy grabs a rollup with Jey holding him in place for the pin at 2:50.

The Hype Bros talk about picking up women and Ghostbusters when the Ascension interrupt. Evil staring ensues and a tag match is probably set up for later.

Here's AJ Styles to brag about his win on Sunday. He beat Dean Ambrose and John Cena in a single match and that's simply phenomenal. The fans are a bunch of losers for wanting to cheer Cena when he's off trying to be Kelly Ripa's co-host or for cheering someone as weird as Ambrose. Most champions would take a year off after a win like he had at No Mercy but AJ isn't even taking a night off. Instead he's giving someone a chance tonight so bring out his opponent. Cue Ambrose but that's not who AJ meant. Ambrose accuses Dean of ducking him but AJ has a newcomer in mind.

AJ Styles vs. James Ellsworth

It's chin guy! Non-title of course. Dean kind of wants to see this because Ellsworth 3:16 says if you've got two hands, you've got a fighting chance. AJ wants Dean gone but here's Bryan to say hang on a second. The match will take place and Ambrose will be the guest referee. Dean steals the referee's shirt and makes AJ hold everything in his pockets, including a flask and Tic-Tacs.

The bell rings and we get a weapons check before going to a break. Back with barely any contact having taken place, which makes me wonder why bothered ringing the bell before the break. Dean won't let him use a

closed fish but AJ argues that everyone uses it in WWE. James throws a right hand and AJ is so incensed that he chases James around the ring. Back in and Dean trips AJ so Ellsworth can get a rollup for two.

The Calf Crusher makes Ellsworth tap but Dean stops to take a phone call. JBL: "HE CAN'T HEAR THAT BEHIND HIM???" JBL annoys me as much as anyone but he's hilarious when he snaps like that. Ellsworth is thrown outside but Dean throws him back in, only to stop to flirt with a good looking woman. Back in and the Styles Clash gives AJ two as Dean stops to stare at him before three. Dirty Deeds lays AJ out and Ellsworth gets a very close two. Dean heads outside to steal a soda before giving AJ another Dirty Deeds. A fast count gives Ellsworth the pin at 10:34.

Rating: B. This was a lot of fun and I had a blast with it. They were trying for goofy here and went with something over the top instead of the same tropes they always use in these things. It's also nice to see a heel get this treatment instead of a face for once. That being said, they might have been better served to do this on a different night than right after AJ wins such a huge match.

Randy Orton asks Kane if he wants to go on the ride through his nightmares. Kane agrees, but says Orton has issues.

Royal Rumble By the Numbers video.

AJ yells at the bosses so he'll take issues into his own hands. Daniel says he has an idea for Ellsworth for next week.

Wyatt Family vs. Kane/Randy Orton

Before the match, the Wyatts say the world being crazy has brought them back together. Tonight Randy and his monster can join them in the abyss. Bray hammers on Kane to start so Kane throws him into the corner for right hands of his own. A big boot looks to set up the chokeslam but Bray bails to the floor and we take a break.

Back with Orton superplexing Harper and making the tag to Kane. That goes bad for the masked one though as he gets double teamed in the corner with the Wyatts starting in on his ankle. Kane easily fights them off and

brings Orton back in to clean house. The elevated DDT plants Wyatt but Orton gets distracted by the big guys fighting outside.

The referee yells at Kane, allowing Harper to superkick Orton down. Wyatt misses the backplash though...and there go the lights again. They come back on to have Harper in Kane's place on the apron, allowing Wyatt to hit Sister Abigail for the pin on Orton at 10:49. Kane is nowhere to be seen. JBL: "You don't just lose a 7ft tall superstar!"

Rating: C+. The ending was fine for Wyatt Family standards and I'm glad Bray pinned Orton again. If nothing else it means that we're not likely to be seeing Orton getting the World Title shot for the time being so at least it's not time to get annoyed. It's not the best ending in the world but it came after two hours instead of three so I can live with it a bit better.

Overall Rating: C. Totally watchable show with a good set of matches announced for Survivor Series and a really fun AJ match. The wrestling wasn't the point here as they were much more about bringing things down from No Mercy and making it clear that we're coming up on a bunch of rematches. I actually liked No Mercy so that's not the worst thing in the world.

Also, I really can't emphasize enough how much the missing hour helps this show. You can have stuff like a vanishing Kane, Ziggler fighting cheerleaders and a screwy referee but no matter what happens there's never more than two hours left, as is so often the case on Raw. It's an easy show to sit through and they do entertaining stuff to boot. Good stuff here, as usual.

Results

Dolph Ziggler b. Spirit Squad – Superkick to Kenny

Naomi b. Carmella – Rollup

Jimmy Uso b. Chad Gable – Rollup with assistance from Jey Uso

James Ellsworth b. AJ Styles – Pin after Dirty Deeds from Dean Ambrose

Wyatt Family b. Randy Orton/Kane – Sister Abigail to Orton

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No Mercy 2016: The Same Old Surprises

No Mercy 2016

Date: October 9, 2016

Location: Golden 1 Center, Sacramento, California

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

It's the second Smackdown exclusive show and things have already been shaken up a bit. As announced by WWE.com, the Smackdown World Title match will open the show, presumably to avoid direct competition with the second US Presidential Debate. Why someone couldn't watch both at once isn't clear. Let's get to it.

On the pre-show, Curt Hawkins comes out, says hello to San Francisco, and then leaves because he only said he was stepping in the ring. Ok that's funny. His first match is Tuesday.

Pre-Show: American Alpha/Hype Bros vs. Ascension/Vaudevillains

Bonus match and PLEASE let this be the only pre-show match. Gable and English get things going and it's already time for an NXT chant. Both Vaudevillains are thrown into the corner and English takes a double hiptoss. Viktor and Ryder come in and guess which one the fans like best. It's off to Mojo for some dancing and again, WHY DOES JBL LIKE HIM SO MUCH??? Ryder tags himself in and everything breaks down so a quadruple clothesline can put the bad guys on the floor.

