

Smackdown – June 20, 2017: With Some Fresh Anger

Smackdown

Date: January 20, 2017

Location: Nutter Center, Dayton, Ohio

Commentators: Tom Phillips, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

We're past Money in the Bank and there are two briefcases floating around the blue show. In addition to that, we also saw Jinder Mahal retain his Smackdown World Title when he defeated Randy Orton for the second time. There's a chance we'll be setting up a third match between the two as we head towards Battleground in just over a month. Let's get to it.

We open with a quick recap of Carmella winning the first women's Money in the Bank ladder match with a big assist from James Ellsworth.

The other participants from the women's ladder match are outside Daniel Bryan's door but he won't help them at the moment.

Opening sequence.

Here are Carmella and James Ellsworth to celebrate the win. Carmella addresses the controversy around her winning the briefcase and decides she doesn't care. She's tired of being overlooked compared to all of the other women when she's this great. There have been other issues like this over the years but all the little internet trolls got on their "Tweeter" to talk to Bryan. She won the briefcase fair and square and there's nothing anyone can do about it. This was a solid heel speech but you can tell they're setting up something for later tonight.

Charlotte complains to Bryan and tells him to do the right thing.

Big E. vs. Jimmy Uso

Big E. isn't happy with the Usos leaving on Sunday, saying "the Usos dipped with those ships before we could put them around our hips."

We see some stills of the Usos bailing on the match before the Usos introduce us to the warden of the Usos Penitentiary: Deput E! Joined in progress with Jimmy in trouble and staying on the downed Big E. That doesn't last long though as Big E. powers up and throws Jimmy around like he's a power lifter and Jimmy is a small Samoan wrestler. The Usos tease walking out again but Kofi dives on Jey and Woods blocks Jimmy from escaping. Back in and the Big Ending puts Jimmy away at 3:19.

Rating: D+. Just a quick match to keep the feud going here and there's nothing wrong with that. Big E. is actually a pretty accomplished singles wrestler but he's been in the dominant tag team for so long that it's forgotten. I'm sure we'll see more of this kind of match and that's a fine way to fill in time before the next pay per view title match.

Natalya and Tamina come into Daniel's office and suck up to him about being a new father. Tamina gets to the point and asks what he's going to do about Carmella. Daniel promises an answer by tonight.

Naomi thinks Bryan will make the right decision and will face anyone she has to face. Lana comes in and asks what about her. There was interference that cost her the match so Lana wants a rematch. Naomi: "How thirsty are you?" Naomi agrees to a rematch next week.

We look at some stills of Mahal beating Orton again.

Earlier today, Orton sat down to talk about losing his cool on Sunday. He knows how the numbers game works and Mahal played it to perfection. Orton is ready to do whatever it takes to get his hands on Mahal again. Mahal disrespected his family so maybe Orton can go to India and hit RKO's on every member of the Mahal Family.

Including his grandmother! That's a running trend for Orton and it's kind of disturbing.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Shinsuke Nakamura

The threats of some early kicks send Ziggler to the floor so he tries a more amateur style back inside. That's fine with Nakamura

who sends him into the ropes and says bring it. More strikes stagger Ziggler but he sends Nakamura into the post and hits that good looking dropkick for two. A big toss out to the floor knocks Ziggler silly though and we take a break.

Back with Nakamura fighting out of a chinlock and scoring with another kick to the head. Ziggler drops him again and mocks Nakamura's little dance, earning himself another series of kicks. The running knees in the corner connect for two but Ziggler kicks him in the knee and gets two off a very ugly Fameasser.

Ziggler's superkick misses and Nakamura reverses into a triangle choke into a cross armbreaker until Ziggler rakes the eye. There's the Zig Zag for a close two and it's off to the sleeper. Nakamura finally rolls out of it and knees Dolph in the back of the head for a breather. Kinshasa finally puts Ziggler away at 16:49.

Rating: B. Some of Ziggler's normal issues aside, this was much better than they've done in recent outings. They were working hard out there, which is a very nice touch considering what we usually get from them. Nakamura needed one of those hard fought victories, even though he's still nowhere near what he used to be down in NXT. Or at least in that one match with Zayn.

Bryan is in the back with Sami Zayn, who gets to face Baron Corbin next week. Becky Lynch comes in and Sami offers his condolences on her loss, which he thought was unfair. As everyone else has done tonight, she asks Bryan to do something about this.

Here's Kevin Owens for an open challenge and a chat. He didn't like what happened on Sunday because everyone conspired against him becoming Mr. Money in the Bank. This is the Land of Opportunity and tonight he's giving someone from Dayton, Ohio a chance to become the US Champion. Cue AJ Styles to say he'll take the title. Owens isn't cool with that because AJ isn't from Dayton. This brings out Chad Gable of all people, who says he just moved to Dayton this morning. He even has an address and we're ready to go.

US Title: Chad Gable vs. Kevin Owens

Gable is challenging and easily takes Owens to the mat a few times before an ankle lock sends Owens outside. We take a break less than forty five seconds in and come back with Gable getting superkicked for two. Another suplex drops Owens and a moonsault gives Gable two of his own. Not that it matters as the Pop Up Powerbomb is good for the pin to retain the title at 5:59. There wasn't enough shown to rate but Gable looked energetic in defeat.

The Hype Bros are in Bryan's office and think they deserve the Tag Team Title shot that they earned back in December. Bryan says things have changed a bit so if they can beat the Usos next week, they can have a future title shot.

Here's Bryan for his announcement on the ladder match. He brings out all of the participants in the ladder match, each with their own entrance. Bryan says that Carmella did follow the rules by being the first woman to retrieve the briefcase but it has never been done this way before. Therefore, we are in uncharted territory.

Ellsworth thinks Bryan being the father of a vegan hippie baby has made him soft. The women get all catty with each other (duh) with Charlotte threatening to make Natalya look like Ellsworth if she doesn't shut up. Bryan cuts them off and says Carmella has to hand over the briefcase. Next week, there's going to be ANOTHER women's Money in the Bank ladder match with the same five participants. A brawl breaks out with Becky and Charlotte beating Carmella up.

ARE YOU SERIOUS??? Let me make sure I have this straight: I sat through weeks of BUILDING MOMENTUM with WWE telling me that it didn't really matter and now we're doing the EXACT SAME MATCH just nine days later? I really have to go back and sit through the same thing that fast? Then what was the point of the pay per view version? After all that build and all that nonsense, they're just saying "eh do it again"? Oh and add to it another pay per view rematch for the Women's Title. They really are doing this same stuff over and over again and trying to act like it's not just a ratings ploy. This is stupid, even by WWE standards.

Jinder Mahal vs. Luke Harper

Non-title. Harper slugs away to start and dropkicks Jinder to the floor as we take another early break. Back with Mahal grabbing a chinlock until Harper fights up with something like a clothesline. A big boot and the sitout Boss Man Slam give Harper two but Jinder comes back with a superplex. Cue Baron Corbin with the briefcase...but he walks right back up the ramp with it and leaves. Harper gets in a superkick but has to swing at one of the brothers. The Khallas gives Mahal the pin at 9:40.

Rating: D+. Just your standard Mahal match here with the Singhs offering the easiest distraction in the world for the finish. Mahal REALLY needs a better finisher though as that cobra clutch slam is one of the weakest things you're going to find. Having Mahal win a match like this is a good idea though and helps give Mahal some credibility. If they just have to sacrifice Harper again, so be it, which seems to be the company's mantra on Smackdown.

Post match Orton comes out to clean house and hits the hanging DDT off the barricade. Mahal bails while Orton gives both Singhs an RKO (more like a Stunner to the second one) to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. This was your run of the mill placeholder show as they took a breath after Money in the Bank and started planting some seeds for the upcoming stuff. That being said, EGADS they really are redoing all the women's stuff, making that pay per view really look like the biggest waste of time in a long while. This is the kind of thing that makes my head hurt and it's not making their existing problems any better. They'll probably pop a quick rating for it but that doesn't make their pay per view business that much better. Not a terrible show here but it's one really designed to set things up for the future.

Results

Big E. b. Jimmy Uso – Big Ending

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Dolph Ziggler – Kinshasa

Kevin Owens b. Chad Gable – Pop Up Powerbomb

Jinder Mahal b. Luke Harper – Khallas

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Money in the Bank 2017: A Show Where You Just Need A Recap... Like Mine!

Money in the Bank 2017

Date: June 18, 2017

Location: Scottrade Center, St. Louis, Missouri

Commentators: Tom Phillips, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

It's time to climb. Tonight is all about the ladders and the briefcases, which could be cashed in tonight, assuming we have a bit of luck. This has the potential to be an interesting show with a five match card, though two of them are major ladder matches whose entrances alone will take about ten minutes. Let's get to it.

