

# Smackdown – November 29, 2016: Going Home With A Smile

## Smackdown

Date: November 29, 2016

Location: Colonial Life Arena, Columbia, South Carolina

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

It's the go home show for Tables, Ladders and Chairs 2016 and Smackdown has managed to put together a pretty decent build in such a small time frame. Tonight we've got Dean Ambrose hosting the Ambrose Asylum with James Ellsworth as his guest, meaning AJ Styles is bound to get involved. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

There are tables, ladders and chairs all over the arena.

Renee Young is in the ring for a contract signing for the Women's Title match. Alexa Bliss and Becky Lynch come out with Alexa telling Renee to get out of here because they need someone with better fashion sense. They recap the feud with Becky saying Bliss has the mentality of a four year old. The champ signs but Alexa keeps talking about Becky's accent and how this isn't the Disney Channel where you get further by being nice. Becky rips into her for not accomplishing anything in her time here other than having a loser mentality. Alexa signs as well and the fight is on with Becky actually being knocked through the table.

## Dolph Ziggler/Kalisto vs. Baron Corbin/The Miz

Corbin knocks Ziggler down to start and we take a break less than thirty seconds in. Back with Corbin whipping Dolph hard into the corner and doing that slide underneath the bottom rope to keep Dolph in trouble. It's off to Miz, who pulls out a ladder to lean up against the steps. Ziggler gets in the running DDT on the floor, followed by a superkick to Miz.

The hot tag brings in Kalisto for his usual, including the hurricanrana driver for two on Miz. A big suicide dive sends Miz into the announcers' table. Everyone is staggered and Maryse shoves the ladder onto Ziggler. Back in and the Salida Del Sol looks to finish, only to have Corbin use a chair for the DQ at 7:31.

**Rating:** B-. For a match this short, they packed in a lot of action into the time. Kalisto could be an interesting guy if they would stop cutting his legs out from underneath him. The same is true with Corbin, who certainly has the look but I'm not sure if he has enough in ring skills yet to hang at this level.

American Alpha isn't scared of the Wyatts and are ready to levitate the Wyatts with suplexes.

The Wyatts are ready for American Alpha and don't like their positivity. Orton gives Luke Harper a pep talk for his match with Kane but Harper doesn't seem to trust Randy.

Carmella comes out for her match but first of all she has a message for John Cena. She promises to hit Nikki with a chair so hard that the real Bella Twins pop out of her back. Nikki charges to the ring and the brawl is on, meaning no match. Carmella is easily cleaned out.

We recap last week's ladder match with Ellsworth earning his contract and a shot at Styles' World Title.

It's time for the Ambrose Asylum, complete with a single piece of carpet in the middle of the ring. Ambrose gets right to it by bringing out Ellsworth as the first guest. Dean asks how old James' boots are before letting James celebrate his win a little bit. Ellsworth offers to do anything Dean needs so Ambrose gives him money to pick up a six pack after the show. As far as James' future, he'd rather face AJ for the title after beating him three times in a row. Ambrose: "He's drunk with power ladies and gentlemen."

Cue AJ to stand on the announcers' table and make puppet jokes about Ellsworth. Dean: "So what you're saying is you lost to a dummy three times?" AJ gets in the ring and promises to get rid of Dean before

dealing with the new superstar, as long as James shows up on Sunday. The brawl is on with AJ shoving both guys through the furniture. Ellsworth is hung upside down for a chair shot to the back, followed by a Styles Clash onto the steps. That should get rid of him for awhile but odds are he'll be at the pay per view.

Post break, Ellsworth is taken out on a stretcher.

### Kane vs. Luke Harper

Harper's headlock doesn't get him anywhere as Kane comes back with his own power offense. A big boot and clothesline puts Harper on the floor and we take a break. Back with Harper kicking him in the knee and head, only to get caught with the running DDT. Harper hammers away in the corner but gets powerbombed out for two more. The swinging Boss Man Slam gives Luke two of his own and a superkick drops Kane again. Back up and Harper misses the discus lariat, setting up the chokeslam to give Kane the pin at 11:05.

**Rating:** B-. What is with the good matches on here tonight? These two beat the heck out of each other in the only kind of match they should have had. Kane has taken a backseat since the Draft but he's still fine for something like this. You can tell they're doing something with Harper so maybe he'll wind up getting a push out of the thing.

We recap the contract signing.

Becky has a sore back but doesn't care what kind of match she has with Alexa. Again, and I can't emphasize this enough: they've taken a simple idea and ran with the thing, which can often make for something very entertaining.

### Bray Wyatt/Randy Orton vs. American Alpha

The winners get the title shot on Sunday. Orton and Jordan get things going with Jason snapping off some armdrags and working an armbar. It's off to Wyatt who throws Jordan throat first into the ropes to take over. The beatdown begins with Orton draping him over the top rope and grabbing a chinlock.

Jordan fights up and makes the tag off to Gable, who cleans house for a bit until being sent hard to the floor as we take a break. Back with Gable getting DDT'ed onto the apron for two as the beating continues. Bray hits the release Rock Bottom and Orton's awesome looking superplex has both guys down.

Unfortunately it's actually enough for the hot tag to Jordan as everything breaks down. The suplexes begin on Bray but the lights go out, revealing Harper at ringside. Gable breaks up Sister Abigail but an RKO breaks up the Grand Amplitude. Jordan's spear hits the post and Sister Abigail sends the Wyatts to the title match at 15:29.

**Rating:** B. Heck of a match here with the right team going over. Bray almost has to win a title soon and they even protected Alpha in the loss. There's something so cool about watching Jordan fighting for all he's worth as he does the big comeback as well as almost anyone in the company right now. This was better than I was expecting and I had a good time with it.

Slater and Rhino are ready for the challenge when Styles comes up to say no one cares about the Tag Team Titles. Ambrose runs in and beats AJ up to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** A. Now THIS is how you go into a pay per view. Smackdown had a battle plan tonight and executed it to near perfection. I'm pretty sure every match on Sunday got some focus here and the wrestling was even good on top of that. You really can tell that there's a lot of effort put into the planning of these shows and they know exactly what they want to do on almost any given week. This was one of the better go home shows I've seen in a very long time and it was everything they needed to do and more.

