

Smackdown – July 4, 2017: Johnny Cena And the News

Smackdown

Date: July 4, 2017

Location: Talking Stick Resort Arena, Phoenix, Arizona

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton

Welcome home Johnny! After weeks of hype, John Cena is making his return to WWE TV tonight. This is the first time Cena has been seen since Wrestlemania XXXIII and there's no real indication of what he'll be doing. Since Cena can appear on either show, this might be something of note or just a glorified one off appearance. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at Cena.

There's no time wasted as Cena is right here to open the show. The fans are all over him but he tells them to let him have it because he's WAY too fired up to be rattled tonight. Cena talks about the importance of Independence Day and talks about the American Dream (no not Dusty).

The same idea holds true here: everyone has a chance to come out here and compete with the best. Lately, a lot of people have been out here running their mouths talking about Cena going Hollywood and becoming little more than a part time mascot. Cena is an all-timer because he'll show up on Raw or Smackdown to face anyone from AJ Styles to Jinder Mahal to Seth Rollins to Roman Reigns and anyone in between.

Cue the returning Rusev to say he works just as hard in the ring as anyone but he hasn't had any commercials hyping up his return. The American Dream, just like Cena's return, is a joke. Rusev rips on the Fourth of July and gets drowned out with a USA chant. Cena issues a challenge for a Flag Match but Rusev says we do this on his time and his terms. Rusev walks away so Cena starts a USA chant/song. Cena beating up a foreigner on the Fourth of July is as

much of a layup as you can have and that's perfectly acceptable.

Chad Gable and AJ Styles come in to see Daniel Bryan, who says Kevin Owens doesn't want either of them in the battle royal because he's beaten both of them. Bryan kind of agrees so the two of them will be fighting each other for the right to be in the battle royal instead.

Chad Gable vs. AJ Styles

No Jason Jordan in sight. Feeling out process to start with AJ easily being taken down but popping up for his dropkick to send us to a break less than a minute and a half in. Back with AJ blocking a belly to belly superplex attempt. The Phenomenal Forearm is broken up but Gable misses a moonsault attempt. AJ gets the Calf Crusher for a bit but Gable twists out and plants him with a German suplex. Not that it matters as AJ is sent to the apron and hits the Phenomenal Forearm for the pin at 8:11.

Rating: C+. Better match than I was expecting here though I'm curious if Jordan is hurt or something. That's two singles matches for Gable in a row and we haven't seen American Alpha in the ring in at least a month. I hope they're not being split up or anything as Raw is dying for face teams and Alpha would be a great fit.

AJ helps him up post match.

Mojo Rawley looks at a Hype Bros shirt and doesn't seem pleased. Zack Ryder comes in and says it's cool because they're both in the battle royal. That seems to smooth things over a bit.

Here are Carmella and James Ellsworth to brag about winning Money in the Bank again. Carmella laughs off the idea of the fans having their wrongs righted last week and goes Rolling Stones with a little You Can't Always Get What You Want. Cue Naomi and the BELT HAS LED LIGHTS. That's up there with the spinner title on the dumb scale. Naomi says her eyes are always open so the cash-in won't work.

This brings out Daniel Bryan who tells Ellsworth to shut up. Due to what he did last week, he's banned from the arena again, but as a bonus he's fined \$10,000 and suspended for thirty days without pay. If he doesn't leave RIGHT NOW, Carmella loses the contract. They

immediately leave, as you might expect. Thank goodness they addressed Ellsworth coming back in last week. This should wrap it up too and that's the best thing possible.

Women's Title: Lana vs. Naomi

Naomi is defending and grabs her reverse Rings of Saturn for the tap out at 11 seconds.

Post match Tamina comes out to stare Naomi down and leaves with Lana. Nope. Don't even try to give Lana some kind of story or angle now. Not after you spend two months building her up with vignettes and then have her lose twice in less than a minute combined. I have no idea what the point was in building her up like that but if this is some nonsense about how she didn't work hard enough or whatever, screw off WWE and get your nonsense in order. Or, you know, WRITE HER OFF TV INSTEAD OF KILLING HER LIKE THIS.

