

# Backlash 2016 Preview

Let's see: college football, first weekend of the NFL, see how the Cleveland Indians manager to screw up the division lead this year. Yeah it's kind of a bor.....Backlash? That's this weekend? Apparently it is despite feeling like it's lacking another two or three weeks worth of building. It probably doesn't help that we're only three weeks removed from the marathon that was Summerslam weekend and there's barely enough material for a pay per view.

There's no pre-show match announced yet so let's start with the precursor to the Tag Team Title match as the Usos are facing the Hype Bros in what you could kind of call the third semifinal match. American Alpha had advanced to the finals to face Heath Slater/Rhyno for the titles but the Usos turned heel and then did so again after the match to injure Chad Gable's knee, leaving us with only one team for the tournament final. Therefore we'll be seeing the two teams that lost in the semifinals fight each other with the winners going to the title match.

Save for an American Alpha run-in, I see no reason for the Usos to not win here and go on to face Slater/Rhyno. There isn't much else to say on this one as Slater/Rhyno already beat the Hype Bros earlier this week (making it even clearer that this match is filler) so the Usos are the only real option. So yeah, the Usos go on as is the only real option here.

That leaves us with the Usos vs. Slater/Rhyno for the titles and I'm really not sure where you go here. There's a very easy case for the Usos getting the belts to give them credibility (the announcers have made sure to mention that the Usos are the only team in the tournament to ever hold titles in WWE) and of course to set up the rematch with American Alpha, who beat them clean in less than a minute.

On the other hand I'm not sure how long they can string out the "Heath wants a job" angle until they have to give him something. Slater/Rhyno as the first champions would be just fine as American

Alpha and the Usos can have a #1 contenders feud and then win the belts while the first champs do comedy. All that being said, the Usos are the logical pick here and I'll go with them, despite it being stupid to have heels wrestle twice in one night to win a title.

We'll stick with the title matches as it's off to Miz defending the Intercontinental Title against Dolph Ziggler. If you've been reading my stuff lately, you know I'm really not a fan of this feud and that hasn't changed. The story here works: they've built up Miz as a pretty good champion (if he holds the title another two weeks it's the longest reign in five years) who is enough of a veteran that he can be a bigger player on Smackdown, especially with what they were teasing with Bryan. Ziggler needs a big win (though remember: it's DEFENDING the title that matters, not actually winning it) and this is suddenly a big enough deal.

That brings us to the problem: it's Dolph Ziggler vs. the Miz. These guys have fought a ton of times (four times on TV this year alone) and none of them have been exactly what you would call thrilling. The match will be fine but the buildup to it with both guys wanting to move up the ladder into serious contention should be calling for something special, not something we've seen several times before and said "eh not bad" much more often than not. I'll take Miz to retain the title here but Ziggler going over really wouldn't shock me as they're obsessed with pushing him for reasons I really don't buy.

We'll get to one of the bigger matches now with Randy Orton vs. Bray Wyatt and again I'm worried about what they're going to do here. Orton really, really needs a win after that debacle against Lesnar last month but Bray really needs a win.....well always because he hardly ever wins anything important.

The problem here is there's only a limited story aside from Wyatt's traditional "I choose to haunt you" idea which ran out of gas a long time ago. I'm sure it's going to be entertaining but this feels like a lot of going through the motions instead of giving us something that should be good. I'll go with Orton here but a no contest or

countout/DQ ending would be the better option.

Next up is the Six Pack Challenge for the inaugural Smackdown Women's Title and I'll spare you the time by saying this should be Nikki Bella's to lose. Naomi is the athletic woman who probably won't win, Alexa Bliss and Carmella are miles away from being ready and Natalya has less charisma than even your average Canadian wrestler. That leaves Nikki and Becky Lynch as the only real options and you know full well that we need a good Bella comeback story after the neck injury that we all sat up crying over because we might never get to hear her call herself fearless again. So yeah, Nikki wins because it's all about the Bellas.

That leaves us with the main event and as is the case with almost anything else on the card, I really don't care. Dean Ambrose is defending the Smackdown World Title against AJ Styles and that's about the extent of their issue. They've tried to force in the idea that Dean isn't taking this seriously and AJ is the uncrowned champion after pinning Cena and....yeah that's about it. Aside from a rematch, I really don't see a reason for AJ to not get the title here. He's the best on Smackdown and can hold the title for a few months until hopefully someone switches shows to mix things up a bit and give him a fresh challenger.

So that's Backlash and I'm lucky that I stayed awake while I wrote this up. No matter how you slice it, this show really isn't interesting and doesn't need to be a pay per view. The biggest thing here though is this doesn't feel like a three hour pay per view. We haven't seen a single brand show yet so maybe they'll speed things up a bit.

Let's say the main event and Orton vs. Wyatt eat up an hour combined (that's probably a big stretch even when you include entrances). A Six Pack Challenge, two tag matches and Miz vs. Ziggler isn't enough to fill in two hours. I'd be really surprised if this show runs three hours unless they add in some nothing matches like Baron Corbin vs. Kalisto (Is that still a thing?) or Kane squashing Breezango for reasons of general stupidity.

Length issues aside, I'm really not interested in this show and I haven't seen many who are. Smackdown has been the better of the two shows but they're a long way away from being able to pull off a three hour pay per view with just the stuff they have. Just let the show run a little shorter and people will be a lot happier. I don't think the Network subscriptions are going to plummet if one of the seven bonus pay per views a year is a little shorter than average.

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# Smackdown – September 6, 2016: This One Is A Little Different

## Smackdown

Date: September 6, 2016

Location: Pinnacle Bank Arena, Lincoln, Nebraska

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

I'm not sure how but we're already at the go home show for Backlash. At this point there are five announced matches (assuming you count a tournament final as an announced match) which means we're going to get a lot more stuff announced tonight or Sunday's matches are going

to be very long. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Daniel Bryan is in the ring with the Smackdown Women's Title.

Sunday's Six Pack Challenge will be an elimination match (there's how they fill in some time) but before we get there, we'll be having a six women tag match. First though, we're going to have a forum with all six getting some time to talk. We'll start with Becky Lynch but before she can say anything, Daniel has to plug Total Bellas.

The fans clearly aren't interested so Bryan lets Becky talk about being the #1 female Smackdown draft pick. Her journey has brought her here but Natalya cuts her off. Natalya says the Draft was the worst night of her career because Smackdown was supposed to be her kingdom but now she has to put up with Becky and the unnatural hair.

Cue Alexa Bliss to say they're both whiners and calls Bryan a Bella trophy husband. Now it's Carmella cutting them because women in WWE can't let anyone else get more than a few words out. Everyone gets catty about nicknames and the villains accuse Becky of turning them all against each other. Naomi and Nikki run out for the save and the villains leave. This was fine for a quick build but as usual, the women almost all have characters that can be summed up in six words or less and you have to stretch to get that far. If you want the division to go anywhere, give us some development and a reason to care about them.

Dean Ambrose pours most of a bottle of sugar into his coffee.

The bosses are talking about the women's match when Miz comes in. He's not happy about having to defend the Intercontinental Title against Dolph Ziggler at Backlash and thinks it's because of what he said to Bryan a few weeks ago. Bryan says Miz can either fight Ziggler or just hand over the title right now. Miz walks away with the title intact. So much for Bryan and Miz not being on screen at the same time, which is a good thing.

The Miz vs. Apollo Crews

Non-title with Ziggler on commentary. What does it say that I knew

this was going to be Crews because he's the designated midcard jobber? Crews runs him over to start and blocks a headlock with raw power. A shot to the face puts Miz on the floor and Crews moonsaults onto him as we go to a break.

Back with Miz choking in the corner as Ziggler keeps talking about how winning and losing doesn't matter as long as he tries his best. You know, two weeks after talking about how winning was all that mattered. No wait, it was winning the title and then defending it which mattered because that's the story they were going with this week. Miz's running corner clothesline has Crews in trouble but he sends Miz outside. That means it's time to get in Dolph's face and slap him in the jaw, only to have Miz shove Crews into him. A quick posting stuns Crews and the Skull Crushing Finale ends Apollo at 10:12.