### Results

Dolph Ziggler/Kalisto b. The Miz/Baron Corbin via DQ when Corbin used a chair

Kane b. Luke Harper – Chokeslam

Randy Orton/Bray Wyatt b. American Alpha – Sister Abigail to Jordan

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume V at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01M0KDV50>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

---

# Survivor Series 2016: There Are No Words

## **Survivor Series 2016**

Date: November 20, 2016

Location: Air Canada Centre, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Commentators: Corey Graves, Byron Saxton, Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole, David Otunga

For the first time ever, Survivor Series is a four hour show with a two hour pre-show. Now some might think this is too...oh wait I'm not a real fan if I complain about shows being too long unless it's Raw when it's unquestionably too long. Pay per views can be as long as they want you see. Tonight is all about Raw vs. Smackdown and Brock Lesnar vs. Goldberg so let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Ariya Daivari/Drew Gulak/Tony Nese vs. TJ Perkins/Rich Swann/Noam Dar

Swann gets out of a suplex to start and dropkicks Nese in the jaw before handing it off to TJ. More flipping ensues and we can hear Renee Young talking to her producer and saying "nine minutes". The kneebar has Gulak in trouble but everything breaks down to send us to a break.

Back with Dar getting crotched on the middle rope and superkicked for two. A delayed vertical suplex gets two for Nese and it's back to Gulak for a leg lock. Some kicks finally get Dar out of trouble and it's off to Swann for the house cleaning. We hit the dives on the bad guys and it's Swann's standing 450 for the pin on Daivari at 11:50, or 8:57 after Renee said "nine minutes".

**Rating:** C. Standard six man tag though the pace seemed a bit faster here. Maybe giving them their own show is the solution because they still feel out of place on the main roster. They're more than talented enough but the lack of charisma and personalities are killing them. Someone like Gulak or Nese for instance are great examples of this as there's no reason to care about anything they're doing and it shows more every week they're out there. Not a bad match but it was in one ear and out the other.

#### Pre-Show: Kane vs. Luke Harper

Feeling out process to start with both guys going after the arm. That's not the most interesting thing in the world though so it's Kane being sent outside for the suicide dive. Back in and a Falcon's Arrow gets two for Harper as we take a break. We come back with Kane in a chinlock until a belly to back suplex drops Luke on his head. As JBL makes a Walking Dead reference, Kane walks into a superkick for two. A big boot to the shoulder and the running DDT give Kane his own near fall. Harper comes back with the discus lariat but Kane grabs the chokeslam for the pin at 10:08.

**Rating:** C-. This was every match you've ever seen these two have, meaning it wasn't half bad. Harper has been a little overshadowed so it's nice to see him have a match on his own for a change. Kane winning is fine, albeit a bit unnecessary as he just pops in and out of Smackdown at will.

The opening video is pretty standard and focuses on the three elimination

tags plus Goldberg vs. Lesnar.

### Survivor Series Women's Tag Team Match: Team Raw vs. Team Smackdown

Raw: Bayley, Alicia Fox, Nia Jax, Charlotte, Sasha Banks

Smackdown: Nikki Bella, Natalya, Carmella, Naomi, Becky Lynch

Actually hang on a sec as there's no Nikki. We cut to the back where someone has attacked Nikki, meaning Natalya will be taking her place. Alicia and Carmella start things off but it's quickly off to Bayley vs. Becky. Unfortunately that doesn't get to happen as Charlotte tags herself in, leading to a big ten woman staredown with Nia breaking everything up on her own.

It settles down to Becky trying the Disarm-Her on Charlotte but Nia comes in and runs through the Smackdown women one by one. Some double teaming finally puts her back on the apron and it's Alicia hitting an ax kick to eliminate Carmella at 6:26. Bliss pulls Alicia right back down though and Twisted Bliss ties us up at 6:47.

Everything breaks down and Naomi dives onto Jax, who sends Naomi head first into the post. That's enough for a countout at 8:46 and it's 4-3 Raw. Alexa takes Sasha into the wrong corner but Banks comes right back with the double knees without missing a beat. Alexa saves Natalya from the Bank Statement and it's a rollup from Natalya to get rid of Sasha at 10:26.

Charlotte takes Natalya down but the moonsault is countered into a sitout powerbomb. The Sharpshooter doesn't last long as Charlotte makes the ropes, allowing her to kick Natalya in the face for the elimination. So it's Becky/Alexa vs. Nia/Bayley/Charlotte but the Smackdown women get in an argument. Nia suplexes them both at the same time before falling to a horribly botched double DDT. The Disarm-Her (looks really bad as Becky can't lock it in) makes Nia tap at 13:26, leaving the match at 2-2.

Actually never mind as Charlotte boots Alexa in the face for the pin at 14:15. Becky is in trouble but comes back with clotheslines and forearms, followed by the Bex Plex. It's off to Bayley who takes a Bex Plex of her

own but blocks the Disarm-Her. A quick Bayley to Belly gives Bayley the surprise winning pin at 17:49.

**Rating:** C. This was pretty sloppy and the eliminations felt like an excuse to get us to the final few people, which makes sense as they're the most interesting but it also shows the problems with this kind of match. Bayley getting the pin was a good choice though I'm not sure why they got Sasha out of there so fast. All that being said: this was so far ahead of what these matches used to be that it might as well have been a different sport entirely. Things are trending in the right way and that's a good thing.

Charlotte destroys Bayley post match to set up the next title feud.

Anderson and Gallows pick on James Ellsworth until Mick Foley comes in for the save. After talking about how much he loved seeing Foley get beaten up as a kid, Ellsworth turns down an offer to come to Raw. Braun Strowman comes up and scares Ellsworth away.

#### Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Sami Zayn

Sami is challenging and the title can change brands. The Canadian fans are way behind Sami as he starts fast with a leg lariat and sends Miz to the floor for a breather. That's fine with Sami who moonsaults off the barricade to drop the champ again. The standard Miz distraction lets Miz take over on the leg with some kicks and a swing into the post.