Baron Corbin jumps Shinsuke Nakamura with the briefcase.

It's time for the Rap Off with rapper Wale in charge. Both the Usos and New Day have groups of people with them and trade insults about size, fake Jamaican accents, staying in your lane and the Usos being nothing until Naomi put them on Total Divas. A fight almost breaks out so Wale disqualifies the Usos to give New Day the win after nearly twelve minutes of rapping/rhyming back and forth. I know that's a short recap but there's really nothing else that can be said when it's just talking back and forth.

Randy Orton vs. Aiden English

Aiden gets annoyed at Randy for interrupting his song and jumps him from behind. Before he can sing again though, we hit a commercial. The match is joined in progress with Orton beating the heck out of English, including dropping him back first onto the announcers' table. The hanging DDT to the floor makes things even worse and Orton hits him with the steps for the DQ at 2:19.

English takes a post match RKO and here are Mahal and company with something to say. He talks about how everyone disrespects him because of the color of his skin but before he can speak Punjabi,

Orton cuts him off and threatens to RK0 Mahal back to India. Nobody likes Mahal because he's a jacka**...and that's it.

Tye Dillinger is interviewed by Tyler Breeze in drag. Tyler, or Te-Nee Young asks what Tye is going to do to deal with the quadruple threat of Breezango. Dillinger gives a basic strategy and nearly runs into Fandango, who is wearing a fake mustache and dressed like a construction worker. Fandango and Breeze are of course bros forever, no matter how physical things get tonight. They've got something with this Breeze/Fandango things and that's likely grounds for running them into the ground asap.

Renee Young (who says Te-Nee Young was filling out the dress) interviews Mike and Maria Kanellis about the power of love. A noise interrupts them and it's Sami Zayn stretching. He talks about the Power of Love and goes into a discussion of Huey Louis and the News. As Sami wonders why you never hear about the News, his music hits and he has to run off. Maria is not pleased.

Battle Royal

Sami Zayn, Konnor, Viktor, Dolph Ziggler, Luke Harper, Mojo Rawley, Zack Ryder, Erick Rowan, Fandango, Tyler Breeze, AJ Styles, Tye Dillinger, Sin Cara

Winner gets a shot at Kevin Owens, on commentary here, and the US Title at Battleground. I think I have everyone in there but that's always hard to pull off due to the constant camera cuts. Harper clotheslines Ziggler out before the vest can even come off. We take an early break and come back with Rowan eliminating Fandango.

Breeze is thrown to the apron and jumps into Fandango's arms before being placed back inside. That's fine with Rowan who dumps him a few seconds later. Harper knocks out Konnor but gets dumped by Rawley. We're down to Ryder, Rawley, Rowan, Dillinger, Styles and Zayn. The Hype Bros nearly get into it but team up to dump Rowan. Rawley throws Ryder out and says it's not personal. Ryder seems to take it personally though and doesn't seem to mind when Sami kicks Rawley out.

So we're down to three with Tye stomping on Styles and Sami, in increments of ten of course. Tye sends both of them to the apron but Sami backdrops Dillinger out to get us down to two. Sami grabs a quick exploder on Styles but misses the Helluva Kick and gets Pele Kicked out to give AJ the win at 11:18.

Rating: C. This was better than your average battle royal as they got rid of most of the nothing guys early and got down to people fans care about. Styles winning was obvious but they kept things moving and it was far from bad. The fans would have been happy with any of the final three so it was hardly torture.

Owens hits the ring and beats Styles down, only to have AJ knock him to the floor and hold up the title to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. Tonight was a completely skippable show, as it should have been on the major holiday. Save for Cena, who wasn't around after the first fifteen minutes, nothing of note happened here, assuming you count AJ getting the title shot as important. This was exactly what they should have done tonight though as no one was watching and it gives them a week to put some stuff together.