Back from a break with Ryder in trouble with English grabbing a chinlock. They head outside with Konor being sent into the barricade and then missing a charge into the post, allowing the hot tag to Jordan. Everything breaks down again and the Grand Amplitude ends English at 9:13.

Rating: C. Nothing we haven't seen a bunch of times before but it's a good choice for a pre-show match. Just let the guys go nuts with Alpha doing their stuff to hype up the crowd as a glorified dark match should. Above that though: they kept it relatively short and didn't try to do anything more than they needed to. It's better than Corbin vs. Swagger at least.

The opening video features a voice asking for mercy for the sins about to take place.

Smackdown World Title: Dean Ambrose vs. John Cena vs. AJ Styles

AJ is defending and the fans do not like Cena in northern California. For a change of pace, we get a recap video after all three guys have their entrances. Short version: AJ has beaten them both and we're having a triple threat because TRIPLE THREATS RULE! It's a big jawing session to start before all three fail at their finishers in the first minute. Ambrose takes over with some of his brawling and takes AJ outside for a few rams into the announcers' table.

Cena follows them out but walks into a slingshot Phenomenal Forearm (that looked great). Back in and Cena German suplexes both of them at the same time (Mauro: "MAMA MIA!") but AJ flips out of the AA and Pele's Cena down. AJ moonsaults into the reverse DDT on Ambrose and grabs a regular version on Cena for a bonus. Ambrose is tossed outside and hits the

steps, leaving Cena to grab a Code Red for two on the champ.

In something you don't often see in a triple threat, AJ and Cena trade sleepers but Ambrose comes in and grabs one of his own. That goes nowhere so Cena initiates his finishing sequence on Ambrose until Styles makes the save with another German suplex. The finishers don't work again so Ambrose and Styles suplex each other, leaving Cena to come in and pick up the pieces.

A Ten Knuckle Shuffle doesn't appear to do much damage because it's just a fist drop so Cena goes with an AA and STF on Ambrose. Styles makes the save and gets two on Ambrose with the springboard 450. The Styles Clash takes Ambrose out but Cena grabs the STF on the champ. Ambrose saves that so Cena picks them both up for the AA at the same time. I know it's been done before and it's been done with bigger people but THAT IS NOT NORMAL!

Neither guy gets flipped though as AJ escapes and Dean clotheslines Cena down. The Calf Crusher has Cena in trouble but Ambrose makes the save. Dean puts AJ in the Calf Crusher while Cena gets an STF, making AJ tap at 19:27. That doesn't count though because it's a double submission so the match continues. Dean gets two off Dirty Deeds with AJ pulling the referee out. Cena comes right back with the super AA but Styles blasts Cena with a chair to retain at 21:39.

Rating: B+. The match was great but can someone explain the false finish to me? Somehow Ambrose is the only one here who didn't lose but AJ is the one leaving with the title. AJ winning is the only logical winner here as Ambrose had his one title reign and is much more interesting chasing the belt anyway. Cena can win the big one at Wrestlemania and that's all that matters in the long run.

We recap Bray Wyatt vs. Randy Orton. Wyatt targeted Orton for whatever reason (like he has logical reasons) and they were scheduled to fight last month but Orton's injuries prevented it from happening. Their big showdown is tonight and there's a possibility that Sister Abigail is lurking.

Carmella vs. Nikki Bella

Standard “you’re famous but I’m better than you” feud. Carmella goes right after her to start but gets thrown outside. Nikki follows her out and is tossed into the LED board to mess her neck up all over again. Back in and we hit the chinlock on Nikki, followed by the moonwalk into the Bronco Buster for two. Carmella cranks on the neck even more before just pulling on the hair.

A quick Bella Buster and small package get two each on Carmella but she grabs the Code of Silence. Nikki isn’t about to sell a neck hold though and powers up, followed by the big forearm. Another Code of Silence sends Nikki to the ropes and the Rack Attack 2.0 (TKO, which isn’t a move out of a rack) is enough to pin Carmella at 8:05.

Rating: C-. Now come on. You knew Nikki wasn’t about to lose her first singles match when she can get out of a finishing move twice and prove that she’s the real fearless star in a match. Carmella will be back, though hopefully nowhere near Nikki in the future. The build to this was good but Nikki winning the way she did made my eyes roll.

Miz comes up to the bosses and says Daniel Bryan and Ziggler will have a lot in common after tonight. Miz: “Maryse, say adieu.” Maryse (looking insanely good here): “Adieu.”

Tag Team Titles: Heath Slater/Rhyno vs. Usos

Usos are challenging. Jimmy pops Slater in the face to start so the fans remind Jimmy that SLATER HAS KIDS. Jey comes in and lets us know that he has kids too. An early chinlock doesn’t last long and it’s off to Rhyno for a running shoulder to the ribs. The running Umaga attack puts Rhyno down for two as the fans aren’t exactly thrilled with this so far. Rhyno fights out of a chinlock but gets dragged into the Uso corner to keep him in trouble. The twins keep taking turns on Rhyno until Jimmy runs into an elbow in the corner.

That’s enough for a hot tag as Slater comes in to clean house but the fans still aren’t getting into it. Everything breaks down and the fans get behind the champs as Jimmy punches Slater in the face. Heath is right back up though and powerslams Jimmy off the top for two (cool little spot). It’s time to go after Heath’s leg but Rhyno breaks up the Tequila

Sunrise. Rhyno Gores Jey to retain at 10:17 in what I'd call a big surprise.

Rating: C. This got better by the end and the ending was a surprise but it didn't get off the ground for the most part. I'm not sure I get the booking here but maybe the Usos get the titles back in the next few weeks on TV. Not a bad match though the lackluster crowd reactions didn't help things here.

Bray Wyatt speaks in tongues before shifting to He's Got The Whole World In His Hands.