Kickoff Show: Hype Bros vs. Colons

This is the Hype Bros' first match since December after Zack Ryder's knee injury. Epico shoulders Ryder down to start but the Bros (as opposed to the cousins) take over without much effort. Primo decides

to slap Mojo in the face, which just fires him up. The Colons get in a shot to Ryder's knee though and we take a break. Back with Ryder's knee still in trouble until a neckbreaker drops Primo. The hot tag brings in Mojo for Hyperdrive (something like a release F5) and the running punch in the corner. The Hype Ryder is good for the pin on Primo at 8:11.

Rating: D+. Just a "hey Ryder's back" match here and that's fine. The Hype Bros could be inserted straight into the title picture and likely should be after they won the battle royal before the injury. The Colons aren't going to lose anything with this result and that's the point of having them around.

The opening video looks at the World Title match, along with the ladder matches. That's quite the original thinking.

Charlotte vs. Natalya vs. Becky Lynch vs. Carmella vs. Tamina

Women's Money in the Bank, for the first time ever. During the entrances, we go to a video on Naomi winning the title at Wrestlemania, which goes into a history of the title itself and how important it is to be the first Miss Money in the Bank (that has a good ring to it). Tamina stays in the ring to start and kicks ladders back to the floor but everyone else gets back in without too much effort.

The fans get behind Becky but have to settle for Tamina hitting a Samoan drop on Carmella (in her money themed gear). Natalya gets catapulted face first into a ladder as it's still all Tamina so far. Becky kicks a ladder into Tamina and is willing to help Natalya take her down again. Natalya loads up the ladder as we're firmly in the "everyone lays around" stage.

Charlotte makes a save with an electric chair drop but it's Carmella coming up the ladder for the save. That's fine with Tamina, who shoves the ladder over for a big double crash. Natalya suplexes Charlotte down again but gets sent into a ladder for her efforts. Charlotte and Carmella both make saves, followed by Tamina stopping Charlotte after her hand touched the case.

Tamina and Natalya are sent to the floor for the big twisting flip dive from Charlotte. Becky powerbombs Carmella off the ladder but James Ellsworth comes in for the save. Naturally he goes up and grabs the briefcase, which he throws down to Carmella...for the win at 13:15.

Rating: D. Well that was really disappointing. There was no major spot (save for Charlotte's twisting dive, which she's more than topped in a regular match) and the ending was really stupid. After all the talk about this being the first ever moment for a woman, it's the man who climbs up to win the thing? This was a really bad idea with the ending making it much worse than it could have been on its own.

Lana is glad she's a major underdog because it's going to make her victory that much sweeter.

Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. New Day

New Day is challenging and have some prison jokes due to the Usos calling the tag division the Uso Penitentiary. Kofi and Jimmy start things off with the champs in early trouble. One heck of a clothesline drops Kofi though and the twins send him into the post to really take over. Kofi's sunset flip is broken up but he gets in a standing double stomp for the real break.

Big E. comes in for the spear through the ropes and it's right back to Kofi, who gets his bad knee taken out. We hit the Tequila Sunrise (I had forgotten that was a thing) with Jimmy diving into a belly to belly from Big E. Kofi's leg is fine enough to grab a dragon sleeper but has to let go to go after Jey.

The SOS gets two and the Big Ending gets the same with Jey making the save. Woods offers a trombone solo for a distraction but the spear through the ropes hits knees. Kofi dives onto both champs and the Midnight Hour is good for two with Jimmy making the save. That's enough for the Usos as they walk into the crowd for the countout at 12:21.

Rating: C. This started off slow but got a lot better by the ending.

That being said, I'm not sure I want to see a rematch but it's not like they have a ton of other options. It's not like we have the Hype Bros being owed a title shot or American Alpha ready on the sidelines or Breezango still popular at the moment or anything like that. No we need a rematch instead, which isn't the worst idea but it's not the most exciting.

Bob Orton Jr. and Sgt. Slaughter are in the back.

Women's Title: Naomi vs. Lana

Lana is defending in her singles debut. Naomi drives her into the corner to start but gets taken down by the hair. That just earns her a nipup, only to have Naomi miss a high crossbody. The fans want Rusev, because they have no interest in a gorgeous blonde in a rather small outfit.

We're already in the chinlock before a suplex sends Naomi legs first into the ropes. Naomi grabs a cross armbreaker for a breather but goes with some kicks for the real control. The Rear View gets two but Lana comes right back with the sitout spinebuster for two. So much for th...and here's Carmella. She teases handing the briefcase over but changes her mind and leaves. Naomi has had enough of this and grabs her reverse Rings of Saturn for the pin at 6:27.

Rating: D+. Lana looked great (both physically and in the ring) but having her lose is the right call. That being said, it wasn't the brightest move to set up a finisher and then have her use it in a match for two. The Carmella thing didn't need to happen as it took the focus off of Lana, which wasn't a good idea either. Just too much going on here, though Lana looked outstanding.

Carmella leaves without doing anything.

It's Fashion Files time. Based on the description Breeze gave, forensics are sending over an idea. The fax says "answer the door" and they find a VHS tape. Fandango: "Is it Coliseum"? The tape says WATCH ME and they see two guys in silhouette saying they did it. They'll reveal themselves if Breezango meets them in the ring tonight. So there's a bonus match.

Here are the debuting Mike and Maria Kanellis (no Bennett mentioend). Maria calls herself the first lady and says she's spent years looking for the perfect partner. Now they're here to educate everyone on Smackdown Live about the power of love. They dance and that seems to be their gimmick: they love each other a lot.

We recap the women's ladder match and whether the ending was fair or not.

We recap Jinder Mahal vs. Randy Orton. Mahal won the title last month in a major upset and tonight it's a rematch in Orton's hometown.

Some legends are at ringside and get a special presentation for the crowd. We have:

Greg Gagne, Larry Hennig, Baron Von Raschke, Sgt. Slaughter, Bob Orton Jr. (from St. Louis) and Ric Flair.

Smackdown World Title: Randy Orton vs. Jinder Mahal

Orton is challenging and tries an RKO, which sends Mahal bailing to the floor. Back in and Orton takes him down and stomps away, only to go after the Singh Brothers. Mahal uses the distraction to take out the knee and send Orton into the barricade a few times. That's fine with Randy, who whips Mahal over the barricade and into his father's lap.

Mahal goes after the knee again though and grabs a leglock back inside. They head to the floor a second time with the knee being dropped onto the barricade, followed by a superkick for two. With Flair looking on, Mahal grabs a Figure Four for a bit, followed by driving the bad knee into the mat a few times.

Orton fights back and grabs a superplex (makes sense on Father's Day) for two. The clotheslines really confirm the comeback and a powerslam sends Mahal to the apron. There's the hanging DDT and the RKO (almost taken like a Stunner) but one of the Singh Brothers puts Mahal's boot on the ropes.

The referee teases a DQ but ejects the Brothers instead. Before they go though, the Brothers grab Bob Orton and get pummeled by Randy.

One of them gets dropped onto the announcers' table and the other gets an RKO on the floor. The first takes an RKO through the table as the referee is fine with all of this. Back in and Mahal kicks the knee out and hits the Khallas to retain at 20:58.

Rating: C-. The more I see of Mahal, the more impressed I am with him. He's certainly not a great performer and is in WAY over his head but he's done everything right and is playing a good heel. Orton having to deal with the Brothers to save his dad was a fine story and it's not like losing another match is going to damage a made man like him.

Breezango vs. Ascension

This sounds a bit misleading. Konnor knocks Breeze down to start as the announcers bicker about Breezango's furry selfie sticks. Viktor comes in for a forearm to the back of the neck and Konnor adds an elbow for two. Fandango comes in and gets beaten down as well, only to grab a small package to put Konnor away at 3:49.

Rating: D. So that happened. Despite Breezango beating Ascension before and the announcers basically mocking Ascension for being on the show, that's all we got here. Just nothing to talk about here despite it seeming like the perfect place for some kind of a swerve so an interesting team could have attacked Breezango.

We recap the men's Money in the Bank ladder match, with the video focusing on how life changing of an event it can be.

Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Baron Corbin vs. AJ Styles vs. Kevin Owens vs. Sami Zayn vs. Dolph Ziggler

Things get going before the entrances can even finish as Corbin jumps Nakamura during his entrance. Nakamura takes a ladder to the ribs and is left laying as Corbin comes to the ring. Corbin cleans house to start with a few ladder shots, leaving Sami to dive through the ropes and take Owens out. A Ziggler superkick drops Corbin and it's Sami bringing a ladder inside with AJ making the save.

The Phenomenal Forearm is broken up by Ziggler but he dives into Deep Six on the floor. Owens starts cleaning house with the ladder

until AJ kicks it back at him. Kevin comes right back and goes up top, only to have Sami slam him onto the ladder, which is completely mangled. Sami loads up the ladder as something happens off camera and here's Ziggler to make the save.

The Blue Thunder Bomb drops Dolph but Corbin takes out Sami. Ziggler and Corbin take out AJ but Baron takes out Dolph and goes up. That just earns him a Zig Zag off the ladder, followed by Sami sunset bombing Ziggler off the ladder for the next major bump. Dolph is bleeding from the eye as he rolls to the floor, leaving Sami vs. Owens on the apron.