Results

AJ Styles b. Chad Gable – Phenomenal Forearm

Naomi b. Lana – Reverse Rings of Saturn

Aiden English b. Randy Orton via DQ when Orton used the steps

AJ Styles won a battle royal last eliminating Sami Zayn

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

Money in the Bank 2017

Date: June 18, 2017

Location: Scottrade Center, St. Louis, Missouri

Commentators: Tom Phillips, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

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

Kickoff Show: Hype Bros vs. Colons

This is the Hype Bros' first match since December after Zack Ryder's knee injury. Epico shoulders Ryder down to start but the Bros (as opposed to the cousins) take over without much effort. Primo decides to slap Mojo in the face, which just fires him up. The Colons get in a shot to Ryder's knee though and we take a break. Back with Ryder's knee still in trouble until a neckbreaker drops Primo. The hot tag brings in Mojo for Hyperdrive (something like a release F5) and the running punch in the corner. The Hype Ryder is good for the pin on Primo at 8:11.

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

the point of having them around.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

idea with the ending making it much worse than it could have been on its own.

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

Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. New Day

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

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

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

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

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

Women's Title: Naomi vs. Lana

Lana is defending in her singles debut. Naomi drives her into the corner to start but gets taken down by the hair. That just earns her

a nipup, only to have Naomi miss a high crossbody. The fans want Rusev, because they have no interest in a gorgeous blonde in a rather small outfit.

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

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

Carmella leaves without doing anything.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Smackdown World Title: Randy Orton vs. Jinder Mahal

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

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

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

The referee teases a DQ but ejects the Brothers instead. Before they go though, the Brothers grab Bob Orton and get pummeled by Randy. One of them gets dropped onto the announcers' table and the other gets an RKO on the floor. The first takes an RKO through the table as the referee is fine with all of this. Back in and Mahal kicks the knee out and hits the Khallas to retain at 20:58.

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

Breezango vs. Ascension

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

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

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

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

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

The Phenomenal Forearm is broken up by Ziggler but he dives into Deep Six on the floor. Owens starts cleaning house with the ladder until AJ kicks it back at him. Kevin comes right back and goes up top, only to have Sami slam him onto the ladder, which is completely mangled. Sami loads up the ladder as something happens off camera and here's Ziggler to make the save.

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

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

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

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

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

Results

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

New Day b. Usos via countout

Naomi b. Lana – Double arm trap

Jinder Mahal b. Randy Orton – Khallas

Baron Corbin b. AJ Styles, Dolph Ziggler, Shinsuke Nakamura, Kevin

Owens and Sami Zayn – Corbin pulled down the ladder

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Smackdown – June 13, 2017: Money in the Bank Stew

Smackdown

Date: June 13, 2017

Location: Smoothie King Center, New Orleans, Louisiana

Commentators: Tom Phillips, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

It's the go home show for Money in the Bank and instead of having a bunch of matches to set up the ladder match, let's just have one match to set it up! This week it's a six man tag as the participants try to build momentum, all while having JBL say that none of this actually matters as we head towards the pay per view. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

New Day/Breezango vs. Colons/Usos

For those of you counting, this would be fourteen wrestlers in two matches. New Day is played to the ring by a live band for the sake of some New Orleans spirit. Before the match, Woods brags about potentially being cast in a very off Broadway version of Straight Out of Compton. This brings out the Usos to say they're retaining the titles, only to have Breezango interrupt. They have a different view of the Usos: their day one wasn't H but rather G, for GROSS. The Colons come out as well to say they have a break in the case. Big E.: "Now hold on sucker!" Threats of violence take us to the first break.

Fandango and Jey start things off but it's off to Kofi vs. Epico with no offense. The good guys work on Epico's arm with armdrags and elbows to the arm. A legdrop gives Fandango two but Breeze gets taken into the corner for the beatdown. That lasts all of five seconds before it's off to Woods, who drops Breeze onto Primo for two. The Honor Roll drops Primo and everything breaks down with the good guys cleaning house to send us to a rather unnecessary break.