Sami comes right back with a flip dive and the Michinoku Driver for two but Miz starts doing Daniel Bryan stuff again and takes over. That just means a Blue Thunder Bomb to give Sami two but the Helluva Kick only hits the buckle. The Figure Four goes on until Sami turns it over for the counter.

Miz starts in with the YES Kicks but gets pulled down into a Figure Four (which takes a bit as Sami doesn't seem to know how to do it) and the bell rings....as rung by Maryse. The distraction lets Miz grab a rollup (and tights according to Cole, even though his hand isn't grabbing anything) to retain at 14:09.

**Rating:** C+. Not the best here as the ending felt like they needed a way out and didn't want either guy to do a job. I'm really not sure what they're waiting on with Sami as he's more than over enough and ready to do something but he keeps going from one story to another (like Strowman, who didn't even have a match against Sami) without really getting anywhere.

Dean Ambrose and AJ Styles argue over what's going to happen at TLC when Shane McMahon comes in and tells them to cool it.

### Survivor Series Tag Team Elimination Match: Team Raw vs. Team Smackdown

Raw: Enzo Amore and Big Cass, New Day, Anderson and Gallows, Shining Stars,

Smackdown: Heath Slater/Rhyno, Breezango, Usos, American Alpha, Hype Bros

When one member is eliminated, their partner is as well. Fandango and Big E. get things going but Fandango would rather give away fashion tickets. The Midnight Hour takes care of Breezango at 46 seconds but Jimmy superkicks Kofi to tie it up at 1:13. Well that's certainly a surprise. Ryder, with the old Survivor Series logo on his trunks, flapjacks Primo before it's off to Mojo (Graves: "Smackdown's resident blithering idiot.") for his bell clap in the corner. Ryder comes back in and has to deal with Anderson and Gallows, meaning it's a Magic Killer for the pin at 5:14.

We get the big moment of the match as American Alpha comes in for multiple double dropkicks but Sheamus starts stomping Gable down in the corner. The Shining Stars actually beat on Gable for a bit until the hot tag brings Jordan back in for the house cleaning. It's actually a Steiner Bulldog to get rid of the Shining Stars and tie things up.

Everything breaks down and it's Enzo being launched onto the pile. Slater hits a dive of his own, leaving Jordan to get caught in the Swing. Another Magic Killer eliminates American Alpha at 10:46 and we're down to 3-2. Slater has to fight off Anderson and Gallows but some Raw miscommunication allows a tag off to Rhyno. The Gore gets rid of Anderson and Gallows at 12:26 but the Bada Boom Shaka Lacka takes out Rhyno and

Slater at 13:00.

The Usos remember they're in the match and superkick Enzo into the Superfly Splash for the elimination at 13:30, leaving us with the Usos vs. Sheamus/Cesaro. Sheamus eats a superkick but Cesaro shoves him out of the way of the second, meaning it's a Brogue Kick for two on Jimmy with Jey making the save. Cesaro comes in with the Uppercut Train followed by a 619. The high crossbody gets two on Jey and there's the Swing to make it even worse. Jimmy superkicks the knee out to set up the Tequila Sunrise but Cesaro reverses into a Sharpshooter for the tap out at 18:56 as Sheamus cuts Jey off.

**Rating:** D+. Yeah ok we get it: Cesaro and Sheamus are a thing and we'll like them already. This was REALLY disappointing as they flew through the eliminations for reasons I don't even want to try to comprehend. But hey, they got the match in and out of there as fast as they could and that's what matters right? That's why we added an hour: so the matches that could be interesting could be short with two eliminations in less than eighty seconds.

So in theory the final Survivor Series match, which now means even less as Raw has secured the brand supremacy thing (assuming they're not counting the stupid singles matches), is going to run about forty five minutes.

Stephanie McMahon and Foley give Cesaro and Sheamus a Tag Team Title match tomorrow night on Raw.

We recap the Cruiserweight Title match, which is another non-existent feud because there's no story here. Kendrick has the title and Kalisto's job is to bring it to Smackdown.

Cruiserweight Title: Kalisto vs. Brian Kendrick

Kendrick is defending and Kalisto snaps off some hurricanranas to start. A running corner dropkick has Brian in trouble so he grabs the ropes to avoid getting pinned. That would be his craftiness you see and that makes him an interesting villain. Or so I'm told. Kendrick grabs a long cravate until Kalisto gets him to the apron for a Spanish Fly to the floor.

Back in and Kendrick gets flipped off the top but still grabs the Captain's Hook. The rope is finally grabbed and Kalisto starts snapping off the kicks, followed by a middle rope seated senton to the back. The Salida Del Sol gets two as Kendrick puts a boot on the rope. Kalisto heads up top...and here's Baron Corbin to hit Kendrick for the DQ at 12:19. Therefore, Raw is now 3-1, making the last Survivor Series match even less important.

**Rating:** C. I was digging this one until the end and it's amazing how much more interesting this is when you have a high flier that we've actually gotten to know a bit over the years instead of someone who was brought in without much backstory. Oh and another reason why the division hasn't worked so far: the champ's finisher is a chinlock.

Corbin gives Kalisto the End of Days.

Pre-Show recap.

#### Team Raw Men vs. Team Smackdown Men

Raw: Kevin Owens, Chris Jericho, Roman Reigns, Seth Rollins, Braun Strowman

Smackdown: Shane McMahon, Bray Wyatt, Randy Orton, Dean Ambrose, AJ Styles

Ellsworth is here as Smackdown's mascot. AJ and Owens get things going to really make the smarks happy. Neither can get anywhere so the fans start a STUPID IDIOT chant (Owens: "That's you!"). The fans get the tag to Jericho, who stops to hug Owens. Chris leaves so it's off to Rollins vs. Ambrose with neither being able to hit a finisher. Jericho comes back in and hits an enziguri for two on Dean.