Quick recap of Baron Corbin vs. Jack Swagger. Corbin lost to Swagger via submission but claimed he was reaching for the ropes instead of tapping out, which the video seems to back up. It's nice to have a rematch over something that makes sense instead of just having one after someone wins clean.

Baron Corbin vs. Jack Swagger

Corbin goes right after him to start and sends Swagger outside to crush his hand between the steps and the post. Back in and Swagger starts wrenching at the bad hand before getting two off a hard clothesline. Swagger drops him close to onto the post but the hand keeps Jack from following up. Something like a belly to belly plants Corbin, who comes right back with a Deep Six for two more. One heck of a clothesline drops Corbin and it's off to the Patriot Lock. This time Corbin makes the rope and pokes Swagger in the eyes, setting up End of Days for the pin at 7:27.

Rating: D+. This show needs a charge soon as it's starting to lose a lot of steam. This wasn't the best match in the first place but at least the story made sense. Swagger coming over to Smackdown is fine as he's only there to be a jobber. Hopefully this leads to Corbin climbing the ranks as he has all the tools, save for the experience. Wins like this help, but Swagger doesn't have the most value in the world.

We recap Ziggler vs. Miz. Ziggler has lost two straight title shots and is on a major losing streak. He has to win one big match though and is

willing to put up his career for one more shot.

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Dolph Ziggler

Ziggler is challenging and has his career on the line. Dolph tries to take it to the mat to start but opts for a pair of dropkicks instead. Miz comes back with with a double underhook crank before doing Daniel Bryan's YES double knee stomp. The Reality Check gets two but Ziggler comes back with another dropkick. The Fameasser is countered into a slingshot sitout powerbomb and a rollup with a handful of tights gets two on Ziggler.

Miz changes gears by going after the knee with a dropkick to the back of the leg. That means the Figure Four goes on and it's time for the long screaming session from Ziggler. A rope is grabbed and Ziggler comes back with a Rough Ryder of all things for two. The drama is really starting to take hold here and it's working way better than I was expecting.

Ziggler is sent head first into an exposed buckle, setting up another slingshot sitout powerbomb for two. Miz is so furious that he gets caught in the Zig Zag for a VERY close near fall. The Skull Crushing Finale is countered into a rollup for two more so it's off to a sleeper on the champ. Miz gets the ropes and hits the Skull Crushing Finale, only to have Ziggler get his boot on the ropes.

Miz rips Ziggler's boot off and walks into a superkick but Ziggler's injured leg delays the cover. Cue the Spirit Squad for a distraction so Ziggler superkicks Mikey down. The Skull Crushing Finale gets one of the closest near falls I've seen in a long time and Miz is ticked. The referee finally ejects everyone from ringside and it's a superkick from Ziggler for the pin and the title at 19:33.

Rating: A-. It says a lot when I was begging for Ziggler to lose and was still getting into the near falls. They might have overdone it a bit with the Spirit Squad (Maryse could have done the same thing) but the drama was insane here because it felt like something was on the line. Miz's reign made the Intercontinental Title feel like the most important thing in the world at times and that means Ziggler winning the title is important. Now, I have no faith in him to keep things going this strong because Miz is that much better than Ziggler and we've been here WAY too

many times before, but very well done on the moment.

Randy Orton's reflection distorts in a mirror.

Pre-Show recap.

Alexa Bliss vs. Naomi

Naomi is replacing an injured Becky Lynch, who will defend against Bliss on November 8 from Glasgow, Scotland. Bliss goes after her to start but gets dropped into the corner for the split legged moonsault. Naomi kicks Bliss away but gets her arm cranked to put Alexa in control. Bliss: "I DON'T LIKE YOU!" A dropkick knocks Bliss away and the Rear View gets two. Alexa grabs a cross armbreaker but gets rolled up for the completely clean pin at 5:01.

Rating: D+. Regretting this immediately, can someone explain the thinking here? Unless they're setting up a triple threat (which is what they're probably doing), this is another really head scratching result because Bliss should be rolling over everyone to set up the title shot. Instead she gets pinned by a replacement to....I have no idea actually.

Hell in a Cell ad.

We recap Orton vs. Wyatt again, this time focusing on Wyatt tormenting Orton and playing mind games.

Randy Orton vs. Bray Wyatt

Bray laughs throughout Orton's entrance. An early lockup sends Bray outside for a bit before it's time to slug it out. The threat of Sister Abigail sends the fight outside again with Orton being thrown over the announcers' table. Bray sends him into the steps and does the Orton pose before taking him back in for the running backplash.

The slow beating continues with more clotheslines and a chinlock. Bray takes his sweet time going to the middle rope and misses the backplash, which would have missed by two feet even if Orton hadn't rolled away. Some forearms don't have much effect for Orton so he goes with clotheslines because that's how you make comebacks in WWE.

The snap powerslam gets two on Bray but the RKO is countered into Sister Abigail which is countered into a rollup for two more. Bray plants him with the release Rock Bottom and it's back to the floor, only to have Bray miss another backplash onto the steps. A belly to back suplex onto the barricade sets up Orton's elevated DDT....and there go the lights. Luke Harper shows up in the ring for a distraction and it's Sister Abigail for the pin on Orton at 15:37.

Rating: B. So in other words it's the old standard for Bray: the Family has to come in and help him out because Heaven forbid he does anything on his own. At least Bray won a pay per view singles match (first time since Battleground 2015) and it seems that we're waiting on the Orton vs. Styles title feud that seems to be inevitable. It's a good main event but this wasn't going to follow Miz vs. Ziggler.

Overall Rating: B. The three main matches all nailed it but the rest of the show was pretty dreadful. They still don't have enough to warrant three hour pay per view but at least the top of the card worked. Having the World Title match go on first was stupid and the Intercontinental Title match would have been a better main event, though at least the matches were good. This show really isn't memorable aside from Miz vs. Ziggler but at least it was entertaining and went off the air early enough. Good show but it's going to fall through the cracks.