Back with Breeze in trouble and Jimmy hitting a running Umaga Attack in the corner. Breeze gets in a kick to the face but Epico dives over for the save. Fandango gets knocked off the apron and Breeze stays in trouble. Some superkicks finally get him out of trouble, followed by a clothesline that makes Epico DDT Primo by mistake (still perhaps the dumbest spot in all of wrestling). The hot tag brings in Woods and then Kofi to clean house as everything breaks down again. Something like a Demolition Decapitator with a stomp instead of an elbow puts Primo away at 14:27.

Rating: D+. This was much more long than good as they were clearly filling in time because they don't have enough to fill in two hours, mainly thanks to having fourteen people in two matches. That being said, at least this actually had something to do with building momentum as a pinfall here does keep you rolling towards Sunday. I'm assuming Breezango vs. Colons could be added to the Kickoff Show at some point.

Sami Zayn is way too enthusiastic about the upcoming six man tag and

talks strategy with AJ Styles and Shinsuke Nakamura. AJ seems a bit disturbed by Sami's energy. Nakamura: "I like him." Styles: "You would."

Mojo Rawley is disappointed in his loss last week and praises Jinder Mahal. Zack Ryder makes his return to encourage his buddy.

Naomi vs. Tamina

Non-title and Lana comes out to watch. Tamina takes her into the corner to start and we're already into the neck crank. Naomi gets her head crushed in the corner and her kicks are cut off by a shove down. One heck of a clothesline gives Tamina two and it's back to the chinlock. Naomi fights up with some kicks but walks into a spinning Rock Bottom for two. Tamina heads up top but gets slammed down, setting up the split legged moonsault for the pin at 5:08.

Rating: D. The more I watch her, the more I think Tamina has no real reason to be around. She's not imposing, she doesn't have anything all that special in the ring and she doesn't really have a character. She's a warm body who can fill in a spot and I'd much rather have them develop someone interesting than leave her in there for such uninteresting matches.

Lana jumps Naomi after the match and gives her a sitout spinebuster.

Here's Jinder Mahal for the big showdown with Randy Orton. After the long entrance, Mahal calls Orton a coward and says this is his era. Orton's music hits and he comes through the crowd for an RKO. This feud continues to feel like nothing because Mahal feels like nothing, though his delivery has gotten better. He feels like he's doing all the right things but that doesn't make up for him having no background.

Owens, Corbin and Ziggler don't trust each other but they'll work together.

Randy Orton promises to win the title back.

Charlotte vs. Natalya

Feeling out process to start as we see Becky Lynch watching in the back. We come back from a very early break with Charlotte being

thrown shoulder first into the post. It doesn't seem to do much though as she comes back with something like an exploder suplex, followed by a moonsault which actually connects. Charlotte heads up again but gets powerbombed down for two. A small package gives Natalya the same but it's Natural Selection to give Charlotte the pin at 7:16.

Rating: C-. The moonsault and powerbomb looked good but if I have to hear them talking about building momentum one more time, I think my head is going to explode. It's another good example of the one idea that they have going into a show and if you don't like it, get over it because that's what WWE has decided is the best thing they can do.

It's Fashion Files time. Fandango is admiring his pecs and can't wait to show them off to Breeze. We cut to an unconscious Breeze as the office seems to have been wrecked again. Breeze was attacked by two greasy haired men with one arm. Breeze: "No, two arms!" Fandango draws some stick figures and Tyler says that's them.

Video on a WWE fan who has survived liver disease.

Lana doesn't care what people think about her because she can beat Naomi.

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

Non-title of course but MOMENTUM is on the line. Joined in progress with Ziggler being thrown to the ground, only to blast Nakamura with a dropkick. It's off to Owens with forearms to the back and the heels take turns hammering away. We hit the chinlock for a bit until the hot tag brings in Sami as everything beaks down. Sami hits the flip dive onto Owens but Ziggler DDTs Styles to slow things down again.

We take a break and come back with Sami fighting up and getting clotheslined right back down. Owens' backsplash hits knees but Corbin headbutts Sami in the chest to keep him in the wrong corner. Sami kicks Corbin in the face and dodges the other two before low

bridging Corbin to the floor. Ziggler and Owens pull the partners to the floor though and there's still no hot tag. A Helluva Kick out of nowhere puts Corbin away at 12:48.