Shane gets the tag and does his weird punching before elbowing Jericho in the jaw with the fans telling him he still has it. The boss gets beaten down as the announcers argue over which show had higher ratings. Not THE MATCH IN FRONT OF THEM, but the TV ratings. Roman comes in for the corner clotheslines but it's back to Ambrose vs. Owens. The Pop Up Powerbomb doesn't work and we get the big showdown instead, leaving Owens to do the

BIG flip dive onto everyone else.

A bunch of people go after Braun, leaving the Shield and AJ in the ring. The Smackdown guys clear the ring but get in a brawl until Shane breaks it up. A kick to Dean's head allows Strowman to powerslam Ambrose for the elimination at 15:59. Strowman shrugs off the Smackdown attack again, including a SCARY looking toss to send AJ over the top and out to the floor.

We get the Bray vs. Braun showdown with Strowman dropkicking Bray down in a not horrible visual. Orton finally gets in the RKO onto the announcers' table and Shane adds the top rope elbow for the huge crash. AJ gets Shane back inside and Strowman is counted out at 21:12 because Ellsworth grabbed his foot. James bails up the ramp but gets caught (How can you not outrun BRAUN STROWMAN?) and thrown off the stage.

Shane is still in the ring to take another beating and the Lionsault connects, only to have Shane reverse into a small package for two. McMahon and Orton both take Codebreakers and of course Shane kicks out. Question for discussion: would any other member of Team Smackdown be allowed to kick out of a Lionsault and Codebreaker in the span of thirty seconds? Naturally Shane gets in a shot on Jericho and makes the tag off to AJ. They trade submission attempts and AJ decks Owens, who comes in with the List of Jericho for the DQ at 29:28. Jericho is distraught and gets RKO'd for the pin at 30:21.

We're down to Shane/Orton/Bray/AJ vs. Reigns/Rollins. It's Seth going in first and the numbers game has him in early trouble. A superplex gets two on Seth but Orton is banged up enough to allow a tag off to Reigns. The sitout powerbomb gets two on AJ but he blocks the Superman Punch and brings in Shane. A DDT puts Reigns down and something like a spinebuster does the same to Seth.

The spear goes into the post and Shane loads up the Coast to Coast, which is speared out of the air....for two. He's officially announced as eliminated a few seconds later, presumably due to injury. Shane looks really messed up and it wouldn't surprise me if that wasn't exactly how it was supposed to go. There's a good chance that he didn't mean to kick

out but had no idea where he was.

Rollins gets the hot tag to clean house and hits his rolling superplex into the Falcon's Arrow for two on AJ. Reigns has to save Seth from the Elevated DDT on the floor but AJ breaks up a DoubleBomb. Cue Ambrose to go after AJ though and we get the Shield Reunion for a TripleBomb through the table. Seth pins AJ at 46:11 and it's down to two vs. two.

Orton and Wyatt circle the ring until Luke Harper shows up for a distraction. As usual, NONE OF THIS IS A DQ because that's not what the script calls for. Rollins Sling Blades Wyatt and dives onto Harper to keep up the house cleaning. The superkick looks to set up the frog splash but Orton pulls him out of the air with an RKO for the elimination at 49:32.

So it's Orton/Wyatt vs. Reigns with Roman starting fast to do what he can. Reigns is sent into the barricade but scores with the apron dropkick on Bray. Harper gets a spear and the Superman Punch drops Bray. Orton shoves Bray out of the way of the spear though and Sister Abigail finishes Reigns at 52:57. JBL: "RAW WINS! RAW WINS!" Otunga: "Smackdown got one!" JBL: "RAW WINS IS WHAT EVERYONE WANTED TO SAY BUT SMACKDOWN LIVE WINS!"

**Rating:** A-. This was a lot messier than it could have been but they did exactly what they needed to do here by eating up A LOT of time (longest Survivor Series match on record and longer than multiple Royal Rumbles) and being very entertaining at the same time. Bray winning is a very, very good idea as it's now the biggest win of his career and hopefully (emphasis on that word) he can build on it. Orton taking the bullet was interesting though and that's going to mean something going forward. I had a blast with this and it's the big Survivor Series match I was hoping for, issues with eliminations aside.

We get the same Goldberg vs. Lesnar recap we've gotten for weeks now.

### Goldberg vs. Brock Lesnar

Lesnar drives him into the corner to start but Goldberg hits two spears in the first minute. The Jackhammer beats Lesnar in ONE MINUTE THIRTY

SEVEN SECONDS!!!

SCREW YOU DEAN AMBROSE, RANDY ORTON, AND ANYONE ELSE THAT LESNAR HAS KILLED BECAUSE GOLDBERG JUST BEAT HIM IN A MINUTE AND A HALF!!!

The show goes off the air before 10:30 with nothing else happening.

**Overall Rating:** C-. The show ended about five minutes ago and I'm still in shock. HOW IN THE FREAKING WORLD DOES THIS HELP ANYONE OTHER THAN GOLDBERG, WHO ISN'T EVEN STICKING AROUND??? Have Orton, Reigns, Wyatt, freaking Strowman or ANYONE else do that match. You have Orton get squashed at Summerslam and Ambrose get squashed at Wrestlemania but GOLDBERG gets to do this?

So in theory, this has something to do with Goldberg coming into the show injured. If that's the case, they knew this was going to be a short match. But they can't even give the other two Survivor Series matches twenty minutes? This is what you extended the show for another hour? Or you can't give anything else extra time?

I know I'm rambling here but this is one of the most astounding things I've ever seen. The money in Lesnar is gone for a long time, everything Lesnar has done in recent months and years feels like a total waste and Goldberg is probably gone until his Hall of Fame induction. Throw Luke Harper out there or Kane or ANYONE BUT LESNAR and it's fine. Unless there was a major contractual issue or something big backstage, I cannot understand why this happened.

The rest of the show was up and down with the great long match helping to save it but that main event is all anyone is going to be talking about for a long time. I really could have gone for the two earlier Survivor Series matches getting more time, especially in light of what's going on here. This is going to get a lot more talk in the upcoming days because I haven't been this shocked since.....probably Shane on Nitro.