Results

AJ Styles b. John Cena and Dean Ambrose – Chair shot to Cena

Nikki Bella b. Carmella – Rack Attack 2.0

Heath Slater/Rhyno b. Usos – Gore to Jey

Baron Corbin b. Jack Swagger – End of Days

Dolph Ziggler b. The Miz – Superkick

Naomi b. Alexa Bliss – Rollup

Bray Wyatt b. Randy Orton – Sister Abigail

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No Mercy 2016 Preview

We're already at the second Smackdown only pay per view and the card is already stronger than the "Backlash 2016" offering. If nothing else they already have more matches set up for this show, meaning we probably won't have to sit through a ten minute opening segment and no team is going to have to work twice. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Jack Swagger vs. Baron Corbin

We'll start with this rematch from earlier in the week on "Smackdown Live" where Swagger won via submission. However, it's not quite that simple as it sounds. In the first match, Corbin claimed to be reaching for the ropes instead of tapping out so there's a much more logical reason for a rematch. It's much better than having a rematch for the sake of having a rematch after one of the people wins completely clean.

I'm going with Corbin here as there's really no reason to have Swagger win. Swagger is on "Smackdown Live" to lose matches to upcoming names, as he's been stuck doing for years. Corbin is the kind of guy you could throw out there as a midcard title challenger at the drop of a hat so there's no reason to have him lose to someone like Swagger in a spot like

this. Odds are there will be a third match but hopefully this wraps up their mini feud.

Curt Hawkins vs. ???

This is the easiest call on the card as you don't bring in someone for the sake of having them lose. Hawkins has had some entertaining vignettes but I don't really see him doing much on the roster. There's nothing wrong with filling the show with warm bodies though and a quick run for Hawkins isn't the worst idea in the world. The opponent doesn't really matter here because he's going to lose to Hawkins in about five minutes.

Tag Team Titles: Heath Slater/Rhyno vs. Usos

Here we have another case where there isn't a ton of suspense. Slater and Rhyno were never meant to be a long term solution at the top of the division so we can get to the big Usos vs. American Alpha showdown for the belts. The thing to remember is that Slater has already gotten his contract and done his big story so they can switch the titles and everything will be fine.

In case it's not clear, I'm going with the Usos to win the belts. There's no logical reason to keep the belts on the makeshift team when Alpha is waiting in the wings after having beaten the Usos in such quick fashion in the tournament. Slater and Rhyno don't need to team together anymore after this as Rhyno can go off to be a politician while Slater can be a loveable goofball.

Nikki Bella vs. Carmella

It's the first of two women's matches as we have an actual grudge match for a change. In this case, Carmella has been tormenting Bella since she returned from injury, even calling her a Kardashian wannabe, which somehow didn't seem to offend Bella in the slightest. This has been an actually well set up feud with Bella making Carmella look way better than she has any right to.

That being said, I think I'm going to go with Bella here as she hasn't had a big win since her comeback. I'm not sure you can call beating

Carmella a big win but at least there's been a story to set this up. Carmella has already gotten a big boost from this feud and will be fine going forward. It would make more sense to have Carmella win here but I'll go with Bella, who just hasn't had enough publicity lately.

Women's Title: Becky Lynch vs. Alexa Bliss

We might as well cover the other women's match here as Lynch is having her first title defense after winning the title last month. Bliss still isn't great but the Harley Quinn look has done wonders for her and she's gotten even better than she was at the start. Lynch is on a roll too and looks like the star of the division.

I'll stick with the champion keeping the title here though as Bliss just isn't ready to be the face of the division. It's pretty clear we're getting ready for a Lynch vs. Bella showdown over the belt and there's just no reason to switch the belt in Lynch's first title defense. The match should be fine and they did a good job of setting things up on Tuesday so this should be entertaining, albeit a bit predictable.

Bray Wyatt vs. Randy Orton

That leaves us with the big matches and we'll start with the non-title entry. This was supposed to happen last month but Orton was still out due to injury, leaving us with an uninspired yet necessary Kane vs. Wyatt match. Orton is healthy now and that means we have an interesting match to look forward to.

As much as it pains me, I'll go with Orton here, partially due to a lack of anyone else to go after the World Title after this show. With rumors of John Cena and Dean Ambrose taking time off, odds are AJ Styles retains the title (excuse me for jumping ahead of myself) and needs an opponent. There really isn't anyone left other than Orton, meaning he has to win here. I'm sure Wyatt will be fine as he loses so often that he has to be used to it by now. Even with the potential debut of Sister Abigail, Wyatt loses here and that's a shame in many ways.

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Dolph Ziggler

It's more than a title defense for Miz as Ziggler is putting up his career. I'm not going to waste your time with any sort of pretense here: I'm a big Miz fan and I wouldn't mind if Ziggler got lost at sea and turned into the king of a small island where he oversold poi burgers and coconut shakes. I'd love for Miz to win here and go on to a big story away from Ziggler and his "IT JUST MEANS SO MUCH TO ME AND I NEED TO WIN ONE MORE TIME" schtick which he's been stuck with for months now.

That being said, I think they'll actually do it here and have Ziggler lose in a big surprise. There's nothing left for Ziggler to do in WWE and I really wouldn't mind to see him leave for good. Miz has been on fire in the last few months and doesn't deserve to lose to someone as stale as Ziggler. The story has been told well but Ziggler sucks the life out of me and I have no interest in seeing him do anything at all.

World Title: AJ Styles vs. Dean Ambrose vs. John Cena

Styles is defending and we've already covered the result earlier on. There's no logical reason to have Cena and/or Ambrose take the title from Styles here and if both of them are leaving for a bit, it would make even less sense. Styles has been the most consistent performer in WWE for a LONG time now and he deserves to keep the title for several months. There's not much more to this one as the ending is pretty clear and the best case scenario all around.

