

Hidden Gem: Before They Were Stars

This kind of thing can be rather fun.

Kofi Kingston vs. Mike Mizanin

Date: March 23, 2007

Location: Quicken Loans Arena, Cleveland, Ohio

Smackdown dark match and Kofi hadn't debuted yet. Miz is the hometown boy and still little more than a reality show geek who has wrestled a few matches. Before the match, Miz says he and LeBron James are the only two celebrities from Cleveland but Miz was smart enough to get out. It's so strange seeing Kofi with the generic rock music and the big Jamaican flag. Kofi, with the crazy thick accent, says no one is here to hear Miz talk.

Kofi grabs a wristlock and shouts BOOM a lot but has to keep nipping his way out of top wristlocks. The armdrag into the armbar has Miz in trouble until he sends Kofi throat first into the top rope. We hit the chinlock, followed by a quick Fameasser for two. Kofi sends him face first into the middle buckle to set up a spinwheel kick to the face. What would become known as Trouble In Paradise finishes Miz at 4:29.

Rating: D+. It was clear that neither of them were exactly polished yet, though that BOOM BOOM over and over again made it a little more annoying. Miz would take a long time to get somewhere in the ring and while Kofi got better faster, he was doing way too much with the gimmick here and it was annoying. It's still cool to see two future Hall of Famers in a match like this though, as they have to start somewhere.

Smackdown – February 14, 2014: Kofi Kingston As A Bald Muscular European

Smackdown

Date: February 14, 2014

Location: Citizens Bank Business Arena, Ontario, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield

It's Valentines Day and we're getting a nice gift in the form of Cesaro (now minus the Antonio) vs. Randy Orton in the fourth part of Orton's Elimination Chamber gauntlet. Cesaro is rapidly gaining popularity and it would seem a face turn is imminent. Other than that we might get more on the Daniel Bryan vs. Kane feud. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Shield vs. Daniel Bryan/Christian/Sheamus

Christian and Rollins get things going but Seth quickly takes him into the corner for the tag off to Reigns. Roman catches a cross body attempt but gets popped in the face with a right hand. Sheamus comes in for the big power showdown and they slug it out for a bit before Sheamus hits the rolling fireman's carry for two. Reigns comes back with a knee to the ribs and brings in Ambrose who gets taken down by a running ax handle.

The fans demand Bryan and get their wish, followed by some rapid fire kicks in the corner. A top rope hurricanrana gets two and there's the YES Lock but Shield comes in for the save and we have a standoff. Back from a break with Bryan fighting out of a chinlock and sending Rollins into the

top turnbuckle, allowing him to tag off to Sheamus.

The pale one slides to the apron and comes back with the ten forearms to the chest but the other Shield members get involved to take over. Reigns does that awesome dropkick from the floor to the apron before LAUNCHING Sheamus into the barricade. That's not something you see too often. Ambrose comes back in to stomp away in the corner before it's off to Reigns again for hard shots to the head and ribs.

We hit the front facelock for a bit but Reigns lets it go to knock Bryan off the apron but walks into the Irish Curse. Rollins comes in and takes a swing at Christian but only hits air before missing a backsplash to Sheamus. Hot tag brings in Christian to face Ambrose and a tornado DDT gets two on the US Champion.

Everything breaks down and Bryan takes out Reigns with the FLYING GOAT. Rollins takes him down with a suicide dive of his own though and it's Christian hooking the reverse DDT for two on Dean but the Brogue Kick misses Ambrose and takes out Christian. Reigns spears Sheamus down and Ambrose pins Christian at 12:45.

Rating: C+. This was more about the good guys building drama amongst themselves before they head into the Chamber in a little over a week. There weren't any problems for Shield this time which is a good thing before their big six man tag. This was the usual Shield six man so it was fine all around.

Zeb Colter asks Vickie Guerrero to be his valentine but she's not falling for it. Colter wants an Intercontinental Title shot for Jack Swagger but Vickie says he has to beat Rey Mysterio. That's fine with Zeb but Vickie makes it a fourway with Kofi Kingston and Mark Henry filling the other spots. Vickie shoves the chocolates into Zeb's chest, meaning she's a face now?