## Results

Team Raw Women b. Team Smackdown Women – Bayley to Belly to Lynch

The Miz b. Sami Zayn – Rollup

Team Raw Tag Teams b. Team Smackdown Tag Teams – Sharpshooter to Jimmy Uso

Brian Kendrick b. Kalisto via DQ when Baron Corbin interfered

Team Smackdown Men b. Team Raw Men – Sister Abigail to Reigns

Goldberg b. Brock Lesnar – Jackhammer

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume V at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MQKDV50>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

---

## Survivor Series 2016 Preview

For only the second time in history, WWE has a pay per view series reach thirty entries as we arrive at Survivor Series 2016. In what is the most important thing a Survivor Series can do, there's actually something on the line here, albeit just bragging rights, as Smackdown faces off with Raw in a series of three elimination tag matches. It's only a six match card (for now) so it should be interesting to see what they're doing with the show. Let's get to it.

We'll start with the ladies in the first Team Raw vs. Team Smackdown match. This looks almost completely one sided on paper as Smackdown has Becky Lynch and Nikki Bella, who are nowhere near enough to counter the

combined forces of Sasha Banks, Charlotte, Bayley and Nia Jax. However, never underestimate the power of WWE pushing Bella to the moon and back, meaning she has a good chance of overcoming the odds. She's fearless you know.

That being said, I really can't imagine Raw has much to worry about here. No matter how you look at it, there's just too much talent on the red show, even if they have all their in fighting. This should be a glorified layup as Carmella and Alexa Bliss are such liabilities for the Smackdown team that there's almost no way around their limitations. I'll go with Raw winning here in what shouldn't be much of a challenge for them.

On a side note since I don't have much material to talk about here with such a short card, is anyone else completely uninterested in seeing Bella vs. Charlotte treated as a huge showdown? We saw it last year and it was nothing special but now that Charlotte has become possibly the most successful women's wrestler ever and Bella was on the shelf for months, we're supposed to care? That doesn't make sense, though again, never underestimate the powers of a reality "star" in WWE.

Next up we have a title match as Cruiserweight Champion Brian Kendrick defends against Smackdown's Kalisto. This is a little bigger than your usual title match though as the winning brand gets the entire cruiserweight division. There isn't much to the feud as Kalisto was just named #1 contender a few weeks back on Smackdown.

I'm really hoping logic takes control here because there's not much of a reason to keep the title and the division as a whole over on Raw. Tuesday night has a little more open space and is better suited for an action based division than Raw, which is almost entirely storyline driven. Couple that with the upcoming 205 Live, which is being taped after Smackdown instead of Raw and there's really no reason for Kendrick to walk out with the title. If nothing else, maybe Kalisto can breathe some life into the title instead of being another mat based cruiserweight.

We'll go back to the elimination tags as we have the tag team version, featuring a staggering twenty wrestlers in one match. This kind of match hasn't been done at this level since 1988 and the previous incarnations

were borderline classics and among the best Survivor Series matches of all time. I'm not sure the talent is there to pull that off this time but at least there's a great chance for some exciting action.

Picking an accurate winner here is a lot more complicated though as neither team really stands out. Raw probably has the better lineup from top to bottom but Smackdown has American Alpha and better continuity. Unfortunately Raw has to deal with the Shining Stars and the issues between Cesaro and Sheamus. On the other hand, Heath Slater and Rhyno are playing WAY over their heads at the moment and I don't think they're going to be able to make that last against the Raw teams.

In a pick I'm not entirely confident in, I'm going to pick Smackdown to win here, if nothing else so there can be something on the line in the third match. Neither team looks great but I could certainly go for Cesaro/Sheamus vs. American Alpha with the technique vs. clubbing power formula. This should be a lot of fun if they do it right though and that's what matters in a match like this.

We'll go back to the title matches now with Miz defending the Intercontinental Title against Smackdown's Sami Zayn in another match where the title can switch brands. Miz won the belt back from Dolph Ziggler earlier this week and Ziggler not being on the card seems like a red flag.

At the end of the day though, I can't imagine Raw losing two titles and not having a midcard title to fall back on whatsoever. As much as I'd love to see Sami get a title, this doesn't really seem like the time to pull the trigger. Miz is a great Intercontinental Champion and can pick right back up where he left off after that pesky Ziggler run.

That leaves us with one Survivor Series match to go and this one is the biggest tossup of them all. I really don't know which one to pick as you would think Smackdown would be at a disadvantage with Shane McMahon on the team but he went thirty minutes with the Undertaker at Wrestlemania. The rest of the lineups pretty much cancel each other out though and that's rather influential in a match like this.

I'll go with Smackdown as WWE has a long history of putting the blue show

over when the two of them go head to head. There's nothing on the line here so it's not like this is going to mean much either way, but the bragging rights are always worth a chuckle at worst. If nothing else we don't have to listen to Matt Striker shouting "IN YOUR FACE! IN YOUR FACE! IN YOUR FACE!" when someone wins.

That leaves us with the main event, which is only somewhat interesting but is the focal point of the show. Twelve and a half years ago, Goldberg and Brock Lesnar had one of the worst major matches in wrestling history and for some reason we're supposed to forget all that and just enjoy them fighting again. It's also Goldberg's first match since that night and I'm not sure how bad this could really get.

Obviously I'll go with Lesnar, but neither guy is really a good option here. You don't have Lesnar set up as this unstoppable monster and then have him lose but at the same time, Lesnar beating Goldberg means as much as Hulk Hogan beating the Ultimate Warrior in 1998. Lesnar wins here after Goldberg doesn't do much besides throw spears. At least there should be some energy here and Goldberg will have a better chance than Dean Ambrose had.