The half and half suplex plants Owens but AJ's Phenomenal Forearm makes another save. Corbin bridges a ladder between the steps and the table to chokeslam AJ. Owens goes for the ladder but AJ is up in a hurry for the save, followed by an AA onto the ladder. Corbin heads up this time but it's Nakamura, complete with music, for the save. A series of kicks drop Corbin and there are the running knees to the ribs in the corner, followed by a hard knee to send Corbin outside.

Back to back Kinshasas drop Ziggler and another one hits Sami. Nakamura heads up top but gets stopped by AJ for a staredown. They move the ladder out of the way and do the big slugout, capped off by a forearm to Nakamura. Corbin shoves Nakamura and Styles off the ladder though and grabs the briefcase (at a Jack Swagger pace) for the win at 29:51.

Rating: B+. This was much more about the collection of spots than the flow of the match and there's nothing wrong with that. Corbin was probably the best option for winning the thing as putting it on a heel makes the most sense. That leaves you with Ziggler (spare me) and the US Champion so options, meaning Corbin was the best bet.

Overall Rating: D+. This is a show that exists and you look up the results for the next day. The big draw here is finding out who is going to be cashing in the briefcases at some point in the future, which really doesn't sound like the most interesting in the world. The undercard was nothing to see either (outside of Lana that is)

and it didn't offer anything special. Totally skippable show, which isn't the biggest surprise.

Results

Carmella b. Tamina, Becky Lynch, Charlotte and Natalya – James Ellsworth threw Carmella the briefcase

New Day b. Usos via countout

Naomi b. Lana – Double arm trap

Jinder Mahal b. Randy Orton – Khallas

Baron Corbin b. AJ Styles, Dolph Ziggler, Shinsuke Nakamura, Kevin Owens and Sami Zayn – Corbin pulled down the ladder

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<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

Money in the Bank 2017 Preview

Thank goodness we're finally here. I've made no secret of the fact that I can't stand the build to this pay per view and I never have

been able to. We've been BUILDING MOMENTUM to this show for over a month now and it's time to finally pay it off, likely with someone who hasn't built any momentum yet getting the big win. On top of that...well there's not much actually as there's a five match card with two matches being Money in the Bank ladder matches. Let's get to it.

Kickoff Show: Hype Bros vs. Colons

This one is a bit confusing as I really don't see the reason to have the Hype Bros, who are having their return match after being split up over the last few months due to Zack Ryder's knee injury. In theory this would be a better spot for Breezango, who have been having issues with the Colons over the last few weeks. Either way, it's nice to have another team on the roster, even if American Alpha is STILL sitting on the sidelines.

I'll take the Hype Bros to win of course as there's no reason for the Colons to beat them, especially in their first match back. The Hype Bros are still owed a Tag Team Title shot after winning the tag team battle royal a few months back so having them lose to the heel jobber tag team doesn't make the most sense in the world. So yeah, the Hype Bros win in an entertaining match with Ryder getting the pin.

Smackdown World Title: Jinder Mahal(c) vs. Randy Orton

This is the rematch from last month when Orton lost the title in the first place for one of the biggest upsets in a very long time. That left us with Mahal as the World Champion, which has been hit or miss at best (though he hasn't been the disaster I was expecting). Now we're in Orton's hometown and it's time for his big rematch.

That being said, I don't think he's going to get the title back here. Mahal is the kind of guy who can hold the title for a little while longer and then lose in the big match to give someone a rub. While I have little doubt that John Cena is going to be one of the names that will get a shot, I think it's going to be someone a little lower on the pole than Orton or Cena to take the title. Orton loses here, likely through some form of shenanigans again.

Smackdown Tag Team Titles: Usos(c) vs. New Day

I'm not sure on this one as the Usos have been entertaining with their over the top promos but they've hardly done anything with the titles. On the other hand you have the New Day, who really seem like they're just playing the greatest hits. New Day has been in a weird place for a good while now as they really don't have anything going on at the moment but have also outgrown the tag division. Why they're not in the ladder match helping Kofi Kingston win the briefcase isn't clear but my guess is that's a bit too complicated for the "creative" staff.

I think I'll go with the Usos retaining here, unfortunately as we continue to wait on the return of American Alpha to go after the belts again. The tag division looks good on Tuesday nights but when you actually look at what they've got going on, things take quite the fall. New Day is a great addition to the division but I don't think they're going to be getting the belts here.

Smackdown Women's Title: Naomi(c) vs. Lana

This is one of those rare matches where the result is going to depend on what you think is going to happen in the Money in the Bank ladder match. At the moment, I think a certain heel is going to be winning the briefcase and as a result, it should be the face winning here. On the other hand, I have a bit of a difficult time believing that Lana is going to be hyped up so much, only to lose in her singles debut.

I'll stick with my original train of thought though and go with Naomi retaining. They've done a good job of setting Naomi up as a major player in the division as she's gone from pretty much nothing to someone who feels like a star. Lana should get a big push down the line, but I don't think she's going to win here, likely so WWE can have someone chase her with a briefcase.

Men's Money in the Bank Ladder Match

And now it's time for a mess. It's always hard to guess what they're going to do here but as is usually the case, a heel is the better

option to win. I have a hard time getting behind the idea that a face is going to be chasing the champion and basically trying to steal the title from a downed champion. They've kept this down to six names this year which should make for a better match, though it also keeps the options for winners down.

That being said, I'll go with Baron Corbin winning here. There's no change Dolph Ziggler is going to win (please don't let that come back and bite me), Sami Zayn winning doesn't quite feel right, AJ Styles and Shinsuke Nakamura don't need to win a briefcase to be in the title hunt, Kevin Owens shouldn't win while still being US Champion. Corbin has kind of been left off to the side, and that would make him a good Mr. Money in the Bank.

Women's Money in the Bank Ladder Match

That still feels weird to write out. This is another of those groundbreaking matches which is likely going to be treated as something that is bigger than it is good, though that's not the worst thing in the world. They've set up some potential options here, but the favorite almost has to be Charlotte, who tends to dominate everything else with no one (save for Sasha Banks) really coming near her.

That being said, I'll go with Carmella to win. Charlotte seems too obvious, Natalya and Tamina aren't interesting enough and Becky Lynch is someone who has been there before. Carmella feels like Corbin earlier, and that means she could sneak in under the radar and take the case. If this goes on before Naomi vs. Lana, I really wouldn't be surprised to see her cash in the briefcase that night and walk away with the title. At least it would be nice if that was the case so we don't have to have another briefcase running around for months.

Overall Thoughts

I'm not sure on this one but the good thing about having a show with such a short card is that only two or so matches need to be good to really make it work. However, it can also mean that the show can go badly for the exact same reason. The good thing though is that a

gimmick show like this is almost always going to be good because the namesake matches are going to be entertaining enough on their own.

I'm hoping that at least one of the briefcases will be cashed in tomorrow night as I really can't stand the briefcases, at least in the way that they're booked most of the time. They're going to be around though and if the big matches are good enough then the rest of the show is going to work as a result. Just keep the Orton vs. Mahal match short so we can get on to John Cena making his return and going after the title, as he probably should have done.

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New Column: Cool it with Mahal the Backlash

What else was I going to talk about? An amazing angle to end Takeover?

<https://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-cool-mahal-backlash/>

Backlash 2017: So That Happened

Backlash 2017

Date: May 21, 2017

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Commentators: Byron Saxton, Tom Phillips, John Bradshaw Layfield

It's time for another Smackdown exclusive, which could mean things are hit or miss tonight. The card isn't exactly the best with Jinder Mahal challenging Smackdown World Champion Randy Orton and AJ Styles challenging Kevin Owens for the US Title. Other than that though, this is kind of a stretch for a pay per view. Let's get to it.

Kickoff Show: Tye Dillinger vs. Aiden English

This is their third match and this time English sings himself to the ring. Dillinger starts with the ten but English says this is his town (which it actually is). English starts cheating to send Dillinger into the corner though and the posing takes us to an early break. Back with Dillinger working on a chinlock until the comeback starts up. Tye knocks him down and drops a knee before hitting the ten left hands in the corner. Aiden gets in an elbow but misses a Swanton, allowing the Tyebreaker to finish him off at 8:18.

Rating: C-. This was all you would have expected it to be and there's nothing wrong with that. I don't think anyone is taking Dillinger seriously as a major star right now but there's a lot of value in having a cheer/signature deal that's going to wake the fans up every single time. The TEN thing is going to work so just stick with the classics.

The opening video doesn't have much of a theme but it does touch on almost all of tonight's matches.

Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Dolph Ziggler

Makes sense for the opener and DEAR GOODNESS do the fans love Nakamura. Feeling out process to start with Ziggler not being able to do much, other than be told to bring it. Nakamura takes him into the corner and starts picking up Good Vibrations. Dolph grabs the neckbreaker over the ropes and slaps on a chinlock as the fans are actually split.