**Rating:** D+. I have no idea what they're trying for with Miz and Ziggler at this point but it seems to be YET ANOTHER attempt to make Ziggler seem important after years of failing to live up to expectations. I'll be very, very disappointed if they put the title on him Sunday as Miz vs. Bryan still has a lot of potential as they're trying to make Miz look like something special for a change. Ziggler would be the same nothing champion who would likely lose every non-title match but it doesn't matter because he tried his best.

Post match Ziggler chases Miz off and has the title in front of him. Ziggler invites Miz in to get the belt but he sends Maryse in instead. See, that's the kind of thing that shows character rather than "well golly I didn't win the match that I said I absolutely had to win but I sure tried and that's what matters" before saying that he has to win the big one (because winning the Intercontinental Title, a title he's held four times already, now counts as the big one).

AJ Styles is livid about video of him getting crotched last week. He yells at the production assistant who provided the video and that's about it.

American Alpha video.

The Usos say they still run this tag team division. The division has been around for about three weeks and they've already had to affirm their dominance? That's not a good sign.

Bray Wyatt talks about men having to fight to survive. They had to learn to deal with predators, who only knew how to hunt and kill. The predator didn't know how to create and one day they became a play thing. History repeats itself and Orton is no longer the predator he once was. Bray is the evolution of man and at Backlash, predator becomes prey.

#### Nikki Bella/Becky Lynch/Naomi vs. Alexa Bliss/Natalya/Carmella

Nikki makes her entrance before a break so we come back with.....the other five entrances. Bliss and Naomi start things off and it's time for the dancing kicks, which still look horrible. As a bonus this time, Naomi's kick to the head completely misses but it's off to Carmella (now in tights instead of the shorts in a smart move for the heel turn) vs. Becky anyway. A backslide gets two on Carmella, who didn't seem like she kicked out in time. Nikki comes in and again the fans seem to care for reasons that I don't understand. The villains are chased to the floor and we take a break.

Back with Becky in trouble as Natalya sends her into the apron and grabs a chinlock. Bliss comes in and grabs a chinlock of her own before Natalya hits a Michinoku Driver for two. Becky finally dives over for the hot tag to Nikki and a Disaster kick gets two on Bliss. The TKO gets two on Carmella with Bliss making the save as everything breaks down. Bliss misses her moonsault knees to the ribs and Carmella's Code of Silence makes Nikki tap at 12:53.

**Rating:** D. This was bad and there's really no way around it. Between Naomi focusing on looking athletic without having the ability to pull it off, Carmella having all of one good looking move, Bliss not being able to take a move or hit one of her own and Nikki being in the match for two minutes because they're trying to keep her safe, there's only so much Natalya and Becky can do. This division just does not have the depth to work right now and it's showing more and

more when there's so little to praise in a match with the whole division.

#### Tag Team Title Tournament Semifinals: Usos vs. American Alpha

We get a handshake to start but the Usos jump Alpha from behind in what feels like a heel turn. Not that it matters as Alpha comes right back and the Grand Amplitude ends Jimmy at 27 seconds.

Post match (with the replay clipping the thing) the Usos beat Alpha down by sending Jordan shoulder first into the post and superkicking Gable in the knee. Jey puts on a Tequila Sunrise and Jimmy adds a Superfly splash to Gable's other leg for a good looking beatdown. The heel turn is a really good idea for the Usos as they've been the exact same team for years now. At least this gives them a little freshening up.

Orton tells a story about a dying man killing a rabbit but getting caught by a snake who wanted the rabbit for himself. The snake didn't attack until after the man had picked up the rabbit because he knew he could have them both. At Backlash, Bray won't know what hit him.

Here's Fandango to say that Tyler Breeze is out finding fabric for their upcoming fashion line. Instead he's found a woman to tango with Fandango but she's a bit too wild for him and he throws her out. Fandango asks for anyone else so here's Kane to chokeslam him. Fans: "GO BIG RED!" (University of Nebraska football chant).

AJ breaks a guy's phone for not showing him enough respect.

Children with cancer awareness video.

Curt Hawkins video. He's here next week.

#### Tag Team Title Tournament Semifinals: Hype Bros vs. Heath Slater/Rhyno

The Slater Family is in the front row as Slater and Ryder start things off. Zack's middle rope dropkick gets an early two and it's off to Rawley to send Heath outside. Rawley runs Rhyno down and we take an early break. Back with Slater avoiding a splash in the corner but the fans want Rhyno. The hot tag brings in Ryder and



Rhyno but Slater tags himself in and gets rolled up for two. Rhyno saves Heath from the Broski Boot and a Gore ends Ryder at 7:18.

**Rating:** D+. This was an interesting one as Rhyno was WAY over and the fans are already into Slater but Ryder and Rawley are popular enough that it's hard to have them be heels. Either way, Slater and Rhyno were the best possible option and could get the belts, especially given Gable's knee injury.

We look at the knee injury earlier.

Renee Young doesn't have much of an update on Gable's condition but the Usos come in to say they were letting out their bottled up aggression. They've been putting their bodies on the line for years and the fans turned on them but love American Alpha the second they saw them.

Here are Dean Ambrose and AJ Styles for a face to face meeting to end the show. Dean has a gift for AJ: a bowling trophy for participation, which is the only trophy Dean will ever give him. We see clips of AJ getting crotched last week and AJ isn't happy. Styles talks about how he beat John Cena but Dean points out that this Sunday, AJ isn't fighting Cena. On top of that, AJ beat Cena in a wrestling match and Sunday it's going to be a fight. They don't give out trophies for second place so AJ kicks Dean low and breaks the trophy to end the show. They kept this short and that's probably best given how the feud has gone so far.

**Overall Rating:** C. This show was very different than usual and that's a good thing as they head into a rather weak pay per view. There are only five matches for the show and tonight focused on the matches to crown new champions. The wrestling really wasn't the focus here and it's a good idea to spend this show focusing on everything other than the main event, which has gotten a lot of time already. I really don't see a three hour pay per view based on this card but they've stretched stuff out in other ways before.

### Results

The Miz b. Apollo Crews – Skull Crushing Finale

Alexa Bliss/Natalya/Carmella b. Nikki Bella/Naomi/Becky Lynch – Code of Silence to Bella

American Alpha b. Usos – Grand Amplitude to Jimmy

Heath Slater/Rhyno b. Hype Bros – Gore to Ryder

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# Smackdown – August 30, 2016: How To Waste A Big Moment

## Smackdown

Date: August 30, 2016

Location: American Airlines Center, Dallas, Texas

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

Much like last night, this show has a lot of potential to be something big but instead of one big match, this show is built around a few individual issues. First and foremost, we'll see the fallout from Miz's awesome shoot promo on Daniel Bryan, which some people didn't expect to see referenced on TV. There's also more of the Tag Team Title tournament and Dean Ambrose vs. Baron Corbin. Let's get to it.

We open with the full Miz vs. Daniel Bryan interview from last

week's Talking Smack with Bryan calling Miz soft but Miz saying his style means he doesn't get injured and leave for six months to a year at a time. Bryan walked off and Miz went on a tirade about how the Intercontinental Title is the most important one on Smackdown because he's the one out there every night. This was GREAT and more emotion than Miz has ever shown, which makes me think his days as champion are numbered.

Shane tells Bryan that he can't do that to the talent and Bryan agrees. However, Bryan finds this ironic coming from the person having issues with Brock Lesnar.

Opening sequence.

Here's a ticked off Miz with something to say. Miz doesn't want to hear any booing because it's taken 148 days (the length of his title reign) to get the fans' attention. He's bringing prestige back to this title but people think he's soft. Yeah he wrestles a different style but it's because he's smart enough to see the big picture.