Overall, Survivor Series has a lot of potential but it could be good or bad. If they let these matches have a lot of time (which they should given the four hour run time) and only add one more at most, they could have the time to build into something entertaining. Unfortunately they could also build into a disaster with the fans getting bored and matches that aren't the most interesting. I've been excited for this since it was announced though and I'm going to try to keep that optimism.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume V at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MQKDV50>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books

at:

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

---

# Main Event – November 1, 2016: Some Familiar Faces

## Main Event

Date: November 1, 2016

Location: Prudential Center, Newark, New Jersey

Commentators: Tom Phillips, David Otunga

This went well enough last week so we'll see how long I keep it going for. I can always dig more wrestling with people who aren't on TV all that often, as long as it's not Jinder Mahal vs. Darren Young all over again that is. Or not bringing in a debuting wrestler and having him lose his first match. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

## Jack Swagger vs. Simon Gotch

Simon tries to go right at Swagger and is quickly powerslammed for his efforts. A clothesline puts him on the floor, though Gotch jumping about a second before there was any contact probably helped. English offers a distraction and Simon gets in a big boot to take over. Swagger fights out of a chinlock and grabs the belly to belly, meaning it's time to pound on his chest. The Vader Bomb sets up the Patriot Lock but English has to be dispatched. A second Patriot Lock is enough to make Simon tap at 4:04.

**Rating:** D+. It's so strange to see Swagger winning a match against someone I've actually heard of before. There's talent there but he's been dying for a repackaging for years now and it might be too late. I also

like having tag teams wrestle as singles as it offers a way to switch up some matches and still have both halves of the team there.

We go back to Raw for the opening segment.

We open with Goldberg, who gets the full walking entrance. Before he can say much though, Paul Heyman interrupts. Heyman knows he isn't a physical threat to Goldberg but he's willing to get inside the ring. There's no way he would get into this ring without significant backup because Brock wants to fight tonight.

Goldberg is more than happy with this and takes off the jacket (that man just has the look that suggests he could fight anybody) as Lesnar's music starts up. Of course that's not happening tonight but Heyman realizes this could go badly for him. Cue Rusev of all people to praise Goldberg before challenging him to a fight. A few knees to the ribs (with the slip edited out) and a Jackhammer later, Rusev is down. A weak spear takes Heyman down as well and Goldberg gets to pose.

More Raw.

Here's Foley to talk about last night's show with a focus on the Universal Title match. Everything that Owens and Jericho did last night was legal but it all left a bad taste in Foley's mouth. Jericho and Owens come out to brag about getting into the Cell last night and walking out with the title.

That win means they should be anchoring the Survivor Series team because they're the top two guys on Raw. They laugh at Foley and bring up him losing the Cell match against HHH right here in Hartford, Connecticut. Foley gets in Owens' face to yell about how much talent he has but Jericho keeps interfering. Jericho was standing there with a key around his finger and that's what people are going to see on the WWE Network in eighteen years. Jericho: "Lock it in man."

That's enough for Foley, who says Stephanie only wanted Owens for Raw. However, Foley is going to put them both on the team along with another guy he can trust. That wouldn't be just any guy, but rather THE guy. Reigns comes out and praises Foley's pumpkin shirt while saying Owens and

Jericho look like Spongebob and Patrick.

Roman was going to dress up like a stupid idiot but the store was out of Jericho costumes. Jericho teases putting someone on the List but NO ONE GOES ON THE LIST TONIGHT. Chris doesn't like anyone here in the United States but he would still be a better US Champion than Reigns. That sounds good to Foley so the title match is made. To be fair that's the only title Jericho has never won.

### Rhyno/Heath Slater vs. Breezango

Non-title and HOKEY SMOKE BREEZANGO IS ALIVE! Those guys were getting somewhere and they just disappeared. Slater and Fandango start things off and that means it's time for some hip swiveling. I'll let you figure out whose hips they were. A hiptoss to Fandango sets up even more hip swiveling to make it an evenly matched set. Breeze comes in and eats a flying forearm, meaning it's off to Rhyno for some power. The champs clean house and Breezango have a breather on the floor as we take a break.

Back with Slater punching Fandango in the jaw a few times until Heath is sent outside. We hit the chinlock as the fans want Rhyno. Otunga fails at being William Regal as he talks about Breezango's gear being from a pharaoh's tomb. Rhyno gets another tag and hits a spinebuster, followed by the Gore to pin Breeze at 10:09.

**Rating:** C. I miss Breezango on the main show and I don't know why they're stuck down here on Main Event. It's still nice to see them though as they're a good team and Breeze is so much fun to watch. At the same time, it's a good idea to have some bigger names show up on Main Event to boost it up a little bit. The match was fine and I'm surprised at how much I enjoy watching Slater and Rhyno team together. They're not half bad.

We wrap the show up with the last few minutes of Roman Reigns vs. Chris Jericho with Kevin Owens coming in for the DQ, as well as Seth Rollins making the post match save to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C-. Not much to this one but it was nice to see some champions on the show instead of the same low level talent we get every

single week. I still dig the idea of having the highlights on the show instead of another weak match as it lets you get caught up with Raw in a hurry, which is the solution to a major problem on the red show.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete 2014 Raw and Smackdown Reviews Part I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01LY6766K#nav-subnav>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

---

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

### **Smackdown**

Date: October 25, 2016

Location: Resch Center, Green Bay, Wisconsin

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

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

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

Styles vs. Dean Ambrose for this week.

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

#### Kane vs. Bray Wyatt

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

**Rating:** C-. This was much more of an angle than a match but again, the difference from Raw is this is interesting. I'm curious to see where this is going while most of the stuff on Monday comes and goes with little interest. My guess is Orton trying to get into Wyatt's head instead of a heel turn, which works for me as I've always liked Orton vs. Kane matches.

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

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

#### Survivor Series Qualifying Match: Ascension vs. Hype Bros

The winners are on the Survivor Series team along with Heath Slater and

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

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

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

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

#### Survivor Series Qualifying Match: Nikki Bella vs. Natalya

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

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

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

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

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

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

Miz and Ziggler are on commentary. Slater and Rhyno are defending and this is joined in progress with Slater caught in a chinlock. The comeback is cut off and we hit another chinlock to keep the champs in trouble. Slater fights up and dives over for the tag as everything breaks down. The commentators get in the expected argument and it's Mikey being knocked off the apron onto Miz. A Gore to Kenny retains the titles at 4:03.