Ziggler's dropkick and the Shot to the Heart get two but Nakamura kicks him in the head to take over again. The running knee in the ribs connects as they're not exactly going crazy out there. A triangle doesn't last very long with Ziggler making the ropes. It's way too early for Kinshasa so Ziggler hits the Fameasser for two.

Ziggler tunes up the band but has to settle for the Zig Zag for another near fall. A powerbomb of all things is broken up and Nakamura kicks him in the head again, only to get superkicked in the back of the head. That's not enough either so Ziggler tries a single leg, earning himself some knees to the head. The middle rope Kinshasa misses but the regular version is good for the pin on Ziggler at 15:48.

Rating: B. Certainly not a classic but it was a fine way for Nakamura to show that he was there. I don't think anyone was expecting a masterpiece here but Nakamura just doing the greatest hits is getting a bit old. He's pretty much lived off his reputation from the Zayn match and hasn't gotten back to that point since. I'm not saying he can't but I'd like to see it again. Then again, maybe it's because this was the dark match at the last two house shows I've been to so there's not much of a fresh factor here.

Here's the full Fashion Files segment from Tuesday to fill time.

Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Breezango

Breezango is challenging and Breeze is still in the janitor costume, complete with mustache and mop. Jimmy comes at him and gets stopped with a mop to the fact. That earns Tyler a superkick and the mop is broken, much to the fans' annoyance. Fandango comes in for some hip

gyrating...and Breeze is now dressed as an old woman, complete with blue hair, a dress and a cane. Fans: "LET'S GO GRANDMA!"

We get the standard set of spots: flashing and the Bronco Buster, only to have Jimmy kick him down as well. JBL goes along with the whole gag and gets a dress thrown at his head. Jimmy goes shoulder first into the post and the hot tag brings in Fandango. Everything breaks down and Jey is sent outside, leaving Jimmy to take an Unprettier for two. Breeze is sent over the barricade but comes right back with a dive to take them down. JBL says these guys are about to win the titles and it's a superkick to Fandango to retain the titles at 9:12.

Rating: C. This is going to vary quite a bit depending on your taste. I'm a big Breezango fan so I liked some of the jokes, but, as usual, JBL really hurt things here with all of his talking about how funny things were. It's the beating you over the head with the COMEDY that gets old and JBL is horrible about it. I'm fine with Breezango not winning here but hopefully they stick around.

We recap Sami Zayn vs. Baron Corbin, which is your standard bully vs. underdog story. Corbin has jumped Zayn multiple times now and Sami is fighting back.

Sami Zayn vs. Baron Corbin

Zayn starts fast and sends Corbin to the floor for the flip dive, only to have Corbin bail away. Sami isn't willing to wait and dives onto Corbin to send him into the barricade as it's one sided early on. Back in and Corbin starts the power game with some forearms and a bearhug to slow things down. A spinebuster drops Zayn again and his high crossbody is good for two.

Another shot to the back slows him down though and a chokebreaker gives Corbin two more. He takes Sami up top, only to get taken down with a sunset bomb for a nice near fall. Sami's tornado DDT is broken up and Corbin makes things even worse by blocking the exploder in the corner.

Instead he grabs two more off a crucifix, only to walk into Deep Six

for another two. They're trading near falls here and it's not half bad. Sami gets sent outside but comes back in with a boot to the face, followed by the Helluva Kick for the clean pin at 14:19. JBL is rather stunned by the upset and I can't say I blame him.

Rating: B-. Cool. They told a good story here with Sami hanging in there as long as he could until he caught Corbin with his one big move. Corbin can win the rematch but at some point they had to give Sami a big win to keep his credibility. I'm very surprised here and that's not a bad thing. Good match and a win that Sami probably needed more.

Xavier Woods, Ember Moon, Zack Ryder and someone else play Rocket League on Up Up Down Down.

Jinder Mahal and the Singh Brothers arrive an hour and twelve minutes into the show. Tonight he's going to turn this city into a beautiful thing despite everything thinking he's evil and horrible. We hear some Punjabi with Mahal promising to become champion.

Welcoming Committee vs. Charlotte/Becky Lynch/Naomi

Lynch has a long red mohawk tonight and gets thrown into the corner for her efforts. It's off to Charlotte to take over on Natalya but the strutting gets her in trouble as she's knocked into the Welcoming Committee corner. That doesn't last long either though as it's off to Naomi, who takes the beating for her team as well.

Becky gets pulled off the apron to prevent another tag though and Tamina gets two off a Samoan drop. The second attempt at the hot tag works a bit better and Becky comes in with the Bexploder for two on Natalya. Carmella has to break up the Disarm-Her and Tamina adds a shot of her own, setting up the Sharpshooter to make Becky tap at 10:07.

Rating: D+. This was as uninteresting as you would have expected it to be and that's fine. The Welcoming Committee needed this win and as stupid of an idea as they are, they should have gone over here. Becky taking the fall is fine and the best option, especially if it leads to her joining the team (not logical but the best choice).

We recap the US Title. It's another simple story: the Face of America vs. the Face That Runs the Place. Owens is extra smug lately but has shown how violent he can get against Chris Jericho.

US Title: AJ Styles vs. Kevin Owens

Owens is defending. AJ is all fired up to start so Owens bails, only to have them switch places with AJ smirking a bit. Back in and AJ scores with a dropkick but Owens just blasts him with a clothesline to take over. We hit the chinlock with Owens demanding to ASK HIM, followed by a DDT and two backsplashes for two. Owens spends a bit too much time talking trash though and gets caught in belly to back faceplant.

The fireman's carry flip into a backbreaker gives AJ two and he smiles a bit. Styles takes too long going up top though and gets caught with a superkick, followed by a big double underhook into a neckbreaker for a cool looking move. Owens isn't done as he sends AJ outside with Styles' knees going into the steps. A Cannonball against the barricade sets up a Cannonball against the leg in the corner as Owens certainly has a target.

We hit a half crab and an ankle lock of all things but AJ has fought Kurt Angle before and dives over to the ropes. Owens takes him up for a superplex but gets pulled down with a sunset bomb for two, only to have the Phenomenal Forearm broken up. A double underhook implant DDT gives Owens two but frustration starts to set in, allowing AJ to score with the Pele.

Now it's Styles taking him to the top for a superplex, meaning Owens can use the swinging superplex for two more. They head to the apron with AJ getting in a suplex on the apron but both guys are done. Owens throws him into the timekeeper's area but eats a Phenomenal Forearm. AJ isn't done though and loads up the Styles Clash on the top with JBL freaking out. His foot actually goes through a hole in the table though and Owens beats the count back in at 21:09.

Rating: B+. Oh yeah that worked. These two beat the heck out of each other and traded bombs until Styles literally slipped and fell for the loss. You know there's going to be a great rematch and that's

going to be awesome as well. I had a blast with this match and it's easily the second best match of the weekend (nothing was touching that UK Title match though).

We look at the Kickoff Show match.

Erick Rowan vs. Luke Harper

This would be the cool down match. They take turns driving each other into the corner to start before taking a quick trip outside. Back in and Rowan starts throwing Harper around as the announcers recap the history between these two. Rowan misses a top rope splash though and bails to the floor, allowing Harper to hit one heck of a suicide dive. Back in and Harper's slingshot hilo gets two, followed by Rowan powerbombing him for the same. A slugout doesn't get anyone anywhere so Rowan clotheslines him down. That means it's time to go talk to the mask, allowing Harper to get in a discus lariat for the pin at 8:26.

Rating: D+. This was fine for what it was supposed to be as the fans get a much needed breather after the outstanding US Title match. These two aren't the most interesting pairing in the world but they're fine for two people hitting each other with big power moves for a few minutes. I'm sure we'll get a rematch here too.

We recap the Smackdown World Title match. Jinder Mahal won a Six Pack Challenge and has attacked Randy Orton a few times, including stealing the title belt for a week or so.

Smackdown World Title: Randy Orton vs. Jinder Mahal

Orton is defending and attacks Mahal before the bell. The beating goes on for a bit until things are separated Jinder is ready to go. Orton is right back on top of him and hammers Mahal all over the ring, including taking him outside for a beating on the floor. Mahal gets in a shot to the arm and takes over though, setting up a variety of armbars back inside.

With the offense that limited, Orton sends him shoulder first into the post to get a breather and grabs the superplex to put both guys down. Orton throws him with a fall away slam for two, followed by a

neckbreaker from Mahal for the same. They head outside with Orton beating up the Singh Brothers, allowing Mahal to post the bad arm.

Not that it matters as Orton throws him back inside for the RKO, only to have the Singh Brothers pull Mahal outside. The Brothers are thrown onto the announcers' tables, followed by a double hanging DDT back inside. Mahal sneaks in though and grabs the Khallas for the pin and the title at 16:47.

Rating: D. So yeah that happened. I have no idea what to think about it but yeah that happened. I'm sure this is going to end next month in St. Louis at Money in the Bank but hey, at least Bray Wyatt lost the title to Orton for a good reason right? The match was what you would expect from these two of course but...dang yeah that just happened.

