

Smackdown – March 31, 2016: A Necessary Evil

Smackdown

Date: March 31, 2016

Location: Barclays Center, New York City, New York

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Mauro Ranallo

This is one of the most unique shows of the year as it's mostly going to be about building up Wrestlemania. The few matches that will be on here were taped on Monday at Raw so the crowd is going to be hotter than usual. Expect a lot of video packages here though as that's the point of the show. Let's get to it.

AJ Styles vs. Heath Slater

Before the match, the Outcasts talk about how the four of them are going to win the battle royal. Axel dubs the team the Phenomenal Four. Rose: "You really racked your brain to come up with that one didn't you?" Slater gets in a boot to the head to knock AJ outside, sending him head first into the steps. I'll go on a limb and say that's the extent of his major offense in this match.

We hit a chinlock back inside followed by a jumping heel kick (Lawler: "That was founomenal!") for two on Styles. Slater misses a splash though and AJ makes his comeback with the speedy strikes, including a Pele to Rose. The Phenomenal Forearm puts Slater away at 4:45.

Rating: D. I really wasn't feeling this one as Slater shouldn't be beating AJ up for any given amount of time. I'm fine with him getting in a little offense here and there but this as about 80% Slater and that's a really bad sign with Wrestlemania just a few days away. Bad match planning here and that's not good.

Byron Saxton and Renee Young are at AT&T Stadium to introduce a lot of videos throughout the night. Yeah that's going to be the big bulk of the show.

Long video on Shane vs. Undertaker, mostly stuff we've seen on Raw already.

Network skill.

Hall of Fame ad.

Video on Ambrose vs. Lesnar.

Pre-show preview.

Video on HHH using the Dudley Boyz to trap Reigns from Raw and the ensuing brawl.

Video on Snoop Dogg being inducted into the celebrity wing of the Hall of Fame.

Jey Uso vs. D-Von Dudley

Jey pounds in the corner to start and clotheslines D-Von out to the floor, earning himself a jawing session with Bubba. Back in and Jey's charge goes into the post, allowing Bubba to get in a right hand to really change control. A top rope splash misses though and it's time for the kicks, followed by a Samoan drop. The running Umaga attack causes Bubba to start a D-Von chant, which works far better than it should for the heel act. Bubba and Jimmy get into it on the floor, allowing D-Von to get in a spinebuster for the pin at 4:25.

Rating: C. Believe it or not this was fine. It's kind of hard to screw up a match that only goes four minutes and has someone as capable as D-Von in there. The match is going to be fine but it's just not a story that I really want to see. It's also interesting that the Usos are the same in singles matches that they are in tags. You don't often see two wrestlers who are so similar and really change nothing when they're in the same match.

Video on the Divas Title triple threat.

Ad for Thank You Daniel on the WWE Network, which really is entertaining.

Clip of Del Rio vs. Kofi on Monday and Coach's post match cameo.

Byron and Renee talk about the World Title match.

Video on Reigns vs. HHH.

Dean Ambrose vs. Erick Rowan

Bray and Strowman only come to the stage so Rowan is on his own here. They slug it out to start with Rowan getting the better of it off a back elbow. Dean sends him outside and knees him from the apron as we take a break. Back with Rowan getting two off a reverse powerslam (ala Lucha Underground's Matanza) and slapping on the chinlock. Dean's comeback is stopped by a boot to the face and it's time for that head vice.

Erick mixes things up with a middle rope back elbow to the jaw (ala Bayley of all people) but takes too long going up and gets superplexed down. Dean gets in the suicide shove and the standing elbow drop gets two. A sitout Rock Bottom (Matt Hardy's Side Effect) and a spinwheel kick give Rowan a pair of near falls but Dirty Deeds ends Rowan at 13:58.

Rating: D. Yeah this was nothing. It was a lot of rest holds before we got to the exact ending everyone knew we were getting. Then again, this isn't exactly a show that is going to be held to a high standard. Rowan is nothing more than the guy you send out there to look big and intimidating and then lose every time. That's going to keep him employed for a very long time though as it's a role that has to be fulfilled.

A quick plug of the Austin Podcast with Mick Foley takes us out.

Overall Rating: D. Like I said in the main event, this wasn't supposed to be a regular show. The wrestling was there for the sake of saying there was wrestling on the show in between the videos. That being said, the show accomplished its goal of being a big commercial for Wrestlemania, which means it's good if you don't watch regularly but a huge waste of time if you watch every week. I'd call it a necessary evil and that has to be expected with this meaningless episode every year.

Results

AJ Styles b. Heath Slater – Phenomenal Forearm

D-Von Dudley b. Jey Uso – Spinebuster

Dean Ambrose b. Erick Rowan – Dirty Deeds

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