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

Hell in a Cell preview.

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

#### AJ Styles vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title with Ellsworth in the corner and a win makes Dean #1 contender.

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

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

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

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

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

## Results

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

Hype Bros b. Ascension – Hype Ryder to Viktor

Nikki Bella b. Natalya – STF

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

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

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete 2014 Raw and Smackdown Reviews Part I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01LY6766K#nav-subnav>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

---

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

### **Smackdown**

Date: October 18, 2016

Location: Pepsi Center, Denver, Colorado

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga, Mauro Ranallo

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

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

the title rematch.

Dean Ambrose gives Ellsworth a pep talk and his own shirt, which you can really buy at [WWEshop.com](http://WWEshop.com).

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

### Randy Orton vs. Luke Harper

Harper shoves him outside to start but his suicide dive is broken up with a forearm. Back in and Luke goes up, earning himself a superplex back down. There go the lights though and we've got Bray being brought to the ring in his coffin, carried by druids in sheep masks. We come back from a break with Orton on the floor and Bray walking around near the casket. A Michinoku Driver gets two for Harper but he can't put Orton in the casket. Instead, Orton comes back with his clothesline and powerslam but Wyatt comes in for the DQ at 7:48. Too much was spent on Bray's entrance and the commercial to rate, though it was just angle advancement.

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

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

### Naomi vs. Alexa Bliss

Alexa has Nightmare on Elm Street style attire. Naomi starts fast with right hands and those dancing kicks. Back up and Bliss eats a springboard clothesline, followed by a legdrop for two. Bliss gets sent into the buckle and heads outside as we go to a break. Back with Naomi scoring off

a backbreaker and jawbreaker, only to be sent hard into the corner again. A quick Twisted Bliss gives Alexa the pin at 10:49.

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

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

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

#### Curt Hawkins vs. Apollo Crews

Hawkins' theme music is him reciting his Curt Facts. After he wins tonight, Apollo is going to have to change his last name to LOSE. Apollo hits him in the face and that's enough for Curt, who walks out before the bell. No match.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Rating:** C. This was fine and I guess sets up the Spirit Squad as the next challengers for the Tag Team Titles. It's not exactly the Usos or American Alpha but when you have all of five teams (since Breezango has disappeared), adding in another is hardly the worst thing you can do. At least Ziggler didn't get pinned.

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

### Jack Swagger vs. Baron Corbin

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

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

## Smackdown World Title: AJ Styles vs. James Ellsworth

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

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

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

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

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

## Results

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

Alexa Bliss b. Naomi – Twisted Bliss

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

Baron Corbin b. Jack Swagger – End of Days

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

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete 2014 Raw and Smackdown Reviews Part I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01LY6766K#nav-subnav>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

---

# No Mercy 2016: The Same Old Surprises

## No Mercy 2016

Date: October 9, 2016

Location: Golden 1 Center, Sacramento, California

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

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

isn't clear. Let's get to it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ambrose takes over with some of his brawling and takes AJ outside for a few rams into the announcers' table.

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Carmella vs. Nikki Bella

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

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

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

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

### Tag Team Titles: Heath Slater/Rhyno vs. Usos

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

in trouble. The twins keep taking turns on Rhyno until Jimmy runs into an elbow in the corner.

That's enough for a hot tag as Slater comes in to clean house but the fans still aren't getting into it. Everything breaks down and the fans get behind the champs as Jimmy punches Slater in the face. Heath is right back up though and powerslams Jimmy off the top for two (cool little spot). It's time to go after Heath's leg but Rhyno breaks up the Tequila Sunrise. Rhyno Gores Jey to retain at 10:17 in what I'd call a big surprise.

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

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

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

#### Baron Corbin vs. Jack Swagger

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

**Rating:** D+. This show needs a charge soon as it's starting to lose a lot

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

We recap Ziggler vs. Miz. Ziggler has lost two straight title shots and is on a major losing streak. He has to win one big match though and is willing to put up his career for one more shot.

### Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Dolph Ziggler

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

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

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

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

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

Randy Orton's reflection distorts in a mirror.

Pre-Show recap.

### Alexa Bliss vs. Naomi

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

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

Hell in a Cell ad.

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

### Randy Orton vs. Bray Wyatt

Bray laughs throughout Orton's entrance. An early lockup sends Bray outside for a bit before it's time to slug it out. The threat of Sister Abigail sends the fight outside again with Orton being thrown over the

announcers' table. Bray sends him into the steps and does the Orton pose before taking him back in for the running backplash.

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

The snap powerslam gets two on Bray but the RK0 is countered into Sister Abigail which is countered into a rollup for two more. Bray plants him with the release Rock Bottom and it's back to the floor, only to have Bray miss another backplash onto the steps. A belly to back suplex onto the barricade sets up Orton's elevated DDT...and there go the lights. Luke Harper shows up in the ring for a distraction and it's Sister Abigail for the pin on Orton at 15:37.

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

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

### Results

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

Nikki Bella b. Carmella – Rack Attack 2.0

Heath Slater/Rhyno b. Usos – Gore to Jey

Baron Corbin b. Jack Swagger – End of Days

Dolph Ziggler b. The Miz – Superkick

Naomi b. Alexa Bliss – Rollup

Bray Wyatt b. Randy Orton – Sister Abigail

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete 2014 Raw and Smackdown Reviews Part I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01LY6766K#nav-subnav>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

---

## No Mercy 2016 Preview

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

### Pre-Show: Jack Swagger vs. Baron Corbin

We'll start with this rematch from earlier in the week on "Smackdown Live" where Swagger won via submission. However, it's not quite that

simple as it sounds. In the first match, Corbin claimed to be reaching for the ropes instead of tapping out so there's a much more logical reason for a rematch. It's much better than having a rematch for the sake of having a rematch after one of the people wins completely clean.