We get a long celebration and a ton of fan reaction shots to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. It wasn't bad and the ending was a big surprise but that doesn't mean it's something that should have happened. This show really didn't need to exist but that's what you have to get to keep those subscribers coming in. The main event is the definition of throwing the title around like a prop, which is annoying and something we just kind of have to live with. Not a horrible show by any means but nothing you need to go out of your way to see, save for the US Title match.

Results

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Dolph Ziggler – Kinshasa

Usos b. Breezango – Superkick to Fandango

Sami Zayn b. Baron Corbin – Helluva Kick

Welcoming Committee b. Naomi/Charlotte/Becky Lynch – Sharpshooter to Lynch

Kevin Owens b. AJ Styles via countout

Luke Harper b. Erick Rowan – Discus lariat

Jinder Mahal b. Randy Orton – Khallas

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Backlash 2017 Preview

It's nice to have Backlash back where it belongs as the whole September slot didn't feel right last year. I'm not sure if the show is going to be that much better as historically it's more a show of Wrestlemania rematches, but why do that when you can do a mostly new card? This show doesn't have the most hype coming in and after "Takeover: Chicago", they have quite the hill to climb. Let's get to it.

Kickoff Show: Tye Dillinger vs. Aiden English

Having one guy win two matches and then doing a third match worked for Steve Austin and the Rock so it can work here too right? Dillinger debuted on the main roster about a month and a half ago and has kind of toiled around the lower midcard since. Fighting English over and over again hasn't done much for him but it's gotten English more TV time than he's had in months.

Of course I'm going with Dillinger, unless they want to kill one of

the hottest crowds they're going to have all year right off the bat. English is going to need some changes if he's going to survive but I don't think that's going to happen here. To be fair though, it's not like a win in a glorified dark match is going to do him a lot of good. Just give this seven minutes or so though and let Dillinger get a win.

Baron Corbin vs. Sami Zayn

I might have overreacted to Corbin losing to Randy Orton the other night but he should be fine coming into this match. Their reason for fighting isn't all that great but it's a good way to get both of them on pay per view, where they belong. Corbin has cooled off considerably since losing at "Wrestlemania XXXIII" (not that it matters though as the Kickoff Show matches aren't on the DVD/Blu-Ray) but this could help him get back.

As much as I want to go with Zayn here, Corbin makes more sense. Just give him the win and let him start getting back on his feet. Orton vs. Corbin would work fine for a major match, as would Corbin winning Money in the Bank. As much as Zayn needs a win as a member of the "Smackdown Live" roster, Corbin needs it more at the moment. Unfortunately that's the case far more often than not for Zayn and it's going to become a problem one day.

Luke Harper vs. Eric Rowan

Speaking of things that are going to get tiresome if they happen too much. These two have been fighting or at least associated with each other for years now and I really don't have much interest in watching them have another match. Rowan really isn't all that interesting but he's big and that earns him a push.

I'll take Harper winning here as it gives them a reason for another match down the line because WWE likes trilogies. I'm not sure what we're supposed to get out of this match, especially after they had a boring TV match a few weeks back. At least the match should be a good food break moment as this just isn't the kind of match that a lot of fans are going to care about.

Naomi/Charlotte/Becky Lynch vs. Welcoming Committee

I get why the match exists (they want to save Charlotte's big matches with the top "Smackdown Live" women) but that doesn't mean the Welcoming Committee is a good idea. It's basically three women and James Ellsworth banding together because they're scared of Charlotte but none of them have an interesting personality between them, making the whole thing all the more annoying.

That being said, I'll take the Welcoming Committee to win here so Charlotte can yell at Naomi or Lynch for the loss. My initial thought was Carmella takes the loss as she seems to be the potential star of the team but hopefully the trio's plug is pulled in the near future. It's not likely to be all that entertaining but that's par for the course on a lot of these matches.

Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Breezango

What the heck happened to American Alpha? They lost the titles and I don't remember seeing them again since. Maybe we could have more time for them if we didn't need the Welcoming Committee or Rowan vs. Harper in a hoss battle that people don't care about. Maybe we could have some time to build them up and give them some personality (you know, the thing that GOT THEM OVER IN NXT) to go with the wrestling ability. Oh yeah this match.

The Usos retain of course because WWE freaking loves these guys, even though they really only appear to speak in that weird promo style of theirs for about thirty seconds a week. I've been loving the Fashion Files vignettes but I have a bad feeling this is it for Breezango and they'll just fade away as a result. At least it's been a fun time getting here.

Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Dolph Ziggler

I've seen this match twice now as post-show dark matches and I have a feeling that's not going to be the best indicator of what we'll see here. WWE is pushing the heck out of Nakamura as we come into this show and that makes for some lofty expectations. That being said, if Nakamura showed me one thing in Dallas, it's that he knows

how to make a good first impression.

Of course I'm taking Nakamura as there's no reason to believe that Ziggler will or should win here. Nakamura is going to be a major star on the show and I could easily see him going after a title as soon as "Summerslam 2017". There's not much of a point in waiting with him so having him beat the heck out of Ziggler in a star making performance is a great place to start.

US Title: AJ Styles vs. Kevin Owens

This match hasn't had the strongest build in the world and I'm starting to get worried about it. If nothing else, they're running a really strong chance of underwhelming due to the incredibly high expectations. I'm just hoping we don't get a match where the prevailing wisdom is "eh it's Styles vs. Owens" and it's just phoned in.

I'll take Styles to win here as it seems there's more interest in Owens doing the chasing than actually holding the title, or at least that's been the case for most of his title reigns. There are a lot more options to go after champion Styles than Owens, who could easily move up to going after Orton, assuming he retains the title.

Smackdown World Title: Randy Orton vs. Jinder Mahal

And then there's this, which really does seem to be a way to boost the Indian markets (and possibly screw with TNA before they head over there for some live events). That also explains why we've got the Singh Brothers in Mahal's corner instead of, you know, someone actually intimidating (like the Authors of Pain for example). This is the definition of throwing together a challenger, though to be fair this is what we always ask for: a fresh opponent we haven't seen before. Now we get it and despite the building him up well, people aren't interested in Mahal.

Unfortunately I think we're going to keep going with this story as Mahal wins by DQ or countout and we get a rematch at "Money in the Bank 2017" in Orton hometown of St. Louis. As usual, WWE sacrifices their core audience for the sake of whatever their long term

planning is, as people are really bored with Mahal but that's what we're getting no matter how many people change the channel.

Overall, this feels exactly like a filler pay per view, which is one of the worst things you can have if it goes badly. Having low expectations coming in can help a lot but at the same time, you run the risk of having a horrible show that feels more like torture than something entertaining. Maybe the show will be good but there seems to be very little that has my interest. If Orton vs. Mahal goes to a DQ to end the show, Chicago isn't going to react well and that's a very risky move.

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New Column: Rip Rogers, Iron Man and Will Ospreay As a Dinosaur Detective

I think the title speaks for itself.

<https://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-rip-rogers-iron-man-will-ospreay-dinosaur-detective/>

Smackdown – May 16, 2017: Why Can't I Remember This Show?

Smackdown

Date: May 16, 2017

Location: SNHU Arena, Manchester, New Hampshire

Commentators: Tom Phillips, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

We're back stateside with the go home show for Sunday's Backlash. We have a few matches announced as it's Baron Corbin vs. Randy Orton and a "first time ever" match between Jinder Mahal and AJ Styles. I put it in the quotes because while it's the first time the match has ever happened, I really don't know if that's worthy of mention it never happening before. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

We open with Kevin Owens' Highlight Reel with Kevin emphasizing that the original host will NEVER, EVER be seen here again. After a clip of the Chris Jericho beatdown, Owens introduces his guest in French, only to have AJ Styles (not the guest) interrupt on his own. He never did well in French class but on Sunday, he's taking the US Title and bringing it back to the USA. Styles is ready to fight not but here are Jinder Mahal and the Singh Brothers to interrupt. Mahal is supposed to be the guest and doesn't seem pleased. The three all talk trash but Owens runs from AJ.

AJ Styles vs. Jinder Mahal

Owens is on commentary. Feeling out process to start without much of

note to start. Jinder sends him to the apron though and AJ scores with a slingshot forearm to a kneeling Mahal. Some kicks to the chest have Mahal rocked and AJ follows up with a shortened Phenomenal Rush. A hard knee drops AJ though and we take a break. Back with Jinder working on a chinlock for a good while. AJ fights up and crotches him on the top before dropkicking Jinder out of the air. Another forearm has Jinder in trouble but he kicks AJ in the face for two. Owens keeps cheering for Mahal but shouldn't he want the match to go on as long as possible so AJ can be hurt even more? The fireman's carry into the flip neckbreaker gives AJ two but the Singh Brothers offer a distraction, allowing Owens to hit AJ in the knee with the belt. Somehow the referee doesn't wonder why AJ has down and hurt his knee. The cobra clutch slam (the Kalas, Punjab for finish) gives Mahal the pin at 15:45.