Overall "No Mercy 2016" is just there, though I have some optimism for the show. I'm not wild on the idea of having another pay per view this soon but at least the card looks solid. If nothing else they have eight matches this time around and "Smackdown Live" has shown the ability to set up an entertaining show. My guess is this will be a perfectly acceptable use of three hours (Repeat: THREE HOURS. Not three hours and another fifteen minutes. Three hours AT MOST.). The wrestling will be fine and they'll use the Smackdown style of setting up simple stories but paying them off well.

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Smackdown – October 4, 2016: Where It Gets Real In A Hurry

Smackdown

Date: October 4, 2016

Location: Valley View Casino Center, San Diego, California

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

It's the go home show for No Mercy because this is the new WWE where there's a go home show every two weeks. Tonight is going to focus on Dean Ambrose vs. John Cena vs. AJ Styles for Styles' Smackdown World Title in Sunday's triple threat. Other than that we're likely getting more in the Randy Orton vs. Bray Wyatt feud. Let's get to it.

The opening video promises Styles, Cena and Ambrose face to face to face tonight.

Bray Wyatt vs. Kane

They take turns hitting each other in the face to start until Bray gets Kane down for a chinlock. A side slam and running DDT have Bray in trouble but the chokeslam is countered into a Rock Bottom. Bray does the spider walk but an upside down Randy Orton appears on the screen. This

takes WAY longer than it should and the distraction lets Kane get up. Bray blocks a chokeslam but takes the countout loss at 4:15.

Rating: D. So let me get this straight: we're five days away from Wyatt's big match against Orton and Bray is taking a countout loss to Kane instead of, you know, squashing him like a bug? It's not a good sign when the best thing you can say about a match is Kane didn't win off the chokeslam.

Baron Corbin doesn't know why Jack Swagger was signed but if Jack wants to fight, Baron will drop him where he stands. Swagger comes up and a match is set up.

Post break, Bray is looking for Orton.

Alexa Bliss vs. Nikki Bella

Carmella is on commentary as Nikki gets two off a facebuster that didn't come close to making contact. Nikki takes it outside and throws Bliss into Carmella, drawing her into the ring for the DQ at 1:52.

Post match here's Becky Lynch for the save and we might as well keep the referee out here for the obvious tag match.

Becky Lynch/Nikki Bella vs. Carmella/Alexa Bliss

Joined in progress with Alexa hammering on Nikki before it's off to Carmella for some shots to the face of her own. Carmella misses a Bronco Buster though and the hot tag brings in Becky. Everything breaks down with Nikki spearing Carmella to the floor, leaving Alexa to hit Twisted Bliss for the pin on Becky at 3:14.

Rating: C. Basic, simple ideas to set up basic, simple matches. That's the kind of wrestling that's always going to work and you can tell they're putting WAY more thought into these things than the messes over on Raw. Becky getting pinned in a tag match is fine and gives Alexa credibility heading into Sunday. Nikki and Carmella's feud is advanced at the same time and everything is accomplished. When this stuff works, it works to near perfection.

Bray goes to look for Orton again and finds the rocking chair. Orton jumps him from behind and shuts a metal door, locking Bray in what looks like a small storage unit. Of course there's a camera inside with Bray freaking out over being locked inside.

Daniel Bryan brings out some breast cancer survivors for the Susan G. Komen presentation ala Enzo and Big Cass on Raw.

Vaudevillains vs. Hype Bros

There's still something weird about JBL being a Mojo Rawley fan. Mojo slams Gotch to start and it's Hammer Time! Cue Ascension, now with face paint, to the stage for a distraction but Ryder dropkicks English off the apron anyway. Ryder gets kneed in the back but Gotch's chinlock goes as far as a chinlock is going to take him. The hot tag brings in Mojo a few seconds later and a Hype Ryder ends English at 3:48.

Rating: C-. Not much to the match but just like the women's division and everything else around here: keep it simple but do it well. I know I harp on that a lot but Smackdown is so refreshing when you have so many wrestling shows all over the place that can't get the most basic storylines right.

The Ascension point at the Hype Bros.

It's time for MizTV with a special Dolphumentary. Ziggler comes out and the documentary is of course a career lowlight reel with stuff like Ziggler as Kerwin White's caddy and the Spirit Squad and various out of context statements from wrestlers. This Sunday, it's the feature film the Success of a Failure. Ziggler doesn't take kindly to this and says that he loves it when a Make-A-Wish kid says he's their hero but Ziggler gets to tell them that they're his hero. That's the kind of thing that makes Ziggler know he can't walk away.

Miz laughs this off and brings out two members of the Spirit Squad (Kenny and Mikey). We get a cheer with Miz saying Ziggler can join them at their \$5 autograph signing. Ziggler goes after Miz but gets jumped from behind. Dolph easily fights them off and Miz bails from the threat of a superkick. This feud is really, really growing on me despite it being

Dolph Ziggler. They're nailing every single thing about this and I want to see the match, albeit with Miz winning to finally get rid of Ziggler.

Bray is still in the storage unit and says he finally sees it.

Hispanic Heritage Month video on Roberto Clemente.

Jey Uso vs. Jason Jordan

Jey snaps Jordan's neck across the ropes to start and hammers away but a very quick rollup puts Uso away at 1:18.

The Usos send Gable into the steps and chop block Jordan for a bonus. Rhyno and Heath Slater come out to save Jordan's knee.

Bray is now singing but stops to say he missed Abigail. She's going to take him home.

Back from a break and Orton opens the door, only to find an empty chair. There wasn't a lock on the door so this isn't exactly supernatural.

Clip of John Cena on Talking Smack last week, talking about how the Draft is a fresh opportunity for him as well. Cena's big line: "Dean Ambrose doesn't like John Cena. John Cena doesn't care about Dean Ambrose."

Curt Hawkins vignette. He's debuting at No Mercy.