What the fans don't understand is what goes on backstage. Who do you think they call when they need someone to do a red carpet premiere or a commercial or main event Wrestlemania and then dress up as a chicken? Miz didn't spend the first twelve years of his career wrestling in front of 50 people and people booing him for that makes them cowards. Cue Dolph Ziggler and I'm done. This was getting really interesting and it's about Dolph "RESPECT ME WHEN I'M SERIOUS AND THEN LOSE EVERY BIG MATCH OVER AND OVER AGAIN" Ziggler all over again.

Dolph says no one is going to buy what Miz says because he's never proven a thing. If Miz wants to show how tough he is, fight right now with no referees or titles on the line. Just the two of them right now. As expected, Miz teases fighting but walks off. Ziggler says Bryan was right and calls him a soft, safe coward but that's not enough to get him to fight either.

I actually felt the air go out of me when Ziggler came out. This story had the potential to actually be something fresh but instead it's the same old Ziggler that we've seen for months and have no reason to believe it's going to be anything different this time around. Ziggler is just a played out character and I wanted something fresh this time from Miz. Instead it's another Battle of Cleveland because that's what WWE thinks new and different means.

### Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Hype Bros vs. Vaudevillains

The villains takes over to start and send Ryder outside for a neckbreaker on the floor. The double teaming only lasts for a few moments before the tag brings in Rawley for his splashes. A running fist in the corner sets up the Hype Ryder to pin English at 2:53. This was exactly the kind of energetic match these two needed, even though they're likely losing in the next round.

To my shock, JBL seems to love the Hype Ryders. You would expect him to hate a team like this.

Post match the Hype Bros say they're hyped enough to win the titles.

We finally see the tournament brackets and the Usos vs. American Alpha is actually a semifinal match. That makes things a lot more interesting.

AJ Styles runs into Apollo Crews and introduces himself as the face who runs this place.

Here's AJ Styles for a chat. AJ, in the Cena headband, says he's already beaten up John Cena and now he's going to win the World Title. This brings out Apollo Crews to say Daniel Bryan has granted him a match against AJ right now. I love the fact that they just got to the point here. It was clear we were getting this match the second they ran into each other so there's no reason to waste time setting it up.

### AJ Styles vs. Apollo Crews

Crews leapfrogs AJ to start and sends it outside but Crews stops to brag about a right hand. Back with AJ holding a chinlock because that's how you come back from breaks in WWE. Crews sends him into the corner and backdrops AJ outside for a moonsault from the apron. Back in and AJ's high cross body is countered into a Samoan drop (that's kind of insane) for another near fall. Not that it matters as AJ stuns him across the ropes and the Phenomenal Forearm puts Crews away at 8:15.

**Rating:** C+. Crews is still fun to watch but he loses a lot more often than not and really doesn't have a character to speak of. Really all I know about him is that he's an athletic freak and that's not exactly enough to carry you far. It only worked so well for Shelton Benjamin and Crews isn't that far along yet.

Earlier this week, Renee Young went to Heath Slater's trailer and

met his wife for some redneck humor. As Rhino eats cheese whiz and crackers, Slater calls not being drafted an oversight. More redneck jokes ensue and Slater talks about how he's earned a contract several times now. When they win the titles, it's time to upgrade to a double wide. There's talk of the kids (outside picking up bottles and cans) but a car screeching sends the Slaters outside. Rhino just keeps calmly eating crackers. I get what they were going for here but this just isn't my kind of humor.

Here's Bray Wyatt with a message for Randy Orton. Bray isn't scared of snakes or monsters because he doesn't see Orton as anything more than a man. If Orton really hears voices, Bray hopes they're telling him to run but here's Randy in person. Randy says that a bunch of staples in his head aren't going to change anything because being damaged is what he does. Bray calls himself the new predator and promises to cut the serpent's head off at Backlash. Orton talks about Bray seeing the scars on his body but needing to worry about the scars inside. He agrees to the match and goes inside but Bray vanishes.

#### Natalya/Alexa Bliss vs. Becky Lynch/Naomi

Nikki Bella is on commentary to do a commercial for Total Bellas. Naomi hurricanranas Natalya to the floor and we take an early break. Back with Naomi in trouble until a jawbreaker allows the tag off to Becky. House is cleaned and everything breaks down as Carmella comes out to brawl with Nikki. In the melee, Bliss rolls Becky up and grabs the trunks for the pin at 7:21.

**Rating:** D+. This division really needs some promo time. I know all of their basic characters (or what they have for characters) but I really don't know much about most of them. Almost all of them need a chance to give us a reason to care, even if it's just a quick promo during their entrances.

Video on the Headbangers. For the life of me I don't get why they were picked to come back. It's like when Greg Valentine would show up on Nitro for a one off match.

Video on Curt Hawkins.

#### Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Headbangers vs. Rhino/Heath Slater

Mosh and Thrasher look exactly the same as they did in 1999. Slater

gets beaten down to start and the springboard clothesline puts him on the floor. Some stomping sets up a chinlock as Otunga calls the Headbangers the last two Marilyn Manson fans. The Stage Dive (powerbomb/guillotine legdrop combo) gets two as Rhino makes the save. Rhino (with what looks like some blood on the left side of his face) drags Slater over for the tag and the Gore ends Mosh at 2:53. It might be time for Thrasher to go back to training wrestlers like he did with Big Show.

A guy in a suit named Derrick Milliman has been granted a match tonight and issues an open challenge. Kane comes out for a chokeslam and leaves. Were they just running short on time or something? As Kane leaves, Baron Corbin comes out for the main event. Maybe that's what they're trying to set up?

#### Baron Corbin vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title and AJ is on commentary. Ambrose knocks Baron to the floor to start and hits a running clothesline from the apron. Back in and Dean's bulldog is broken up and Baron pounds away with right hands. We come back from a break with Corbin holding a chinlock and getting two off a choke legsweep. Dean fights up and gets two off his clothesline before hitting the suicide dive on the floor. Back in and the Deep Six plants Dean but AJ gets in Baron's face and tells him to stay on it. Dean knocks Baron into Styles so AJ kicks Baron in the face for the DQ at 12:12.

**Rating:** C. Odd ending aside, this was a nice showcase for Corbin and it's a good sign to not have him get pinned here. It would be nice if they gave Corbin something to do other than torture Kalisto (Did that go anywhere yet?). It's not like they're overflowing with options at the moment and building up a big man isn't going to hurt anything.

Post match the main eventers fight until Dean hits Corbin with Dirty Deeds. AJ gets crotched and Dean seems to sympathize before bouncing the ropes up and down. Dean takes his belt and leaves AJ sitting on the top rope to end the show. I really don't like having AJ look silly like that, especially after he did something good earlier tonight.

**Overall Rating:** B-. This felt like an older episode of Smackdown but thankfully it was one where they actually got some stuff done. Nothing major was set up (save for making Bray vs. Orton official)

but they did a good job of advancing a few angles and building towards the matches later on. That's the kind of show they needed with less than two weeks before Backlash, but I'm still not sold on this being a full on three hour pay per view.

### Results

Hype Bros b. Vaudevillains – Hype Ryder to English

AJ Styles b. Apollo Crews – Phenomenal Forearm

Alexa Bliss/Natalya b. Naomi/Becky Lynch – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Rhino/Heath Slater b. Headbangers – Gore to Mosh

Baron Corbin b. Dean Ambrose via DQ when AJ Styles interfered

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# Smackdown – August 16, 2016: What Does That Make Dean?

### Smackdown

Date: August 16, 2016

Location: Frank Erwin Center, Austin, Texas

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, David Otunga, John Bradshaw Layfield

It's the final show before Summerslam and it's time to see what the blue show has to offer. Odds are we'll be seeing a big build towards AJ Styles vs. John Cena II to go along with Smackdown World Champion Dean Ambrose and Dolph Ziggler as guests on MizTV. We'll also have another chance to see Eva Marie's in ring debut. Let's get to it.