Cesaro (officially without the Antonio) says he'll win tonight and then

take the title at Elimination Chamber.

Lita Hall of Fame video.

Jack Swagger vs. Rey Mysterio vs. Mark Henry vs. Kofi Kingston

One fall to a finish and the winner gets Big E. (on commentary) for the Intercontinental Title at Elimination Chamber. Henry quickly throws Swagger to the floor but gets taken down by Kofi and Rey. The two speed guys get to have a showdown with Rey dropkicking Kofi for two but they have to eliminate Swagger again. Kofi dives over the top to put Jack down again and Rey hits a running seated senton from the apron. Henry is back in and loads up a dive of his own, only to have Swagger take out his leg.

Two straight Vader Bombs have Henry in trouble but Jack has to clothesline Rey down for two. Mysterio comes back with a top rope seated senton for two followed by the sitout bulldog for two more with Kofi making the save. Rey is sent into the post before Kofi bounce up the ropes and dropkicks Swagger down before hitting the Boom Drop. Rey gets knocked off the apron again and Swagger loads up Kingston in a superplex. Henry tries to make it a Tower of Doom but Kofi holds on, meaning it's only a powerbomb to Swagger.

Henry cleans house but Swagger takes out the leg again and puts on the Patriot Lock, only to have Mark kick him off. Rey hits a 619 to Mark's ribs and Kofi adds Trouble in Paradise but Jack is on his feet again. Kofi grabs a German suplex on Rey but Jack suplexes both of them at once in a nice power display. Kingston is sent to the floor but slides back in to break up a 619 attempt. Henry makes the save but gets kicked to the floor by Kofi. The distraction lets Swagger catch Kofi in the Patriot Lock for the submission at 8:35.

Rating: C+. Nice match here with everyone doing their job perfectly. I didn't see the Mysterio knee injury but I'd guess it was on the seated senton from the apron as he went off camera for a few minutes as a

result. Swagger getting the shot is a good enough choice as he was the only heel here and Henry vs. Big E. does nothing for me.

Raw ReBounce covers Betty White and the Outlaws.

Bad News Barrett says American women are going to gain several pounds by tomorrow morning and be ashamed of what they see in the morning. Is there a point to this character coming anytime soon?

Goldust/Cody Rhodes/Usos vs. Ryback/Curtis Axel/New Age Outlaws

Billy and Goldust get things going with Gunn taking an atomic drop and the uppercut for a quick two. Off to Road Dogg vs. Cody with the sunset flip out of the corner getting two on Roadie. A clothesline gets the same and it's off to an armbar from Rhodes. Jimmy comes in off the tag to stay on the arm and a double elbow gets two for the twins. Road Dogg takes Jey into the corner and it's off to Axel for a dropkick. Ryback comes in for some driving shoulders in the corner and a hard slam as we take a break.

Back with Ryback elbowing Jey in the face and handing it off to Billy again. The Stinger Splash hits buckle and a double tag brings in Road Dogg and Jimmy. Everything breaks down with Jimmy cleaning house and hitting the running Umaga attack in the corner. Cody dives over the top to take out Axel but Ryback throws him into the barricade, only to walk into a Golden cannonball off the apron. A double superkick drops Road Dogg, Jey dives on the other heels and Jimmy hits the Superfly Splash for the pin at 11:00.

Rating: C-. This did its job but wasn't the most interesting match in the world. Most importantly of all though it gets us closer to the Usos getting their Tag Titles which they earned about two years ago. Ryback and Axel have nowhere to go at this point and I have no idea what's next for Goldust and Cody. The tag division has a lot of names in it right now but it's not a very deep talent pool.

Randy Orton says this gauntlet is just to make him better and all that matters is him being champion. Tonight, Cesaro gets the Viper.

Lana says Alexander Rusev isn't coming to make friends.