Jack Swagger vs. Baron Corbin

Corbin shoulder blocks him down to start and rains down right hands to the head, sending us to an early break. Back with Swagger favoring his knee and getting caught in a chinlock. Jack fights up and elbows Corbin in the face, followed by the Patriot Lock. Corbin dives for the ropes over and over, which the referee calls a tap out at 8:25. Replays show that Corbin was reaching for the ropes as his hand is up and it's his wrist hitting the mat when he can't reach the ropes.

Rating: C-. I'm not interested in the match but that's a clever way to keep the feud going as it was close enough that you could say it was a tap and call it a mistake. It's much better than having one guy win clean and then do a bunch of rematches just because. I don't really need to see

them fight again but it's nice to have a feud continue logically instead of having it forced.

Here's AJ for the big closing segment. He talks about how he'll prove himself to be the best in the world on Sunday but Ambrose comes out to cut him off. Dean is serious this week and says he had the title won last week until Cena had to get involved. Cue Cena but AJ cuts him off and begs Cena to shut up for once in his life. AJ is incensed at the thought of Cena comparing himself to Flair (here we go) and begs Cena to give one of his rah-rah speeches.

Cena is ready to do just that when Ambrose cuts him off again, saying Cena is a part timer who is dying to get out of here on a private jet and go be with his people in New York. Dean is the man who works harder around here and has wrestled more matches than anyone else in the company the last two years because he never takes days off. He'll be over here in the corner being Dean Ambrose while Cena gets to play John Cena on TV.

That's enough for Cena and the fight is on with Cena hitting an AA on Ambrose and throwing Styles outside. John holds up the title but AJ runs in and escapes an AA attempt. The Phenomenal Forearm drops Cena but Dean gives AJ Dirty Deeds onto the ramp and holds up the title to end the show. REALLY good stuff here with Dean standing up to Cena in a way no one has done since Rock. That's the kind of thing that makes him feel like a main event star, not wearing funny hats.

Overall Rating: B. The wrestling wasn't great here but that's not the point most of the time. The point here is a very well done structure as you move from story to start for most of the show with only Bray and Orton running throughout and never getting too much time at once. You can tell someone has actually put effort into setting this up and it makes the show fly by instead of making me wonder how we can only be an hour into it. No Mercy may not be the best show ever but it's been built up as well as it can be and that's what this show needed to do.

Results

Kane b. Bray Wyatt via countout

Nikki Bella b. Alexa Bliss via DQ when Carmella interfered

Alexa Bliss/Carmella b. Nikki Bella/Becky Lynch – Twisted Bliss to Lynch

Hype Bros b. Vaudevillains – Hype Ryder to English

Jason Jordan b. Jey Uso – Rollup

Jack Swagger b. Baron Corbin – Patriot Lock

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Smackdown – September 27, 2016: NXT Style(s)

Smackdown

Date: September 27, 2016

Location: Quicken Loans Arena, Cleveland, Ohio

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Mauro Ranallo, David Otunga

It's a big night for Smackdown as we have a rare World Title match on free TV with AJ Styles defending against Dean Ambrose. We're less than two weeks away from No Mercy and it should be interesting to see where

things go as we get ready for the triple threat and whatever else is announced before the show. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Randy Orton to open the show. He's heard about Bray Wyatt talking about fear but thinks it's because Bray is scared himself. Bray comes on screen to talk about Hansel and Gretel. Bray has left his own trail of breadcrumbs that will lead Randy through the prison of his own mind. He holds up an hourglass and sings He's Got The Whole World In His Hands. Orton leaves to go after Bray.

Dean Ambrose says he's ready to fight AJ Styles tonight.

Usos/Ascension vs. American Alpha/Heath Slater/Rhyno

Alpha works on Jimmy's arm to start before a double monkey flip sends this Usos flying. Jey tries to go after Gable but gets pulled down into an armbar over the ropes. Jimmy offers a distraction and Jey chop blocks Gable again to take us to a break. Back with Gable still in trouble and Konor getting two. Gable tries to break free for the tag but everything breaks down and everyone not named Slater is knocked off the apron.

The hot tag brings in Heath for a big reaction, followed by some knees and a leg lariat to the bad guys. A neckbreaker gets two on Jey with Konor diving in for the save. Jordan Cactus Clotheslines Viktor to the floor but the Usos make a blind tag, allowing Jimmy to kick Heath in the face. The jumping kick to the back of the knee sets up a Tequila Sunrise to make Heath tap at 10:00.

Rating: C. This was a fine way to set up the title match without having the champs lose in a regular tag match. I can't imagine anything other than the Usos taking the belts at No Mercy and that's all it should be. Slater and Rhyno have reached heights they have no right to be near so it's hard to call them anything other than a success. Another few weeks as champions would be fine but you have to take the belts off them and let us get to the Usos vs. Alpha for the real feud.

John Cena will be at ringside to scout the main event.

Miz has a Lebron James poster covered with one of his own.

Orton goes to what looks like the boiler room and sees an arrow left by Bray. For some reason he turns it around and goes the other way. When the camera pans back, the arrow has been turned around again and Erick Rowan is standing there in his mask.

Back from a break with Bray saying Orton might find out the meaning of the abyss tonight. The hourglass is almost out of sand.

Carmella/Natalya vs. Nikki Bella/Naomi

Naomi and Carmella get things going with the latter danging instead of fighting. That earns her a quick spank and now it's Naomi's turn to moon walk. It's off to Nikki, who scares Carmella to the floor for a breather. Back with Naomi in trouble on the floor and Natalya putting on a chinlock. Carmella gets in a Bronco Buster, followed by Natalya's basement dropkick (which missed) for two. It was enough of a miss that the tag brings in Nikki a few seconds later and it's time for the showdown with Carmella (which seems to happen every week). Natalya offers a distraction though and Carmella gets the rollup pin on Nikki at 10:05.

Rating: D+. This small division is working at the moment, mainly because they've split it up into two distinct stories. Unfortunately one of those is about how we're all supposed to love Nikki Bella, who still isn't all that interesting. Carmella is fine for a first victim for Nikki but hopefully it doesn't lead to yet another Nikki title reign.