Randy Orton signs his contract vs. Brock Lesnar but warns the bosses that the match might be short because it only takes one RKO. Heath Slater brings in a fruit basket but Bryan sees the card: "To Bob, my condolences." Slater can't believe that he's not being offered a

contract so Orton eats an apple and says he has an idea. A secret alliance with Carlito?

Opening sequence.

We open with MizTV but Dean cuts off Miz's intro. Ziggler cuts off Dean's opening statement though and they go nose to nose. Miz talks about how this is a huge fight for the title at Summerslam and even he thought Ziggler was a write off. He was a flop like WWE's version of the Ghostbuster's reboot. Again, I'd like to point out: a two time World Champion and a four time Intercontinental Champion should never be considered a flop. All Dolph cares about is winning the title on Sunday.

Miz gets cut off again as Ziggler says all he wants to do is kick Ambrose's head off (of his face that is but I think I get what Dolph meant). Ziggler wants to hear Dean say he was the final push Dolph needed to get over the top. That earns a chuckle from Dean, who says the title isn't the goal. Winning the belt is just the start because that's the day the pressure really starts. Everyone knows Dolph can't handle pressure which is why he's never grabbed the ball and scored a touchdown. HE'S A TWO TIME WORLD CHAMPION AND HE WON IT THE SAME WAY DEAN DID!

Ziggler gets serious and says Dean is going to have to give everything he has but it's not going to be enough to put Dolph away. As Dean is reaching down deep and looking for one last move BAM! Dolph lays him out with a superkick in mid sentence and says this Sunday, Dean will realize that he's that good. Ziggler's stuff was much better but this idea that Ziggler has never won the big one is ridiculous, especially coming from Ambrose. Or are they just burying the legacy of the World Heavyweight Championship and saying it doesn't mean a thing anymore?

During the break, Miz insulted Apollo Crews by calling him Apollo Creed, only to have Crews come out and beat Miz down. I had almost forgotten about that match so it's nice to get a quick something.

American Alpha/Usos/Hype Bros vs. Ascension/Vaudevillains/Breezango



Viktor and Gable start things off but Mojo tags himself in for a three point tackle. Konnor saves his partner from the Hype Rider and everything breaks down to take us to a break. Back with Ryder and Konnor reaching for tags as it's off to Jimmy vs. English. Jordan starts throwing suplexes and it's time for the parade of finishers, including a ridiculous four superkicks. Jimmy dives on most of his opponents, leaving English to take Grand Amplitude for the pin at 6:50.

**Rating:** D+. Well that accomplished a grand total of nothing. Wow the Usos can throw superkicks and hit dives and American Alpha is awesome. I feel so much more confident about this new division than I did coming in when I thought the division had no depth and was basically American Alpha and a bunch of nothing teams. That's really not enough to warrant a title but I'm sure WWE would disagree.

#### Naomi vs. Eva Marie

Naomi's full outfit now lights up, including her hair, and she has a backpack full of glow in the dark material to throw to the crowd. It's certainly eye catching if nothing else. And Eva isn't here due to traffic issues so no match again. This is becoming the highlight of the show.

AJ Styles can't wait to see Alberto Del Rio beat up John Cena tonight but Del Rio tells him to stop living in the past.

Curt Hawkins is coming. Uh....yay.

#### Heath Slater vs. Randy Orton

So I guess just facing Lesnar last night doesn't count for some reason. Slater can barely walk so Orton easily takes over by hitting him in almost every body part. Orton keeps hammering away in the corner....and that's a DQ at 1:00.

Orton destroys him post match and doesn't seem to notice that he lost. The elevated DDT onto the floor sets up some German suplexes and Brock's pose. An RKO leaves Slater out cold.

The Wyatts are here.

The bosses give Slater a contract so Heath brags about how he showed

no mercy. Bryan thinks that's a great name for a pay per view but Slater thinks Bryan is Mick Foley and a bigger star than Roman Reigns. Oh and Shane is Stephanie. That's enough for the boss and Shane takes the contract away but Slater keeps reading the bed he's laying on. No signing.

#### Erick Rowan vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title and the Wyatts came out during the break. Of note: Bray and Randy had a staredown as Orton was leaving. Dean tries Dirty Deeds thirty seconds in but settles with a dropkick to send Rowan outside for a suicide dive. Back in and Rowan takes over with a powerslam before sending Dean into the steps. Rowan slowly stomps and pounds in the corner, only to have Dean suplex him back down.

Mauro: "WWE Champion Dean Ambrose willing to put it all on the line!" Other than the title in this match that is. Erick kicks him in the face as JBL talks about opponents not expecting Dean to drop an elbow while they're standing up. You don't expect him to do something he does in almost every match? Speaking of which, Dean hits Dirty Deeds for the pin at 4:58.

**Rating:** D+. That's the match you would expect from these two as Erick showed off his power but Dean did his normal stuff while JBL said stuff that doesn't make sense. I like the idea of having Dean fight midcarders though as it allows him to look good and the person he beats doesn't look bad because they lost to the champ. Everything works fine.

Post match Bray looks at Rowan's mask and walks away. Good.

#### Becky Lynch/Carmella vs. Alexa Bliss/Natalya

Carmella and Natalya start things off with a headscissors sending Natalya flying. We hear about Daniel Bryan making a new Women's Title despite there being a total of five female wrestlers on the roster (I'm waiting on Eva to actually wrestle to count her and get it all the way up to six.). Natalya takes Carmella down and the heels take over until a diving tag brings in Becky. Everything breaks down and Natalya collides with Becky....as Eva Marie comes out

to her full entrance. This brings out Naomi for a chase to distract Natalya, setting up the Disarm-Her for the tap out at 4:15.

**Rating:** D. I probably shouldn't have rated it due to how long the match spent on Eva's entrance but it lets me talk about how stupid it is to have a title for this division. The entire division was involved in one match and you have a total of one former title holder in the whole thing. Becky has never won anything, Carmella and Alexa are rookies, Natalya is the same thing she was the day she debuted, Naomi is flashy but nothing great in the ring and Eva is a comedy act.

That gives you Becky, Natalya and Naomi to do the lifting until Bayley can come and make it four women of worth in the division, at least until Alexa and Carmella are more ready. Remember when all the women were in the ring the night after Wrestlemania and it looked like something might come of it? Yeah forget all that because having enough for one great division means it's time to split it into two weak divisions.

Baron Corbin attacks Kalisto again. What did Kalisto do to deserve this kind of demotion?

Long video on Orton vs. Lesnar, which we saw a few weeks ago.

#### Alberto Del Rio vs. John Cena

AJ is on commentary. Feeling out process to start until a hiptoss sends Del Rio outside and he takes a breather in the crowd. Back from an early break with Del Rio hitting a shot off the top but missing a charge to crash out onto the floor. Del Rio kicks him in the face (kind of) and avoids a charge to send Cena into the buckle.

AJ and Otunga keep arguing over respect with Styles calling him a rookie. Since this is a Del Rio match and you can guess what he's doing, I have the chance to flash back to Otunga being Styles' replacement at an autograph booth at this year's Axxess. I've never seen a line clear out so fast in my life. Alberto hits a DDT for two and we take another break.

Back with Del Rio diving into a dropkick as Cena starts his

comeback. The Backstabber cuts him off and gives Alberto two, followed by the corner enziguri for the same. Cena reverses the cross armbreaker into the STF but Del Rio is too close to the ropes. The low superkick sets up the cross armbreaker but Cena escapes with a powerbomb. A quick AA gives Cena the pin at 16:56.

**Rating:** C+. Really if you've seen these two fight once, you've seen almost every one of their matches. Del Rio isn't going to beat Cena in a regular match (certainly not at this point in his career) and it gets a little more boring every time these two fight. Del Rio is just so dull like this and it's so boring watching him clearly not care.