Rating: C. Better than I was expecting here with the only logical ending and there's nothing wrong with that. Mahal needed this win and it advances Styles vs. Owens at the same time. That's one of the best things they can do at the moment as it accomplishes everything at once. Mahal is still passable in the ring but that's about all you can give him, which isn't enough for the spot they want him in. It's Fashion Files time with more pictures and Post-It notes stuck to the walls. Breeze comes in with a blond wig and taped on mustache, whom Fandango praises for his expertise as a master of disguise. Tyler has found a number of fashion felonies, including EVERY BARON CORBIN shirt being a wolf design. The Usos are scary but their hair is like a mop. Breeze takes off the mustache, asking what in Versace's name is he wearing. They load up a high five but Breeze says freeze frame, leaving them both hanging in the air.

Randy Orton is ready for Mahal.

Breezango vs. Colons

Joined in progress with Breeze fighting out of some trouble and getting two on Epico. The cousins keep him in trouble though and Primo grabs an armbar. Breeze avoids a charge though and the hot tag

brings in Fandango to clean house. Everything breaks down and the Falcon Arrow gives Fandango the pin at 3:18.

Rating: D+. Just another match here but it's nice to have Breezango on a roll heading into the pay per view. I doubt they win the belts but I could go for a title change. The Usos are barely doing anything with the belts (not to say Breezango would) but it would be nice to switch things up for a little bit.

Post match the Usos come out to say they'll win on Sunday because this is the Uso penitentiary. They'll remain vicious and give you stitches and that's not paranoia.

Here's Shane McMahon for a contract signing for Sunday's six woman tag. Natalya uses her uncle's catchphrase and signs while Tamina and Carmella sign without saying anything. Becky laughs off the idea of being offered a spot on the team and can't wait to slap all three of them. Naomi tries to dub the team Royal Glow Fire and threatens to snatch them bald. Charlotte promises a win but after that she's coming for the crown.

Ellsworth cuts Shane off and says he can take care of himself. Shane has no idea what he's talking about but it's clear that Becky is staring at Ellsworth. Neither Charlotte nor Becky has a shot him though and Carmella is coming for his title. A fight nearly breaks out so Shane makes Carmella vs. Naomi for right now.

Carmella vs. Naomi

Non-title. Joined in progress with Naomi hitting a Thesz press and a running forearm in the corner. Naomi misses a knee drop though and gets sent face first into the mat. The threat of the Rear View sends Carmella outside and Ellsworth gets ejected. We take a break and come back with Carmella running away from some kicks and screaming a lot.

Naomi shuts her up with a dropkick, only to have Carmella kick her in the face and send her outside. The champ fights up again and hits a jawbreaker but Tamina and Natalya break up a cover, meaning it's a double ejection. Charlotte and Natalya get in a fight with them

first though and Naomi goes over to kick Tamina in the back. The distraction lets Carmella grab a rollup for the pin at 11:21.

Rating: D+. I'm still trying to get past Naomi's attempts to get "I'm gonna snatch you bald!" over as a threat/catchphrase. She can't threaten to beat them up or hurt them but rather take their hair? Is she a reincarnation of Brutus Beefcake? Anyway not a great match or anything but it did well enough to set up the match on Sunday.

Dolph Ziggler has been watching all the Shinsuke Nakamura footage he can find in WWE but there's nothing to see. Instead, here's a Ziggler highlight package. Ziggler can't wait to beat Nakamura.

Sami Zayn has been granted a match with Baron Corbin for Backlash (That wasn't official yet?) because he thinks Corbin feels threatened by him. Corbin jumps him from behind and says stay down.

Randy Orton vs. Baron Corbin

Non-title. They shove each other around to start with Corbin popping Orton in the jaw to take over for the first time. One heck of a clothesline gives Baron two and we take a break. Back with Orton missing a middle rope knee drop and getting caught in a chinlock. Corbin hammers him down again and some posing gets quite the negative reaction from the fans.

Baron says the people's reaction is why he's hurting Orton but he misses a charge into the corner. JBL keeps calling both of them great closers as Orton hits the hanging DDT. The RKO is broken up and Deep Six gives Baron a close two. Back up and the RKO gives Orton the pin at 13:20.

Rating: C. Corbin took WAY too clean of a loss here when he's supposed to be a big deal going forward. I'd bet on him getting a title shot in the near future but why should I care about him if he just lost clean here? I'm fine with Orton winning a match but the booking here is a bit questionable.

Post match Mahal comes out for a distraction so the Singh Brothers can come in for the attack. Mahal holds up the title to end the show.

Rusev never appeared despite being advertised.

Opinion: C-. This was a rather flat show heading into what feels like a flat pay per view. I'm interested in Styles vs. Owens and that's really about it on the entire card. What am I supposed to care about other than that match? Breezango? The six woman tag? Jinder Mahal? They're fine for a big Smackdown but it doesn't quite work that well on a pay per view. The show was good enough but nothing I'll remember in a day or two.

Results

Jinder Mahal b. AJ Styles – Kalas

Breezango b. Colons – Falcon Arrow to Primo

Carmella b. Naomi – Rollup

Randy Orton b. Baron Corbin – RKO

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Smackdown – May 9, 2017:

The British Curse Turns Blue

Smackdown

Date: May 9, 2017

Location: O2 Arena, London, England

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

We're taped tonight from London as we have less than two weeks before Backlash. That means it's Jinder Mahal time tonight and we get to see more of his rapid fire build towards being a main eventer. Other than that we might get more of the Welcoming Committee, which is turning into one of the worst heel stables I can remember in years. Let's get to it.

We open with a clip of last month's Six Pack Challenge where Mahal became #1 contender. Has Mojo Rawley had a match since then? Mahal then cost Randy Orton the House of Horrors match and stole the title belt.

Opening sequence.

Here's Orton to get things going and he has the title back, thanks to Shane McMahon taking it from Jinder last week. Orton says he lost because of Mahal, not because of Wyatt or that refrigerator. Before Orton can get too far, here's Mahal to show off his promotional pictures with the title. Mahal promises to begin a new age at Backlash before speaking I believe Punjab.

Cue Kevin Owens to say no one cares about anything but him. Owens brags about ending Chris Jericho's career and, after he gets rid of AJ Styles, he wants the World Title. Now it's AJ coming out to quite the reaction to say he's the face that runs the place. Cue Baron Corbin but Sami Zayn jumps him from behind and the fights are on with the good guys cleaning house.

Becky Lynch vs. Natalya

Before the match, we get some generic "British people have bad

teeth" jokes from James Ellsworth and Carmella. Naomi and Charlotte are here as Becky's seconds. The Welcoming Committee offers an early distraction so Natalya can send Becky to the floor and take over. We hit the abdominal stretch for a bit before the STRAIGHT FIRE forearm has Natalya reeling. The Bexploder looks to set up something on the top but the other women get in a fight, allowing Natalya to pull Becky off the top for the pin at 3:02. That's almost the same ending as Alexa Bliss vs. Mickie James from last night.

Rating: D+. The time and the familiar ending hurt this one but real problem was taking fifteen minutes to introduce everyone and start the match. I'm sure this sets up a six woman tag for the pay per view, which should be a good place for either someone to turn heel or at least for the Welcoming Committee to get a win. Therefore, look for Charlotte to pin Carmella.

Lana is coming soon.

Charlotte blames Naomi for Becky's loss but Lynch comes in to cool them down. A six woman tag is set for the pay per view.

It's Fashion Files time! They're at the 02 Arena this week and Fandango is dressed as Sherlock Holmes while Breeze is a standard British cop. Fandango: "Cheerio." Breeze: "No thanks. I've already had my breakfast." They find some spilled lead paint that would only be worn by Uggs. That must be a ruse so Breezango can't tell them apart but it doesn't really matter. The paint leads to a room where roaring is heard. They think something nefarious is going on in there but it's just the Ascension warming themselves up. Breeze: "I'm getting too old for this s***e." More funny stuff here as Breezango continues to look good.

Luke Harper vs. Erick Rowan

Rowan throws him to the floor to start as the announcers talk about how these two are running amuck with no one to guide them. Back in and Rowan scores with a spinning kick to the face and a splash for two. Harper suplexes his way out of the head vice but the discus lariat is blocked. Instead Erick gets two off a Side Effect and grabs the mask. The distraction (as the referee tries to figure out

what the mask is supposed to look like) allows Rowan to poke Harper in the eye and grab a reverse spinning powerslam for the pin at 4:23.

Rating: D. Just a power match here but they really need to either stop pushing Harper for a few weeks and then having him lose over and over again. I mean, do they really think there's value in Erick Rowan winning with a lame powerslam? This didn't work and the booking makes my head hurt so we'll move on.

Here's Dolph Ziggler to call out Shinsuke Nakamura. He's been here for eight years (How has it only been that long?) but the fans treat him like a disease. Who do the people cheer for now? That starts a Nakamura chant as this is starting to sound like Chris Jericho vs. AJ Styles last year.

Now people are calling Nakamura an artist but Ziggler is the strongest man in WWE because he never needed the people. This brings out Nakamura to tell Ziggler to shut up. Nakamura is ready to show him so here's a referee but Ziggler says nope. Dolph says we do this on his time and wants the match at Backlash. The sneak attack earns Dolph a beating.