Orton finds a message saying there's one way out. He opens a closet to find a cardboard cutout of himself with the eyes missing. Another message on another door asks Predator or Prey reveals....Rowan a few feet away but Orton doesn't open the door wide enough to see him. Good thing there was a camera waiting there right then.

Here are Miz and Maryse for his homecoming celebration. Maryse introduces a video package on Miz's career, including Real World clips, his time as a Tag Team and US Champion, his World Title win (still the only possible call) and capped off by the promo on Bryan from Talking Smack. Miz talks about the Cleveland Cavaliers winning the NBA Title and wonders why his

celebration isn't as big. Mr. and Mrs. Miz are in the front row, as are Dolph Ziggler's parents.

Cue Ziggler because of course it's still Ziggler to go after Miz. Ziggler doesn't like Miz talking about his parents and goes to leave almost immediately but Miz laughs at Ziggler for failing again. Dolph brings up Miz cheating, which Miz interprets as yet another excuse. Miz says Ziggler has nothing left to offer for another shot and leaves but Ziggler calls for Mike to come back. All Ziggler has left is his career so he'll put that on the line. Miz agrees and the match is made for No Mercy. Uh...yay. Like really, yay.

Bray says when one door closes, another opens but he's watching Randy wander around like a mouse in a maze.

Becky Lynch comes out for a match but Alexa Bliss attacks her from behind and takes off her belt.

Curt Hawkins says gravity has to obey his laws. He's making a big announcement next week.

Bray wants to know where Orton is. As in any horror movie, he's right behind Bray and beats the heck out of him. Wyatt runs off so Orton puts on the sheep mask for a little singing. I think the video breaks up as the voice starts distorting and it turns into Bray. It's not clear if that was intentional.

AJ Styles recaps his rise to the championship and says he'll still have the title after tonight.

Smackdown World Title: Dean Ambrose vs. AJ Styles

Ambrose is defending and Cena is on commentary. Dean chops away in the corner as JBL asks if Cena really is a part timer or still a full time performer. Cena says nothing as Ambrose takes AJ onto the announcers' table for some right hands to the head. Back from a break with Ambrose hitting a running clothesline to put both guys down. A backbreaker gets two on the champ and we hit a cloverleaf.

Styles gets to the ropes so Dean gets in a suicide dive because every

match needs a suicide dive. Back with AJ cranking on a Calf Crusher until Dean grabs his head to slam it onto the mat for the break. They slug it out until Dean gets two off a double chickenwing facebuster for two of his own.

AJ's torture rack powerbomb gets two more and a Pele puts Dean down again. He misses the springboard 450 though as Dean rolls away (it would have missed by a mile anyway) and they head outside where AJ hits Cena in the face. The distraction makes the referee miss a rollup, meaning Dean goes outside to hit Cena as well. The distraction lets AJ grab a rollup with tights for the pin to retain at 21:17.

Rating: B. Another good match here and they did a good job of setting up the triple threat. It's fairly certain that Cena isn't getting the title this soon and since there's almost no one around to face Dean, AJ retaining makes the most sense. That's not a bad thing though and the build has been strong, which is the best thing you can ask for in this sort of feud.

Cena AA's both guys to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. This was a very NXT style show and that's the best thing you can say about wrestling these days. The Orton vs. Wyatt stuff was an interesting idea to tie things together, though the ending wasn't all that great. Rowan wasn't a factor and Orton just finds Wyatt to beat him up? That's it? Other than that though this was all about setting up a big match to end the show and move us closer to the pay per view in a few weeks. Just a fun wrestling show here, as Smackdown often is.

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Smackdown – September 20, 2016: Crush My Crackers This Was Fantastic

Smackdown

Date: September 20, 2016

Location: Legacy Arena, Birmingham, Alabama

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga. Mauro Ranallo

It's a big night here on Smackdown as we have Miz defending the Intercontinental Title against Dolph Ziggler in a rematch from Backlash as well as a major showdown between Dean Ambrose and John Cena after Ambrose laid Cena out to end last week's show. We're only a few weeks away from No Mercy so things should start to pick up steam. Let's get to it.

We open with a preview of Ambrose vs. Cena later tonight.

Daniel Bryan is in the ring for a contract signing for the Women's Title match at No Mercy. Becky Lynch comes out first and agrees to keep this civil. Alexa Bliss comes out and suggests Becky use moisturizer. Becky says she's here for a fight instead of a pageant. They go back and forth about how Becky doesn't belong here but she worked as hard as she could at jobs she hated to get to this point. She wasn't born to be a champion but Alexa knows she was.

At No Mercy, Alexa is going to prove Becky is a one hit wonder. Bliss hits her with the contract and turns the table over. Alexa goes to leave but Becky chases her to the back. Really simple segment here but I liked it. Bliss has a very natural feel on the mic and that's going to do her a

lot of favors. Becky is playing her character perfectly too and while the match might not be great, the build is working and these two have chemistry talking.

Miz comes up to Bryan in the back to complain about his title defense tonight. That's fine with Bryan, who says we'll cancel the match and cancel Miz's contract as well. Miz backs down and leaves.

Usos vs. American Alpha

The winners get the title shot at No Mercy and Chad Gable's knee is mostly fine coming in. It's a brawl to start with Gable taking Jimmy down. Rhyno and Heath Slater are watching in the back and naturally Rhyno is enjoying some cheese and crackers. Alpha cleans house early on with their dropkicks but Gable is sent to the floor and comes up holding his knee.

Back from a break with the twins working over Gable's knee. Chad elbows his way out of the corner and the hot tag brings in Jordan for the suplexes and shoulders to the ribs in the corner. Jey breaks up the superplex though and the Superfly splash gets two with Chad making the save. They got me on that one. Another toss to the floor makes Gable's knee even worse and Jordan refuses to tag in his hurt friend. Chad tries to come in anyway and gets chop blocked, setting up a double superkick. Jey's Superfly splash puts Jason away at 11:34.