AJ runs in for a Phenomenal Forearm. Styles says he's tired of hearing that the future goes through Cena and he's going to be the new face that runs this place. He goes to leave but comes back for more, allowing Cena to hit the AA. Cena isn't done though and hits a big AA through the table to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C-. This show had some moments but it never took off and a lot of that is due to a lack of a really compelling feud. AJ vs. Cena feels like the World Title feud while Ambrose and Ziggler are continuing to fight over who is the best wrestler from Ohio. I still can't buy into the idea that Ziggler has never won a big match when he did the exact same thing Ambrose did. If so, what does that make Dean? Throw in the tag and women's divisions that can fit into a single match and it's hard to find a reason to get excited about this show.

### Results

American Alpha/Usos/Hype Bros b. Ascension/Vaudevillains/Breezango – Grand Amplitude to English

Heath Slater b. Randy Orton via DQ when Orton kept attacking in the corner

Dean Ambrose b. Erick Rowan – Dirty Deeds

Carmella/Becky Lynch b. Natalya/Alexa Bliss – Disarm-Her to Natalya

John Cena b. Alberto Del Rio – Attitude Adjustment

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# Smackdown – August 9, 2016: False Hope

## Smackdown

Date: August 9, 2016

Location: Rabobank Arena, Bakersfield, California

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

Summerslam is coming up but tonight is going to be another light show as a bunch of the roster is off on a tour of Australia. Tonight is again going to be focused on Dean Ambrose vs. Dolph Ziggler and their upcoming WWE World Title match, though there's the chance that the Wyatts will be involved as well. Let's get to it.

Randy Orton is ready to kill Brock Lesnar's legend because all it takes is one RKO to get to Viperville. Alberto Del Rio comes up and says that sounds like Disneyland so Orton offers to give him a VIP tour.

Opening sequence.

Here are Bray Wyatt and Erick Rowan to open the show. Last week Bray did NOT fall to Dolph Ziggler because he was a victim. Ziggler was desperate and in that desperation came a ram into the turnbuckle because it was the only way. You can't defeat Bray Wyatt because he is everywhere. There is no red or blue because this is him against the world.

Cue Dean Ambrose to say this is a new era because Bray is talking about how he's a victim. That sounds like a baby instead of an eater of worlds. Bray invites him into the ring but Dean is smarter than that. This brings out Zigler who charges into the ring on his own with Dean coming in a few seconds later. Rowan is sent outside but Dolph superkicks Dean by accident, only to eat Sister Abigail.

Post break, Ambrose yells at Zigler until the bosses come up and make the tag match. As usual I can only wonder why we need both Bryan and Shane for this segment. One of them accomplishes the same as two but we get both of them anyway.

#### American Alpha vs. Mike Vega/Mikey O'Shea

Before the match, Ascension, the Vaudevillains and the Hype Bros come out to watch. Alpha starts on Vega's leg, followed by the double dropkick and the Grand Amplitude for the pin at 1:11.

All four teams brawl post match with Alpha cleaning house. As they brawl, the announcers talk about the upcoming Smackdown Tag Team Titles.

Miz and Maryse are at Renee Young's interview desk and nearly crawl over her as she sends us to a video package on Miz's #1 contender Apollo Crews. Back with Miz and Maryse laying on the table with Miz calling his wife a modern day Aphrodite. That's enough for Renee as she throws it back to the arena.

#### Becky Lynch vs. Eva Marie

Eva gets her big over the top entrance and breaks her top on the way off the turnbuckle so again no match.

Post match Becky vents some frustration and issues an open challenge.

#### Becky Lynch vs. Alexa Bliss

Joined in progress with Bliss in control for a bit until Becky makes a comeback with a clothesline and the Bexploder. Now here's Eva Marie with the big voiceover doing the full entrance again, allowing Bliss to hit a choke shove and Twisted Bliss for the pin at 2:32.

Bliss was fine here but I'm not wild on the Divas being more sexualized again. They did just fine and got better than ever without it but now we seem to be seeing it again.

Post match Eva calls this a shame but she'll make her debut next

week.

### Randy Orton vs. Alberto Del Rio

The fans chant RKO to start and Orton takes over with some right hands in the corner. Del Rio comes back with a knee to the ribs and then stands there for a second, allowing Orton to snap him back first across the ropes. Back from a break with Orton going shoulder first into the steps and Del Rio working on an armbar.

Alberto gets the armbreaker across the top rope for a few seconds but gets crotched on top for taking too long. That means the superplex but Orton has to escape an armbreaker attempt. The elevated DDT doesn't set up the RKO as Orton takes it outside and loads up the announcers' table instead. That takes too long as well though and Del Rio hits him in the arm with a chair for the DQ at 12:20.

**Rating:** C-. Would anyone notice if Del Rio was traded for a red wagon and a box of Ding Dongs? His entire character can be summed up as "Mexican heel who attacks arms" and that's not enough to carry my interest. I'm also not sure why they didn't have Orton get the clean pin here as it's not like Del Rio needs protecting. Then again they'll probably have a rematch next week because it would be asking a lot to have them come up with a new idea so soon.

Post match Orton hits the RKO to prevent another chair shot.

Heath Slater asks Rhyno to lay down for him. Rhyno says no because he needs to impress his constituents in his Michigan State Senate district (where he really is up for election). Slater suddenly can't remember how many kids he has so Rhyno says no.

Miz arrived earlier today and met Scooby-Doo, demanding that all of his new DVDs are immediately recalled. Scooby shoves him in a van and steals Miz's car.

### Heath Slater vs. Rhyno

Rhyno beats him up to start and shrugs off everything Slater can throw at him. A belly to belly gets two on Heath but he avoids a charge to send Rhyno into the buckle. That's only good for two though as Slater is caught with his feet on the ropes, setting up the Gore to give Rhyno the pin at 3:03.

**Rating:** D. This was all it needed to be though I'm hoping Slater gets to keep going with this run he's on as it's quite entertaining.

Rhyno is fine in the role as well as he can go out there, hit people really hard and then get pinned while keeping most of his credibility. He's a fine role player and that's all it needs to be.

We go to the Wyatts with Rowan talking about wolves being led by a sheep. Bray says Rowan has always been a good soldier (Good?) but tonight he wants Erick to be ready to give his life for the cause.

After a break the bosses are considering giving Heath a job for his fighting spirit until Slater comes in to yell at them for embarrassing him in front of his seven kids. Heath says Smackdown doesn't deserve him and storms off. They change their mind on the contract.

#### Carmella vs. Natalya

Natalya jumps her during the entrance and sends her throat first into the ropes. A stomping in the corner makes the orange Carmella scream and we're off to a bow and arrow. It's off to the abdominal stretch with Natalya lifting Carmella's leg to make it even worse. Nattie By Nature connects but Carmella kicks off the Sharpshooter and puts on her headscissors crossface for the tap at 4:12.

**Rating:** D+. Not much to this one but it's a good way to introduce Carmella. Unfortunately I really don't think she's ready for the main roster in ring level. Keeping it short here like they did with Bliss earlier makes sense though as they both need ring time. I'm still amazed that they think they have enough talent for a division when you have to count Eva and Maryse as members of the roster though. Maybe in a few months when Carmella and Alexa have developed but this is too soon.

Long video on AJ Styles vs. John Cena.

Baron Corbin attacks Kalisto for costing him the triple threat last week.

#### Erick Rowan/Bray Wyatt vs. Dolph Ziggler/Dean Ambrose

The Wyatts run the good guys over to start and Rowan hits a clothesline to send Dolph outside as we take a break less than ninety seconds in. Back with Dean getting the hot tag to clean house, only to spend too much time on the floor with Rowan so Bray can take him down with a big clothesline. Bray sends Dean outside again for the release Rock Bottom on the apron, only to have to escape Dirty Deeds.



Instead Dean hits a swinging neckbreaker and makes the real hot tag to Ziggle. Everything breaks down and Rowan's spinning kick to the face gets two on Dolph. The Zig Zag gets the same with Bray making the save but Dean breaks up Sister Abigail. Dean's suicide dive gets tangled up in the ropes and he crashes down to the floor, leaving Rowan to eat the superkick for the pin at 10:40.