Sami is fired up to team with Orton and Styles. Zayn tries to run a strategy session but seems to just annoy his partners. By the time he announces their team as the winners, they've both left.

New Day is coming and we get a video game themed promo with every other team being listed on a character select screen.

Breezango vs. Ascension

Fandango chops at Konnor to start but it's off to Viktor who runs him over. A chinlock doesn't last long and it's off to Breeze for some house cleaning. Fandango makes a blind tag and it's an atomic drop into the Last Dance for the in at 2:39.

Post match the Usos come out to say twelve days over and over while listing off various things that Breezango can do to each others' backs (with Jimmy clearly trying not to crack up).

Mojo Rawley is giving some kids a tour of the backstage area but

stops to tell them a story about Andre the Giant. Andre did a lot of things but Mojo switches to a story about a boy who was different growing up. He was bullied as a kid but then he used it as motivation to become a legend. Mojo pulls out the trophy and the kids are amazed. I've started to like Mojo more and more lately and I'd love to see him get some more TV time.

Rusev hasn't heard about his demand for a World Title shot but he'll be here next week to get an answer.

Randy Orton/Sami Zayn/AJ Styles vs. Jinder Mahal/Baron Corbin/Kevin Owens

Sami and Corbin get things started but a quick tag brings in Owens. There's no contact though as it's off to Mahal for some kicks to the chest. Sami grabs a headscissors and brings in Orton so Mahal tags out to Owens. The threat of an RKO sends Owens out to the floor and we take a break.

Back with Corbin working over Sami and handing it off to Owens as the eternal feud continues. Sami is tossed outside for a stomping from Mahal, drawing AJ over to stare him down. Corbin's chinlock keeps things slow so Jinder comes in for one of his own. The stomping keeps going and we take a break.

Back with AJ getting the hot tag to come in and clean house as everything breaks down. The running forearm drops a seated Corbin and Sami hits a big flip dive onto all three villains. Owens breaks up the Phenomenal Forearm though and Styles and Corbin are down. It's Mahal breaking up the tag though and dropping a knee for two on Styles.

Owens comes back in for some very aggressive stomping and a chinlock of his own. That's quite the popular move tonight and in no way a method to stretch out a long main event. The backsplash hits knees though and the hot tag brings in Orton. Everything breaks down and Owens eats the RKO, only to have Jinder's cobra clutch slam put Orton away at 22:14.

Rating: C+. The match was more long than good and the ending

extended the Mahal vs. Orton feud but this felt like a way to fill in TV time instead of a match that needed to go this long. I'm not sure how much people are going to buy Mahal's cobra clutch slam as a threat to beat Orton but at least they're setting it up as a possibility.

Overall Rating: D+. This was a rough one as it felt like a shortened version of Raw. The problem is I don't watch Smackdown for a shortened version of Raw but rather something far more interesting and exciting. To be fair though, I think we can blame that on the UK tour as those shows are almost always lifeless. Some stuff was set up for the pay per view though and that's important with just a show left beforehand.

Results

Natalya b. Becky Lynch – Natalya pulled her off the top rope

Erick Rowan b. Luke Harper – Spinning reverse powerslam

Breezango b. Ascension – Last Dance to Viktor

Jinder Mahal/Kevin Owens/Baron Corbin b. Sami Zayn/Randy Orton/AJ Styles – Cobra clutch slam to Orton

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Payback 2017: Thank You Strowman! And Reigns. Rollins Too. Throw in Joe. Maybe Jericho?

Payback 2017

Date: April 30, 2017

Location: SAP Center, San Jose, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, Booker T., Corey Graves

And now, the most oddly booked, unnecessary and likely meaningless pay per view of the year! We're four weeks removed from Wrestlemania and somehow it seems like a far more distant memory. This was going to be your run of the mill rematch pay per view but the Superstar Shakeup has rendered a lot of the top matches worthless. Randy Orton vs. Bray Wyatt is now non-title while Kevin Owens and Chris Jericho haven't interacted in weeks. Fun for everyone you see. Let's get to it.

Kickoff Show: Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Anderson and Gallows

Enzo and Cass talk about Chinese food and say that Anderson and Gallows' fortune cookie will call them sawft. Amore pounds on Anderson to start and hits a running kick to the ribs. The offense doesn't last long though as Gallows kicks him down and works on the arm until we go to a break.

Back with Anderson breaking up a hot tag attempt at the last minute, only to have the second attempt work a few seconds later. Cass starts cleaning house with the corner splashes, only to have Enzo make a blind tag. Gallows pulls him off the apron a second later for a big crash but Cass breaks up the Magic Killer. A small package finishes Gallows at 6:39.

Rating: D+. This was only there so Enzo and Cass could fire the crowd up and there's nothing wrong with that. What there is

something wrong with it is how lifeless this feud has been over the last few weeks that it's dragged along. Enzo and Cass really could have used the Revival for their next feud but instead we're stuck here thanks to injury. Not bad but really not interesting.

We're not done on the Kickoff Show as we have MizTV with special guest Finn Balor. Miz asks what the deal is with the long entrance and Finn says it's the Balor Club. That doesn't quite make sense as Miz wants to know what it takes to get into the Balor Club. Finn puts it up to the crowd who approve of Maryse but not so much of Miz.

We hear about Balor's success worldwide but Miz thinks Finn might feel like a failure. Balor mentions all the injuries he suffered in a match that he still managed to win and become the Universal Champion (my goodness imagine where his career would be if he didn't win that match). Miz mentions all the time away and asks what's next for Balor. Finn makes it simple: he wants his title back.

Miz brings up Lesnar being the Beast but Balor is ready to fight a bigger man, just like he has for his entire career. A fight is about to break out but Miz hides behind Maryse. Miz isn't worth the beating so Finn goes to leave, only to have Miz call him out. One Sling Blade later and Miz is quickly shut up as Finn destroys the set.

The opening video is a simple look at the matches with a theme of retribution. Nothing special but it's all it needed to be.

US Title: Chris Jericho vs. Kevin Owens

Owens is defending after taking the title from Jericho at Wrestlemania. The story would call for a big violent gimmick here but nah, let's just let it be a standard rematch instead with IT'S RAW VS. SMACKDOWN serving as the gimmick instead. Kevin bails to the floor to start and gets sent into the announcers' table to let Jericho take over. Owens has to roll away from a Jericho dive to the floor but makes the stupid decision to roll back inside, allowing Jericho to hit a top rope elbow to the jaw.

The springboard dropkick is broken up (which should be attributed to Owens being such a big Jericho fan) and Owens nails the Cannonball against the barricade. We hit the chinlock (Owens: "ASK HIM!") as Cole continues running down both guys' resumes. One heck of a clothesline drops Jericho again and it's right back to the chinlock. Back up and Jericho misses a charge but gets in a quick enziguri for two of his own.

A superkick out of the corner gives Owens two more and the Cannonball is good for the same. The Pop Up Powerbomb is countered with a hurricanrana into the Walls. Owens gets to the ropes by a finger again so Jericho crushes the hand beneath the steps. The bad hand means Owens can't hit the Pop Up Powerbomb so it's back to the Walls...for the tap out and the title at 14:06, sending Jericho over to Smackdown.

Rating: C. The ending helped it a lot (shock value can indeed do good things) but this felt like it was a long stretch of house show level stuff until Jericho started to go after the hand. Changing the title is a good idea though as they needed to do something to get off to a good start instead of having Owens beat a huge crowd favorite. Odds are Jericho loses on Smackdown anyway so it really doesn't mean that much.

Jericho signs a kid's List on the way up the ramp.

Cruiserweight Title: Neville vs. Austin Aries

Neville is defending in another Wrestlemania rematch where Neville raked the eyes to retain the title. An armdrag and a running shoulder in the corner have Neville flummoxed early on and it's time to lay on the top rope. It's way too early for the 450 though as Neville dropkicks the rope for the break.

We're already in the chinlock for a bit before Aries fights up and hits the middle rope elbow to the back. Aries sends him outside for a suicide dive, followed by a suplex back inside. A running forearm in the corner looks to set up the 450 but Neville bails out to the floor for safety. Not that it matters as Aries grabs a sunset bomb to set up the Last Chancery. Neville is in trouble but grabs the

referee for the DQ at 11:19.

Rating: C+. This was getting good until the ending. I'd assume this sets up a third match at Extreme Rules but they're to the point where Aries almost needs to win the belt. It's still a good feud but this one didn't have anywhere near the steam that the previous one did. I'm not sure they can really drag it out another month but that's never stopped WWE before.

Aries post-match protests don't get him anywhere.

Tag Team Titles: Sheamus/Cesaro vs. Hardys

The Hardys are defending after winning the titles at Wrestlemania in a ladder match. Cesaro and Matt start things off as an OBSOLETE chant starts up. Jeff comes in for a BROTHER NERO chant and it's almost immediately back to Matt. So much for that chant. Cesaro and Sheamus start in on the arm but it's right back to Jeff to speed things up. The legdrop between the legs and a seated dropkick set up the splash for two. Why does no one else ever do that?