Darren Young vs. Damien Sandow

Titus O'Neil is on commentary. Young catches Sandow in a quick atomic drop and clotheslines him out to the floor. Back in and Damien gets a knee to Darren's ribs but You're Welcome is countered into a rollup for the pin by Young at 1:07. So much for rebuilding Sandow.

Titus goes after Darren post match but Young rips his pants off. I'll let you make your own jokes.

The Bellas show us how to use the WWE Network.

Fandango vs. The Miz

Miz dropkicks the knee out to start and rains down left hands in the corner but Fandango comes back with an atomic drop. A nice dropkick gets two and we hit the chinlock on Miz. It's quickly broken and Miz fights back with some basic stuff and the Reality Check but gets kicked shoulder first into the post. This brings out Santino and Emma for a distraction and a cat fight between Emma and Summer. Distraction, Skull Crushing Finale, pin on Fandango at 3:47.

Rating: D. At least it was the better finisher. I'm not sure how I'd react if we got through a week of shows without the distraction finish. Santino and Emma are a decent enough cute pair but Emma is going to have to get away from him if she wants to get over. Santino is going to overshadow whoever he's with due to how over the top he is and there's not much of a way around that.

Bobo Brazil video.

Cesaro vs. Randy Orton

In the sitdown interview of the week, HHH said he thinks Cesaro might be the wildcard in the Chamber. Cesaro chases Orton to the floor to start but doesn't go after him. They do the same thing again before Cesaro takes him to the mat and hits the gutwrench for two. A running European uppercut in the corner gets two more and they both head outside. Orton reverses a whip into the barricade and clotheslines Cesar as we take a break.

Back with Orton ramming Cesaro into the announce table and taking him inside for a chinlock. The fans chant WE THE PEOPLE and Cesaro fights out, only to lose a fist fight and get elbowed to the mat. Cesaro rolls outside and catches Orton with a big clothesline of his own and counters the Elevated DDT into the Swing. Randy can barely get to his feet but is able to backdrop out of the Neutralizer. Cesaro lands on his feet but runs into the powerslam for two.

Now the Elevated DDT connects and Orton points to the sign to make this serious. He spends too much time walking around though and it's Swiss Death for two. They head to the corner where Orton tries a superplex but Cesaro counters into a sunset bomb. A discus uppercut sets up the Neutralizer for the completely clean pin at 12:44.

Rating: B-. Well you can't give much more of a rub than that. However I'd be much happier with this if Kofi Kingston hadn't gotten the same kind of a win just a month ago. Cesaro is a guy that could be world championship material with a good push (meaning getting away from Swagger) but I have a feeling this is just for the Chamber and then it's back to nothing for not-Antonio.

Cesaro waves to Orton to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. Another good Smackdown tonight with some nice action and angle advancement which is all you can ask for anymore. Unfortunately I don't think tonight is going to mean much. Cesaro isn't winning the title and while Sheamus and Christian had some problems, I can't imagine it's anyone but Orton, Bryan or maybe Cena walking out of the Chamber with the title. Randy has to be the favorite even though he's lost three out of his last five matches and might even lose to Sheamus on Monday, making him look like a lame duck champion heading into Wrestlemania.

The rest of the show was good stuff with a nice six man, a good four way, a watchable eight man and a short Miz match that involved good looking women fighting. That's not bad at all when you consider what Smackdown means in the grand scheme of things anymore. Cesaro winning made me smile, but I can't imagine it's anymore more than false hope.

One more note: the spoilers I read said there was an Eva Marie vs. Alicia Fox match taped with Eva winning via rollup but there was no sign of it at all here.

Results

Shield b. Christian/Sheamus/Daniel Bryan – Ambrose pinned Christian after a Brogue Kick from Sheamus

The Miz b. Fandango – Skull Crushing Finale

Jack Swagger b. Kofi Kingston, Rey Mysterio and Mark Henry – Patriot Lock to Kingston

Usos/Cody Rhodes/Goldust b. New Age Outlaws/Ryback/Curtis Axel – Superfly Splash to Road Dogg

Darren Young b. Damien Sandow – Rollup

Cesaro b. Randy Orton – Neutralizer

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