I'm going with Corbin here as there's really no reason to have Swagger win. Swagger is on "Smackdown Live" to lose matches to upcoming names, as he's been stuck doing for years. Corbin is the kind of guy you could throw out there as a midcard title challenger at the drop of a hat so there's no reason to have him lose to someone like Swagger in a spot like this. Odds are there will be a third match but hopefully this wraps up their mini feud.

### **Curt Hawkins vs. ???**

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

### **Tag Team Titles: Heath Slater/Rhyno vs. Usos**

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

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

### **Nikki Bella vs. Carmella**

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

That being said, I think I'm going to go with Bella here as she hasn't had a big win since here comeback. I'm not sure you can call beating Carmella a big win but at least there's been a story to set this up. Carmella has already gotten a big boost from this feud and will be fine going forward. It would make more sense to have Carmella win here but I'll go with Bella, who just hasn't had enough publicity lately.

### **Women's Title: Becky Lynch vs. Alexa Bliss**

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

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

### **Bray Wyatt vs. Randy Orton**

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

As much as it pains me, I'll go with Orton here, partially due to a lack of anyone else to go after the World Title after this show. With rumors

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

### **Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Dolph Ziggler**

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

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

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

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

Overall "No Mercy 2016" is just there, though I have some optimism for the show. I'm not wild on the idea of having another pay per view this soon but at least the card looks solid. If nothing else they have eight matches this time around and "Smackdown Live" has shown the ability to set up an entertaining show. My guess is this will be a perfectly

acceptable use of three hours (Repeat: THREE HOURS. Not three hours and another fifteen minutes. Three hours AT MOST.). The wrestling will be fine and they'll use the Smackdown style of setting up simple stories but paying them off well.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete 2014 Raw and Smackdown Reviews Part I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01LY6766K#nav-subnav>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

---

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

## **Smackdown**

Date: September 27, 2016

Location: Quicken Loans Arena, Cleveland, Ohio

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Mauro Ranallo, David Otunga

It's a big night for Smackdown as we have a rare World Title match on free TV with AJ Styles defending against Dean Ambrose. We're less than two weeks away from No Mercy and it should be interesting to see where things go as we get ready for the triple threat and whatever else is announced before the show. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Orton goes to what looks like the boiler room and sees an arrow left by

Bray. For some reason he turns it around and goes the other way. When the camera pans back, the arrow has been turned around again and Erick Rowan is standing there in his mask.

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

### Carmella/Natalya vs. Nikki Bella/Naomi

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

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

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

Here are Miz and Maryse for his homecoming celebration. Maryse introduces a video package on Miz's career, including Real World clips, his time as a Tag Team and US Champion, his World Title win (still the only possible call) and capped off by the promo on Bryan from Talking Smack. Miz talks about the Cleveland Cavaliers winning the NBA Title and wonders why his celebration isn't as big. Mr. and Mrs. Miz are in the front row, as are Dolph Ziggler's parents.

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Smackdown World Title: Dean Ambrose vs. AJ Styles

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

Styles gets to the ropes so Dean gets in a suicide dive because every match needs a suicide dive. Back with AJ cranking on a Calf Crusher until Dean grabs his head to slam it onto the mat for the break. They slug it

out until Dean gets two off a double chickenwing facebuster for two of his own.

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

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

Cena AA's both guys to end the show.

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

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete 2014 Raw and Smackdown Reviews Part I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01LY6766K#nav-subnav>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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

---

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

## Smackdown

Date: September 20, 2016

Location: Legacy Arena, Birmingham, Alabama

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga. Mauro Ranallo

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

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

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

At No Mercy, Alexa is going to prove Becky is a one hit wonder. Bliss hits her with the contract and turns the table over. Alexa goes to leave but Becky chases her to the back. Really simple segment here but I liked it. Bliss has a very natural feel on the mic and that's going to do her a lot of favors. Becky is playing her character perfectly too and while the match might not be great, the build is working and these two have chemistry talking.

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

### Usos vs. American Alpha

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

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

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

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

### Baron Corbin vs. Apollo Crews

Jack Swagger is on commentary. Crews hits him in the face to start and gets two off a fall away slam. A jumping enziguri knocks Corbin around

even worse but he sends Crews ribs first into the post. Corbin drives the ribs into the post again and the End of Days wraps Crews up at 2:48. I'd love to hear the explanation for why Crews isn't getting ready for a big showdown against Shinsuke Nakamura for the NXT Title instead of being a jobber on Smackdown.

Corbin and Swagger have a staredown.

Curt Hawkins Face the Facts vignette.

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

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

#### Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Dolph Ziggler

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

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

Back with Miz countering a superplex into a slingshot sitout powerbomb. Ziggler's sleeper sends Miz over to the ropes and the superkick gets two. Maryse loads up the hairspray but gets caught this time, meaning an ejection. Rollups are exchanged for two each and the Zig Zag gives Ziggler a VERY close two. Miz tries to leave with the title so Ziggler

sends him into the steps, only to get sprayed in the face. A Skull Crushing Finale retains Miz's title at 16:01.

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

#### Erick Rowan vs. Randy Orton

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

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

#### Nikki Bella/Naomi vs. Carmella/Natalya

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

Naomi kicks Natalya in the head post match.

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

#### John Cena vs. Dean Ambrose

As usual, the fans are split on Cena. Feeling out process to start with Cena working on a headlock and then into a top wristlock. Ambrose turns it up by sending Cena into the post and we take a break. Back with Dean

chopping and punching away until Cena pulls him down into the STF. Dean makes the ropes and gets in another shot to the head, only to have Cena roll through a high crossbody into the AA for two. Dirty Deeds gets the same and I probably should have penciled that in as soon as the AA hit. Back up and a second AA is countered into a sunset flip to give Dean the completely clean pin at 10:14.

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

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

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

### Results

Usos b. American Alpha – Superfly splash to Jordan

Baron Corbin b. Apollo Crews – End of Days

The Miz b. Dolph Ziggler – Skull Crushing Finale

Randy Orton b. Erick Rowan – RKO

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

Dean Ambrose b. John Cena – Sunset flip

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete 2014 Raw and Smackdown Reviews Part I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01LY6766K#nav-subnav>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

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