Rating: C+. The booking of American Alpha is really interesting as they came in so hot that there's no reason to believe any team can hang with them. WWE had to come up with something to slow them down so other teams could hang with them and this knee injury was as good as they were going to come up with. In theory this sets up the Usos winning the belts to set up the big showdown against Alpha down the line.

Slater and Rhyno were watching in the back and Heath has an idea: "When I say Rhy, you say no." Rhyno: "No." The Usos come in and say they'll win at No Mercy. They even threaten to knock Rhyno's crackers out of his hand. That makes things serious but Jey threatens to send Slater's kids back to the mudhole. Rhyno CRUSHES HIS CRACKERS and it's a staredown.

Baron Corbin vs. Apollo Crews

Jack Swagger is on commentary. Crews hits him in the face to start and gets two off a fall away slam. A jumping enziguri knocks Corbin around even worse but he sends Crews ribs first into the post. Corbin drives the ribs into the post again and the End of Days wraps Crews up at 2:48. I'd love to hear the explanation for why Crews isn't getting ready for a big showdown against Shinsuke Nakamura for the NXT Title instead of being a jobber on Smackdown.

Corbin and Swagger have a staredown.

Curt Hawkins Face the Facts vignette.

Naomi and Nikki Bella are ready to keep the momentum going with the power of the glow. Natalya's glow went out a long time ago and Carmella has had it out for Nikki for a long time now because she wants to make a name for herself. See, they're friends now because the script says they should be.

Ziggler says anything could happen here tonight and doesn't think much of Miz. There are a lot of things he shouldn't be but tonight he's going to become Intercontinental Champion.

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Dolph Ziggler

Miz is defending and we even get Big Match Intros. Ziggler takes it to the mat to start and Miz is in WAY over his head with the technical stuff. A clothesline on the floor takes Miz down again but he dropkicks Ziggler off the apron to take over. Back in and Miz does the YES Kicks but continues the tradition of missing the big one. Ziggler goes shoulder first into the post and gets kicked in the face for two.

A Stinger Splash has Miz in trouble but he misses another charge into the post. That means it's time for a running dropkick in the corner, again ala Bryan. The champ goes up top for the ax handle but dives into a dropkick. Ziggler's running DDT gets two and a Cactus Clothesline takes us to a break.

Back with Miz countering a superplex into a slingshot sitout powerbomb. Ziggler's sleeper sends Miz over to the ropes and the superkick gets two.

Maryse loads up the hairspray but gets caught this time, meaning an ejection. Rollups are exchanged for two each and the Zig Zag gives Ziggler a VERY close two. Miz tries to leave with the title so Ziggler sends him into the steps, only to get sprayed in the face. A Skull Crushing Finale retains Miz's title at 16:01.

Rating: B+. They had me worried more than once there but thank goodness Miz retains the title here and Ziggler loses again. I'm sure we're going to get a third match between them at No Mercy and hopefully they still don't change the title. As has been the case for weeks now I'm still not sure what they're setting up with Bryan. At this point they almost have to deliver the big return match but most sources say there's no way that's happening. We're either in for a major surprise or a debut of some kind and either one would be interesting.

Erick Rowan vs. Randy Orton

Rowan doesn't even get an entrance so he starts fast with a reverse powerslam and a dropkick of all things. A trip to the floor makes things even worse for Randy but he gets in the Elevated DDT and the RKO for the quick pin at 2:23.

Post match the lights go out and Rowan disappears with the sheep mask taking his place. Bray pops up on screen and says that unlike Orton, he can never die.

Nikki Bella/Naomi vs. Carmella/Natalya

Natalya forearm Naomii at the bell and has Nikki in the Sharpshooter less than thirty seconds after the bell. For some reason Carmella pulls Nikki to the floor for a beatdown and that's a DQ at 36 seconds.

Naomi kicks Natalya in the head post match.

AJ Styles says he doesn't have a rivalry with Dean Ambrose or John Cena because he's better than both of them. Tonight he's going to enjoy watching them fight because the champ will always be here.

John Cena vs. Dean Ambrose

As usual, the fans are split on Cena. Feeling out process to start with Cena working on a headlock and then into a top wristlock. Ambrose turns it up by sending Cena into the post and we take a break. Back with Dean chopping and punching away until Cena pulls him down into the STF. Dean makes the ropes and gets in another shot to the head, only to have Cena roll through a high crossbody into the AA for two. Dirty Deeds gets the same and I probably should have penciled that in as soon as the AA hit. Back up and a second AA is countered into a sunset flip to give Dean the completely clean pin at 10:14.

Rating: B-. I upgraded this one for the clean ending alone. Cena losing clean is something that you almost never see and this win feels bigger than when Dean won the title in the first place. It's not like this hurts Cena in the slightest but it gives Dean a huge rub and makes him feel like a factor instead of just a third man in the match to take the fall at No Mercy.

Post match AJ hits the Phenomenal Forearm on Cena but here's Bryan to interrupt. As Shane McMahon promised, Dean is getting a one on one title rematch and that's going to happen next Tuesday on Smackdown. Dean hits Dirty Deeds on AJ to end the show.

Overall Rating: A-. This show was fantastic and there's not much else that needs to be said about it. The wrestling was good, the angles were hot and the stories were advanced. Above all else, Bryan was only there when he was needed instead of running around every five minutes and interjecting himself where he wasn't needed. I had a blast watching this show and thought it was more fun than anything WWE has done in a very long time. Great stuff here and by far the best episode of either show since the Brand Split and a long time before that.

Results

Usos b. American Alpha – Superfly splash to Jordan

Baron Corbin b. Apollo Crews – End of Days

The Miz b. Dolph Ziggler – Skull Crushing Finale

Randy Orton b. Erick Rowan – RKO

Nikki Bella/Naomi b. Carmella/Natalya via DQ when Carmella attacked Nikki on the floor

Dean Ambrose b. John Cena – Sunset flip

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