**Rating:** C+. It was false hope at best to imagine Bray being added to the title match and I'm ok with that. Ziggle vs. Ambrose will be a fine match. Not thrilling mind you but definitely entertaining enough for a middle of the shot spot. Rowan taking the fall here was the only way to go as Bray can come back later, hopefully against the winner of the title match and no one is any worse off.

Dean gives him Dirty Deeds as a receipt for earlier in the night. A BIG YES chant ends the show.

**Overall Rating:** C. This was a bit better than last night's show but a lot of the improvement is due to the show being an hour shorter. It's so much better to have this show wrap up at ten instead of eleven as the show doesn't drain you nearly as much. That being said, it was still little more than a bunch of short matches with so many people off on the overseas tour. The show was completely in the middle though as an easy two hour sit but nothing that you needed to see. Things should pick up with the full roster back next week though.

### Results

American Alpha b. Mike Vega/Mikey O'Shea – Grand Amplitude to Vega

Alexa Bliss b. Becky Lynch – Twisted Bliss

Randy Orton b. Alberto Del Rio via DQ when Del Rio used a chair

Rhyno b. Heath Slater – Gore

Carmella b. Natalya – Headscissors Crossface

Dean Ambrose/Dolph Ziggle b. Erick Rowan/Bray Wyatt – Superkick to Rowan

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# Smackdown – August 2, 2016: Double The Problem And It Might Go Away

## Smackdown

Date: August 2, 2016

Location: Bridgestone Arena, Nashville, Tennessee

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

Last week's show wasn't the greatest in the world and the reception has been mixed at best. That doesn't mean the show is in trouble by any means though as Raw started off great and wasn't exactly as strong last night. If nothing else we get American Alpha tonight. Let's get to it.

We open with Shane McMahon and Daniel Bryan watching the end of Raw last night with Randy Orton. Shane isn't happy because he thinks Orton has jeopardized everything but it was pretty awesome. There's a bunch of security standing by but Orton doesn't think they're necessary. The bosses walk away and run into Miz and Maryse with the former saying he's their Jason Bourne. Bryan announces a triple threat match between Baron Corbin, Apollo Creed (yes Creed) and Kalisto with the winner getting the shot at Summerslam. They keep walking and run into Dean Ambrose who says nothing of note.

Opening sequence.

Here's Ambrose to say he loves being the captain of the blue brand

and he's here to stay. That brings us to Summerslam so Dean would like Dolph Ziggler to come out here right now. Ziggler started here as a male cheerleader and knows what it means to work hard to get to the top. Dean doesn't want to hear it though because people told him that he wasn't championship material and you can't pay attention to all that negativity. You can't be worried about what fans chant and what people say on the internet and stealing the show all night long.

All that matters is that Ziggler is facing him for the title at Summerslam. Ziggler goes into a story about going to his first WWE live event when he was five and then being a star at Kent State University as a walk-on. He's spent seven years being told he's too good and then not good enough and he's going to walk into Summerslam to take the title like he deserves to.

Dean leaves and there go the lights with Bray Wyatt appearing to lay out Ziggler with Sister Abigail. Bray calls him worthless and wants a match with Ziggler tonight for the #1 contendership. Putting Wyatt in the spot would make sense but I have a bad feeling that they're going with this as a way to put Ziggler over because the last six to eight years haven't accomplished that yet but having Wyatt lose would be the ticket.

Post break Ziggler tells the bosses that he wants the match.

#### Kalisto vs. Apollo Crews vs. Baron Corbin

Winner gets the Intercontinental Title shot at Summerslam with Miz on commentary. Everyone also now has a little tail of the tape during their entrance to make things feel a little more professional. Corbin gets double teamed to the floor to start but he's able to low bridge Crews to the floor, only to have Kalisto take Baron out with a suicide dive as we go to an early break.

Back with Corbin in control with Kalisto sends him outside. A Samoan drop gets two for Crews but Corbin comes back in with Deep Six for two of his own. Another hurricanrana attempt is countered but Corbin gets dropkicked to the floor, leaving Crews to pin Kalisto for the title shot 6:45.

**Rating:** C. This was barely long enough to rate with the commercial but Crews was the only option. They're not going to go heel vs. heel for the title and Kalisto is a lost cause so Crews had to get the win. It's nice that they're actually doing something with him for a change though and maybe it can actually mean they're serious about these random callups.

Post match Corbin goes after Kalisto with Crews making the save, only to eat a Skull Crushing Finale.

#### Becky Lynch vs. Eva Marie

Eva gets her big over the top entrance, which seems to be her new standard. Actually hang on a second as Eva is claiming a leg injury before the bell. We get a trainer brought in and there's no match. This comes off as the latest answer to "we can't have Eva wrestle live."

We go to Renee Young for an interview with Carmella but Natalya cuts them off. They get catty with each other (because that's what WWE women do) and a match is teased for later.

#### American Alpha vs. Vaudevillains

Gable quickly takes Gotch down to start before it's off to Jordan. That doesn't go as well so it's right back to Gable for a top rope double clothesline. A double dropkick sends the Vaudevillains to the floor and Alpha does their sliding pose. Chad gets beaten down for a few seconds before the hot tag brings in Jordan to clean house. The dropkicks and suplexes setup Grand Amplitude to end English at 3:28.

**Rating:** C+. This was exactly what the debut needed to be as they kept it short but got in everything they needed to hit. These guys really are like a modern day Steiner Brothers and the high flying makes it even more entertaining. I still don't know why they're doing new Smackdown Tag Team Titles though when of the seven or so teams they have, two of them are jobbers and another is Breezango. Anyway though, Alpha looked great here.

Video on John Cena hosting the Teen Choice Awards.

Here's AJ Styles with a message for Cena but he's cut off in a hurry by Cena himself. AJ thinks he could beat Cena up but he's done that time after time and Cena just keeps sticking around. Styles doesn't like Cena making these kids delusional and taking the kids with them. You don't get dessert before dinner, you don't stay up late with school the next day and you don't get a trophy for participation. You're rewarded for winning like AJ did when he beat John Cena last time.

Cena does his standard "they make up their own minds about me" but AJ cuts him off again to rant about his win again. Styles wants to know why Cena is still here with all that stuff he has going on outside of WWE. As usual, it's because Cena loves this place. He loves doing the ESPYs and the Teen Choice Awards because people always ask him when he's leaving WWE. That gives him another chance to say the WWE is his home and he's never leaving.

Tomorrow when AJ is kicking it on his day off, Cena will be in New York on the Late Show representing WWE. All AJ has to do is be a great wrestler who can get up and leave when he needs to. There is no other place for Cena so what the heck is AJ doing here? AJ mockingly applauds him and issues the challenge for Summerslam, which Cena immediately accepts. Cena was great as usual but I'm really not sure what AJ's issue was here and that's not good.

#### Randy Orton vs. Fandango

Security is around ringside. The fans already want an RKO but get Orton working on the leg but walking into a dropkick instead. We're already in a chinlock as JBL incorrectly says Orton's father was in the main event of the first Wrestlemania (being in the corner for doesn't mean being in the match). Breeze tries to come in and eats a powerslam, leaving Fandango to take the elevated DDT. There's the RKO but cue Brock to come in for the F5 and the DQ at 3:05.

**Rating:** D. Normally I wouldn't rate this when the last fifteen seconds of the match were Brock coming out to watch and the F5 but it's not like it matters that much. Thank goodness they can use a team like Breezango as cannon fodder like this. But hey, we should

totally buy them as title contenders soon after this.

During the break, Lesnar was forced to leave the arena.

Heath Slater comes in to see Daniel Bryan and asks for a contract. Bryan gives Slater a match next week and if he wins, he gets a job. Slater thinks he's facing Jumping Marty Lunde (Arn Anderson's real name) but gets Gored by Rhyno instead.