Rating: C. Just a long six man here with the six people doing things to set up Sunday's ladder match. Sami getting a pin on Corbin makes me more sure that Corbin is going to be the one winning the ladder match because if there's one thing WWE loves to do, it's put people down before giving them the big win, thinking it makes up for all the losses. The match was perfectly fine and above all else, Owens didn't take yet another pin for a change.

Post match Owens brings in the ladder and the brawl breaks out. Corbin gets the better of it until Nakamura gets in a shot. Shinsuke takes everyone else down and climbs up to pull down the briefcase to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This was the show that I was dreading and it's not all that surprising. They went with the "throw everyone together and call it developing the big match" formula here, which isn't interesting and does nothing for the pay per view. At least it's done now though, save for the following week when we do the exact same matches and call it fallout. I'm still interested in Sunday's show, but only because of the ladders instead of the feuds and stories. That's not good, and shows how ineffective the build to this show has been.

Results

New Day/Breezango b. Usos/Colons – Middle rope double stomp to Primo

Naomi b. Tamina – Split legged moonsault

Charlotte b. Natalya – Natural Selection

Sami Zayn/AJ Styles/Shinsuke Nakamura b. Baron Corbin/Dolph

Ziggler/Kevin Owens – Helluva Kick to Corbin

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Smackdown – May 30, 2017: Back in the Fall

Smackdown

Date: May 30, 2017

Location: Philips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Tom Phillips, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

You might have heard about this one before but tonight has a Fatal Five Way for a future title shot. In this case it's the Smackdown Women's Title as Charlotte, Becky Lynch and the Welcoming Committee will go at it for a shot at Naomi at the upcoming Money in the Bank pay per view. Let's get to it.

Charlotte says she's ready to face anyone.

Carmella will make a fabulous champion.

Natalya says her one and only catchphrase which isn't even hers.

Becky Lynch doesn't need the luck of the Irish to win.

Tamina says she'll win.

Opening sequence.

We open with Kevin Owens' Highlight Reel with Owens talking about how he's going to climb the ladder for the briefcase. After winning

that, it's one step away from the Smackdown World Title, which will make him the face of the entire WWE. One thing he needs to step on before he gets there is his guest tonight: Shinsuke Nakamura. Owens calls Shinsuke a rock star and you remember what happened to the last rock star around here. If Nakamura shows up at Money in the Bank with the fans singing his song, it's going to be the day the music died.

This brings out Baron Corbin to show a clip of his beatdown of Sami Zayn. Owens: "I've been beating up Sami Zayn for fifteen years so you've got nothing to brag about." Nakamura says he pinned Owens last week and Corbin has lost to Sami twice in a row. The brawl is on with Sami coming in for the save. A challenge is issued and the tag match is on after the break.

Sami Zayn/Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Baron Corbin/Kevin Owens

Nakamura sends Corbin into the corner to start and tells him to bring it. That earns Corbin some Good Vibrations in the corner before it's off to both partners. Sami sends Owens outside so it's back to Corbin to hammer away in the corner. Owens adds a kick to the head and Baron grabs a powerslam as we take a break.

Back with Sami fighting out of Owens' chinlock and hitting the Blue Thunder Bomb. Corbin gets dropped as well and the hot tag brings in Nakamura. Everything breaks down and we get some heel miscommunication, causing Corbin to deck Owens with a right hand. Kinshasa makes things even worse for Owens and is good for the pin at 11:10.

Rating: C+. At least there were extenuating circumstances this time. You really don't need to have the US Champion losing so often but you know full well that everything is going to be sacrificed for the sake of building to the Money in the Bank ladder match in the only way this company knows how to do it.