Not that it matters as Sheamus sends him hard out to the floor and it's time for the heat segment. Sheamus' middle rope knee gets two and it's off to the chinlock. Back up and Sheamus kicks him in the face with Corey calling him the "alabaster gladiator". It's right back to the chinlock as Jeff seems to have lost a tooth somewhere in there. He's still able to kick Cesaro away and make the hot tag though as things pick up.

A DELETE middle rope elbow sets up the Side Effect for two. Matt's moonsault misses though and it's the Cesaro Swing into the Sharpshooter. A rope is quickly grabbed so Sheamus comes back in for a super White Noise in a great crash. Jeff makes a last second save but Sheamus breaks up the Twist of Fate. Sheamus powerslams Matt but Jeff makes a blind tag and hits the Swanton for the pin to retain at 12:48.

Rating: C. Another Raw match here with the Hardys still needing a real team to feud with, at least until Revival gets back to take the titles away. As has been the case both times tonight, the match was

fine though it's nothing that I'm going to remember tomorrow. Matt and Jeff are still good in the ring but they don't quite have the same spark from when they made their return. It's not early enough for a big change, but the Broken stuff needs to happen before it goes too long.

Post match the Hardys shake their hands, only to have Sheamus and Cesaro turn on them and beat them up. If that doesn't set up a rematch with the Broken Hardys at Extreme Rules, nothing is going to.

Braun Strowman promises to hurt Roman Reigns.

Women's Title: Alexa Bliss vs. Bayley

Bayley is defending in her hometown. Bliss gets slammed to start and a knee drop gets two, followed by a long series of rams into the buckle. Alexa comes right back with a HARD shot to the head and the slow beating begins. As is normally the case, Alexa beats on Bayley and looks extra annoyed while doing so. She gets so much mileage out of her facial expressions. The chinlock is quickly broken so Bliss clotheslines her back down. Bliss spends a bit too much time trash talking though and gets caught in a Stunner over the ropes.

A belly to back suplex gives Bayley two but she takes too much time going to the ropes and gets sent hard into the buckle. Bayley can't get the super Bayley to Belly and gets pulled down with a Code Red for two. Bliss gets kneed in the face though and the Macho Elbow gets two more. A rollup gives Bayley two but the kickout sends her into the post. Bayley is so stunned that a DDT gives Bliss the pin and the title at 11:19.

Rating: C+. So to clarify, Bayley is NOT Naomi and is no better than anyone else that loses in their hometown. Bliss winning is fine but it really does seem that these hometown losses are just there to show that WWE is still in charge. The match was good enough and proof that playing a character well is far more important than what you can do in the ring. Bliss' in-ring work might not be the best but it's passable enough to be carried by her great mannerisms.

We recap the House of Horrors match, which means we'll finally get to know what the heck it is. The match is non-title due to the Superstar Shakeup but that gives Bray a slight chance of winning, perhaps due to some Jinder Mahal interference. Randy Orton beat Bray Wyatt at Wrestlemania for the title and this is the (meaningless) gimmick rematch.

Randy Orton vs. Bray Wyatt

Non-title. The match is going to start in Bray's House of Horrors and will wind up in the ring where it's pinfall, submission or forfeiture. We go to the inside of a limo where Orton is firing himself up and wearing pants. The House of Horrors is an actual house...and a tractor goes by with no one on it. The door is locked so Orton kicks his way in and we start the rapid camera cuts.

Bray's voice says run and he jumps Orton from behind. Randy is thrown into various things as the House of Horrors looks like a not great house that is being renovated. Bray disappears but reaches through a wall to choke Orton for a second and a half. The next room has baby dolls hanging from the ceiling in various mutilated forms and we hear babies talking.

Cue Wyatt for another attack but Orton throws him through a wall. They head to another room with more dolls and some weird structure made of sticks. That goes nowhere so it's off to a kitchen (the refrigerator says WE'RE HERE) with Orton getting the better of it. Bray tries to climb onto a counter and gets in a low blow. The refrigerator is shoved down onto Randy so Bray walks outside and steals Orton's limo. We'll come back to this later.

We recap Seth Rollins vs. Samoa Joe. Rollins was injured at Joe's hands earlier this year so tonight is really just about payback. As is often the case, the simpler ideas work best.

Seth Rollins vs. Samoa Joe

Joe punches him up against the ropes to start and they're quickly on the floor with Rollins chopping away. Seth hits the big suicide dive and a second one does just as well. The big guy gets smart and goes

after the knee before hitting the suicide elbow to send Rollins over the announcers' table. Graves: "Like a flying school bus!"

A backslash onto the knee has Rollins screaming and his comeback is cut off almost immediately. The Knee Capper sets up the kneebars until Seth scrambles to the ropes. Joe grabs a powerbomb into a half crab into the Texas Cloverleaf but Joe is at the ropes again. Seth comes back with a Sling Blade, followed by a superkick to the neck for two of his own.

For some reason Seth tries the Buckle Bomb and the knee gives out, though it's fine enough for a Falcon Arrow a few seconds later. That great looking frog splash bangs the knee up even more so the cover is only good for a delayed two. The Koquina Clutch is countered with a quick rope climb but Joe grabs the hold again, only to have Seth roll over for a cradle and the pin at 16:03.

Rating: B+. It's definitely the match of the night so far which was what most people had coming in. Rollins winning is the right call as it would have been really stupid to give him the win last time and then job him here. Joe dominated the match until the ending where he got caught (ignore his shoulder being up) so this was about as well done as they were going to get.

Wyatt arrives back at the arena and stumbles into the ring. Cue Orton from behind with a chair (no word on how he got back) to start the beatdown, including sending Wyatt over the announcers' tables. There's the Elevated DDT off the table and Orton follows it up with another chair to the back. Back in and the RKO is loaded up but here are the Singh Brothers to go after Orton. They're dispatched just as quickly and there's the RKO to Wyatt. Now it's Jinder Mahal with the belt to Orton's head twice in a row, setting up Sister Abigail for the pin at 4:22 shown in the ring, not counting about ten minutes in the House.

Rating: D. The house stuff was more stupid than bad and that's a major improvement. They would have been in big trouble if it had been stuff like they did at Wrestlemania so it was more just there instead of anything all that terrible. Wyatt winning might be a

stretch but I'd much rather him actually get a win than lose all over again with the RKO being the great vanquishing force. Not the best concept here but it's going to be a more forgettable idea than on a list of all time horrible concepts and that's a major victory. We recap Braun Strowman vs. Roman Reigns. Strowman destroyed Reigns in an incredible segment but has since gone 0-1-1 against Big Show and Kalisto for reasons that aren't clear. Tonight Reigns is back for revenge.

Roman Reigns vs. Braun Strowman

Reigns is very banged up coming in. He goes right after Strowman and hits a clothesline off the steps to drop the monster on the floor. The apron kick is pulled out of the air and Strowman chokeslams him onto the announcers' table. A powerslam gets two and Reigns is getting some sympathy for FINALLY being an underdog.

The bad shoulder is sent hard into the steps and it's off to a waistlock back inside. Strowman misses a charge into the corner and Reigns somehow hits a Samoan drop for two. They head outside with Reigns charging at Strowman and managing to send him into the post twice in a row.

The spear gets two back inside (giving us a reaction from a young girl that we'll likely see weekly from now on) but the second attempt hits boot. Two Superman Punches drop Braun but a third is caught in that head and arm choke. The powerslam only gets two so Strowman does it again for the pin at 11:20.

Rating: B+. This was WAY better than I was expecting and Reigns losing is probably the right call. I mean, I really don't need to see him vs. Lesnar at Wrestlemania XXXIV but if that's where we just have to go, you have to take Reigns down a few pegs first. Really good power match here and that was easily the way to go.

Post match Strowman throws in some steps (Fans: "THANK YOU STROWMAN!") and drops Reigns ribs first onto the steel in a big crash. Braun lifts the steps over his head and brings them crashing down onto his ribs in a cringe inducing landing. Strowman is as over

as free beer in a frat house and Reigns is bleeding from the mouth (Fans: "YOU DESERVE IT!") to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. The really low expectations helped this a lot, as did having Jericho win and not having the House of Horrors match be a disaster. The ending was really good and Joe vs. Rollins was quite the match as well. Raw is looking strong, or at least it would if there was anything for these guys to be fighting over. Good show here, though I still wonder how long they can stretch things out with Lesnar not likely wrestling until July.

Results

Chris Jericho b. Kevin Owens – Walls of Jericho

Austin Aries b. Neville via DQ when Neville grabbed the referee

Hardys b. Sheamus/Cesaro – Swanton Bomb to Sheamus

Alexa Bliss b. Bayley – DDT

Seth Rollins b. Samoa Joe – Cradle

Bray Wyatt b. Randy Orton – Sister Abigail

Braun Strowman b. Roman Reigns – Powerslam

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