Ambrose says nothing surprises him.

#### Carmella vs. Natalya

And again no match with Natalya jumping Carmella from behind and putting on a Sharpshooter.

The bosses try to talk Ziggler out of the match and he says screw them.

#### Bray Wyatt vs. Dolph Ziggler

Ziggler hits a dropkick and Fameasser for two less than ten seconds in. The threat of a superkick sends Bray outside and he's hobbling on his previously injured leg. Back from a break with Bray hitting a superplex and putting on a cravate. Bray's leg seems fine as Ziggler comes back with clotheslines and a neckbreaker. The superkick is blocked though and Bray gets two off the backsplash.

Bray goes to pull off the turnbuckle pad but gets caught with a Zig Zag for a close two. Even Dean is stunned off the kickout. Sister Abigail is countered into a rollup for two but the release Rock Bottom gets two on Dolph. Back up and Bray is sent face first into the exposed buckle (as usual, right in front of the referee because they're worthless in WWE), followed by a superkick for the title shot at 11:34.

**Rating:** B. The false finishes were really good here but that lack of a DQ makes the match look so faked. At least try to make it clear that the referee isn't looking or something because it makes them look incompetent. Speaking of incompetent, we're really sticking with Ziggler vs. Ambrose at Summerslam? That's what they're going with? I mean, I know it's not a popular move and the match won't be that great but that's what we're getting because WWE decided it.

Post match Erick Rowan comes out to beat down Ziggler. Ambrose's save attempt doesn't work and it's Sister Abigail on Dolph to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C. I liked it better than last week but it's really clear that adding more titles would be a horrible decision right now as the depth just isn't there. The depth was barely there for one set of titles so the solution is clearly to double everything. That ending gives me hope that we won't be seeing just Ambrose vs. Ziggler at Summerslam. The worst part is the match will be at least decent but there's just no WOW factor to it and that's a really bad thing for Smackdown's future.

### Results

Apollo Crews b. Kalisto and Baron Corbin – Rollup to Kalisto

American Alpha b. Vaudevillains – Grand Amplitude to English

Randy Orton b. Fandango via DQ when Brock Lesnar interfered

Dolph Ziggler b. Bray Wyatt – Superkick

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## New Column: Reviewing the

# Reviews

Bringing this one out of mothballs, much like Ziggler as a credible main eventer.

<http://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-reviewing-the-review/>

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## Smackdown – July 26, 2016: The Big Problem

### Smackdown

Date: July 26, 2016

Location: First Niagara Center, Buffalo, New York

Commentators: David Otunga, Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield

We're into the new era of Smackdown now and it should be interesting to see where they go now that they're all on their own. Given who they have on the roster, there's a chance we'll have to get some new titles or at the very least some new stars to challenge for the titles that already exist. Let's get to it.

Daniel Bryan and Shane McMahon are in the back and say this new era is all about us as they walk into the arena.

Just like Raw, there's a new intro accompanied by new music.

The roster is around the ring with the bosses inside. Shane talks about how we have the only WWE Champion here so it's time to find a new #1 contender. Dean Ambrose comes out to say he's ready for a new challenge and has Smackdown Live fever. Tonight there's going to be a Six Pack Challenge for the right to face Ambrose at Summerslam.

Included in that match will be:

John Cena

Bray Wyatt

Dolph Ziggler



AJ Styles

Baron Corbin

That leaves one spot open so let's have a battle royal right now for that final position.

### Battle Royal

Kane, Tyler Breeze, Fandango, Apollo Crews, Konnor, Viktor, Simon Gotch, Aiden English, Kalisto, Zack Ryder, Jey Uso, Jimmy Uso, Erick Rowan, Alberto Del Rio, Mojo Rawley

The camera has a slightly different camera angle, starting from over the cover and down a bit lower instead of the stationary shot. Kane throws out Gotch and clotheslines Ascension out to start clearing out the ring early on. Breezango gets together to eliminate Jey Uso and we take a break.

Back with Rowan and English having been eliminated, leaving us Breeze, Fandango, Kane, Del Rio, Crews, Kalisto and Ryder. I didn't bother listing Rawley as he was eliminated a few seconds after we came back. A double clothesline gets rid of Del Rio and Kane throws out Breezango to get us down to four. Everyone starts taking shots at Kane but Crews seems to injure his knee on a standing shooting star.

All four are down for a bit until thankfully Crews gets up fine. A clothesline sends Ryder to the apron and Kalisto hits Salida Del Sol on Crews. Ryder goes up for the Elbro but slips off, only to have Kane do the dramatic sit up. Kane dumps Kalisto with ease and Ryder follows him out, leaving Kane and Crews. Apollo backflips out of a chokeslam and low bridges Kane out for the win at 12:45.

**Rating:** C. The ending really does this match a lot of good and teasing Kane winning made it even better. Above all else though they kept this moving very quickly and didn't overstay the welcome as so many battle royals do. Crews isn't likely going to win the Six Pack Challenge but it's a nice win to get him noticed.

Crews says he won't celebrate until he wins the main event.

Shelton Benjamin is coming back.

Dolph Ziggler is ready to break through the glass ceiling. You can't be a multiple time World Champion and still complain about the glass ceiling.

### Natalya vs. Becky Lynch

Battleground rematch because those are still a thing in the new era. Becky takes her to the mat for a bit but gets run over by a shoulder. Natalya flips to her feet and slams Becky off the top as we take an early break. Back with Becky jawbreaking her way out of a chinlock and getting two off a guillotine legdrop. The Disarm-Her is broken up and Nattie By Nature gets two. The slow motion Sharpshooter that is only designed to be countered is countered into the Disarm-Her to make Natalya tap at 10:21.

**Rating:** C-. I don't know any other way to put this but Natalya is really dull. She wrestles the exact same match as a heel that she wrestled as a face and there's really no motivation for her other than something that happened a few weeks ago and now she's a villain basically in name only. It doesn't help that these two don't have the best chemistry, especially when they're the best in the Smackdown division.

Post match Becky says you can call her Becky Balboa (No.) but is interrupted by Alexa Bliss who says this is what the new era looks like. This is followed by the returning Naomi, Carmella (almost no reaction) and Eva Marie, who comes out with a voiceover like a movie trailer, listing off every possible positive attribute about herself. It's really corny but I actually liked it, even though Eva didn't say anything.

Baron Corbin says he'll win.

It's time for MizTV with special guest....The Miz. He brags about how awesome he is (well duh) until Randy Orton interrupts. Orton thought Miz was talking about him with all those accolades and agrees that Miz is awesome. Miz brings up the upcoming Brock match and Orton is ready to take Lesnar to Suplex City because he'll be taking Brock to Viperville. Orton suggests a match against Miz tonight and he'll even make it non-title so Maryse accepts for her husband.

### Randy Orton vs. The Miz

Non-title. They're quickly on the floor with Miz stomping Orton down, throwing him back inside, and then whipping him into the steps. Back in and the RKO knocks Miz silly for no cover. Instead Orton stares at the entrance and slowly gets up before slapping the ropes a bit. Miz has been down for about two minutes before getting up to take a second RKO for the pin at 4:53.

**Rating:** F. Oh screw you WWE. Smackdown has almost nothing and you have Miz lose to one move with almost half the match spent on him standing up after the RKO. You know who would have been perfect for this spot? Kane. He's established, he's tough, he loses NOTHING by taking the loss and it makes Orton look like he can beat a monster. This was stupid and one of the things that ticks me off more than any other nonsense WWE pulls.

Video on American Alpha. They're here next week. Well I mean they were here earlier but we don't have time for the hottest tag team act in a long time. I mean, aside from New Day of course.

A jobber is in the ring for a match when Heath Slater comes in and knocks him out. Slater isn't happy that he wasn't drafted to either show and wants to be in the main event. He starts a SIGN HEATH SLATER chant and the fans actually go along with it. Cue Shane McMahon to say Slater needs to send in his resume. Slater says his resume would say he was the brains behind the Nexus, the Corre (there's a name I never thought I'd hear again) and the Social Outcasts. As Slater rants, Rhyno of all people sneaks up behind him for a Gore.

AJ thinks Smackdown is against him because he's too good. Why else wouldn't the Club have been drafted together and why else would he have to fight five guys at once?

Bray Wyatt says it all revolves around him and tonight he'll have the whole world in his hands.

John Cena vs. AJ Styles vs. Apollo Crews vs. Bray Wyatt vs. Baron Corbin vs. Dolph Ziggler

One fall to a finish, no tags and the winner gets a shot at Ambrose at Summerslam. We take an early break and come back with Bray and AJ double teaming Crews with the other three down on the floor. That lasts about as long as you would expect it to as Bray takes AJ's head off with a clothesline, only to be dropkicked down by Ziggler. AJ adds a springboard 450 with Cena diving back in for the save. Crews comes back in with rolling German suplexes on AJ, only to walk into an STO of all things from Corbin. Baron throws on a chinlock, which really shouldn't be seen in a six way match.

We go to another break and come back with stereo Towers of Doom (because that's how wrestling works) and Corbin getting two off Deep Six to Crews. Apollo's toss powerbomb gets two with Bray pulling the

referee out. The Zig Zag should finish Bray but there's no referee. Cena finally remembers he's in this match and AA's Ziggler and AJ with the latter getting two.

Crews and Wyatt take AA's as well but Corbin takes a bit more to get up and elbows his way out. And scratch that as the second attempt works, only to have AJ springboard in with the forearm. Styles turns right into a superkick though and Ziggler gets the very surprising pin at 16:12.

**Rating:** C+. ZIGGLER??? Of all the people you have here you pick ZIGGLER??? I mean I know this lets you have Styles vs. Cena and....well that's about it actually. Yeah Smackdown needs new stars but the best they can do is having Dolph Ziggler's main event push brought out of mothballs? I don't hate it but I'm going to need to see a lot more of this before I accept Ziggler as a top challenger. Shane, Bryan and Ambrose come out and say nothing to fill in the last four minutes of the show.

**Overall Rating:** C. This show's main issue is it followed last night's great Raw. It's certainly not a bad show and they did some good things (Crews getting a push, setting up the title match, the women showing up) but on the other hand you have Orton's completely needless destruction of Miz, Heath Slater and Rhyno instead of American Alpha (which at least gives you something to look forward to next week so it's not all bad. This show set left a lot to be desired but it's certainly not terrible. The problem is Smackdown didn't look great in the first place and now those suspicions are even more confirmed.

### Results

Apollo Crews won a battle royal last eliminating Kane

Becky Lynch b. Natalya – Disarm-Her

Randy Orton b. The Miz – RK0

Dolph Ziggler b. AJ Styles, Apollo Crews, John Cena, Bray Wyatt and Baron Corbin – Superkick to Styles

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

## Monday Night Raw

Date: July 18, 2016

Location: Dunkin' Donuts Center, Providence, Rhode Island

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

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

Opening sequence.

Here are Shane and Stephanie to open things up. They have their standard bickering that makes award show presenters seem like Bogart and Bergman before arguing over testicles vs. lady balls.

Stephanie's big announcement: there's going to be a new Cruiserweight division on Raw. Shane mentions his General Manager and the YES chants begin. That's cut off just as quickly though as Stephanie Raw's General Manager: Mick Foley. I wouldn't have bet on that one but I'd be shocked if he's still around by TLC.

After Stephanie awkwardly dances to his music. Foley compares the feeling here to the Attitude Era because IT'S THE GREATEST THING EVER and feels like the MONDAY NIGHT WARS ALL OVER AGAIN BABY! Stephanie calling him made the little embers turned into a fire. He's ready to bring Raw to new heights and all that jazz.

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

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

#### Chris Jericho/Kevin Owens vs. Sami Zayn/Cesaro

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

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

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

around.

Golden Truth, Titus O'Neil and Jack Swagger try to get on Daniel Bryan's good side until Stephanie interrupts. They insult each other (with jabs about Daniel and Brie planting peaches) for a bit until Daniel says she ruined Raw.

#### Alberto Del Rio vs. Darren Young

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

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

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

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

That goes nowhere so New Day explains How You Doin to Cena. Naturally this turns into a Pokemon Go reference with Woods listing off the ones he's captured but Cena cuts him off, only to be cut off

with a NEW DAY ROCKS chant. This brings out the Wyatts as it turns out we actually have a match to get to.

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

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

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

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

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

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



Earlier today, Seth Rollins was in the empty arena (well save for the cameramen) to talk about how they came through so many stands to fight. He was the brilliant mind and kept Ambrose around to take the beatings and Reigns around to dish them out. After Sunday, Reigns will never be the same again. Ambrose on the other hand is a coward who is running out of places to hide. This Sunday, Rollins will prove he was always the man.

We recap the opening segment.

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

#### Baron Corbin vs. Sin Cara

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

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

#### Charlotte/Dana Brooke vs. Becky Lynch/Sasha Banks

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

Sasha gets beaten down post match.

#### Rusev/Sheamus vs. Dolph Ziggler/Zack Ryder

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

**Rating:** D+. Just a quick way to show off the idea that Rusev is awesome because we didn't know that yet. Ryder needed a win here after that mess last week against Sheamus. Ryder is going to get destroyed on Sunday and I'm not sure where things go after that. Sheamus on the other hand continues to float, just like Ziggler. And no WWE, that's not a hint about a bonus match for Sunday.

Video on Randy Orton.

Video on Cena hosting the ESPYs.

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

#### Raw World Title: Dean Ambrose vs. Seth Rollins

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

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

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

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

he's a STAR ratings disaster. Really good match here though and a big feeling title match.

Stephanie (of course) declares Rollins the new champion and Shane doesn't say anything to close the show. You know you'll see more of this on Sunday.

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

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

#### Results

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

Darren Young b. Alberto Del Rio – Rollup

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

Baron Corbin b. Sin Cara – End of Days

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

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# Smackdown – July 7, 2016: Pre-Draft Momentum

## **Smackdown**

Date: July 7, 2016

Location: Huntington Center, Toledo, Ohio

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton

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

The Club is conferencing.

Chris Jericho is trying to find his blue scarf.

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

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

Opening sequence.

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

## Jey Uso vs. Seth Rollins

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

and asks Seth if it's time to go to a commercial.

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

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

Dean: "The winner of the match, the human equivalent of a root canal." Seth bails at the threat of a fight so Ambrose can't raise his hand. Dean: "I'll just raise this instead." And he holds up the title.

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

#### Zack Ryder vs. Sheamus

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

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

Baron Corbin video.

Rusev accepts the challenge.

#### Becky Lynch vs. Natalya

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

We recap the Wyatt Family and New Day from Monday.

Xavier Woods is worried about going to the Wyatt Compound because they have no idea what's going to happen there. Woods isn't happy with what his brothers have decided but he'll stand by them. Did the Wyatts send them directions to get there? Otherwise we could be in for a long scavenger hunt.

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

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

#### AJ Styles vs. Enzo Amore

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

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

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

a completely face promo from Owens and he was just as good as always.

### The Miz vs. Kalisto

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Sami Zayn vs. Chris Jericho

Kevin Owens is at ringside and starts ripping on Byron before his music even ends. Owens: "Hi Sami! Hope you have a good match! I hope you break your ankle." Jericho wristlocks him down for a bit until Sami scores with three straight armdrags. They head outside with Sami hitting his barricade moonsault but Jericho punches him in the face and mocks the OLE chants as we take a break.

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

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

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

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

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

### Results

Seth Rollins b. Jey Uso – Pedigree

Zack Ryder b. Sheamus – Elbro

AJ Styles b. Enzo Amore – Styles Clash

Miz b. Kalisto – Skull Crushing Finale

Sami Zayn b. Chris Jericho – Rollup

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