Here are the Usos to brag about beating American Alpha and Breezango so no one is left. As you might expect (or should expect if you've been paying attention), heeere's New Day. Jey: "Did you three get lost skipping down the Yellow Brick Road?" Kofi: "It's more of a

skip clap." Big E. gets right to the point: they want the titles. The Usos threaten to shoot New Day so Kofi brings up Shane McMahon, who has granted them a title shot at Money in the Bank. The Usos leave as Big E. and Woods carry Kofi around. This did exactly what it needed to do.

Long recap of Jinder Mahal winning the title and all the fallout that ensued.

It's Fashion Files time with Fandango as a film noir style gumshoe saying that it might be time to go back to the discount rack. He finds the fashion police department ransacked so he pulls out his price tag gun, only to find a woman's silhouette. It's Breeze in a wig and dress for some reason and, after realizing they can hear each others thoughts, they find a bottle containing ethanol alcohol, tree frog excrement and hibiscus. They have a new case.

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

Elimination rules and the winner gets Naomi at the pay per view. The brawl starts before the bell with Tamina hitting a Samoan drop on Charlotte. Becky beats up Carmella in the timekeeper's area and Charlotte hits the moonsault onto Tamina and Natalya. Charlotte powerbombs Natalya through the table and everyone is down with the match never starting.

Cue Shane to say let's do something big, like the first ever women's Money in the Bank ladder match. In other words, we have no idea how to book a solo feud so let's just throw everyone into one match and put our feet up while saying the big matches are coming later on. That's the writers' solution instead of, you know, WRITING SOMETHING ELSE.

Breezango vs. Colons

Breezango is still wearing the same stuff from the film noir bit, including Breeze in the dress. Primo rips off the dress and the wig (because of course there's a wig) but Fandango squirts Primo with the water gun. Back from a break with Fandango in a chinlock, followed by Epico getting two off a Downward Spiral. Epico pulls

Breeze off the apron so he bails under the ropes, only to come back as the janitor. Fandango and Epico fight over the mop, allowing Breeze to grab the Unprettier for the pin at 8:04.

Rating: C-. Just a quick match to keep Breezango going strong. I know the comedy isn't the best stuff in the world but the division is REALLY weak on teams at this point so putting a gimmick on two guys is one of the best things they could do. It's not brilliant or anything but at least they're doing something. If it gets over, sweet.

AJ Styles and Dolph Ziggler are ready to fight tonight.

Here's Randy Orton to talk about Jinder Mahal. His family is full of wrestlers and if his grandfather was still alive, he wouldn't say anything to Randy. Instead he'd just smack Orton for losing a title to someone like Mahal. At Money in the Bank, Orton is going to take a lesson from his grandfather and smack some sense into Mahal. Cue Mahal on the screen to say he's champion and Orton isn't. Orton poses like it doesn't mean anything.

Dolph Ziggler vs. AJ Styles

Feeling out process to start with AJ scoring off a great looking dropkick to take over. Ziggler sends him outside though and we take a break. Back with AJ hitting his seated forearm and a Teshhocker for two. Ziggler knees him in the head, only to get suplexed hard into the corner. AJ gets in a backbreaker but Ziggler hits him in the back of the head for something you don't see too often.

A running knee to the jaw drops AJ again but he comes right back with the Calf Crusher. Ziggler rakes the eyes (like a true heel should) for the break, followed by the Zig Zag for a delayed two. AJ gets back up and tries a springboard, only to get pulled down for a crash. The superkick is good for the pin on AJ at 12:13. Did I mention that AJ was billed as the hometown boy here?

Rating: C+. Standard Smackdown main event as they try to push Ziggler for some momentum. I'm still not sure how winning a match via pinfall gives you the momentum necessary to climb a ladder but

then again I've never been the biggest fan of this time of the year in the first place.

Overall Rating: D+. Yep it's Money in the Bank time, meaning we can stop pretending that ANY of this matters because the writers have come up with their group of names, thrown them into a random match generator and put their feet up until the end of June. We're currently looking at THREE multi-person matches, none of which are for anything more than a future shot at a title. In other words, absolutely none of this matters so check back again in July so you can see them stall even more until Summerslam rolls around.

Results

Sami Zayn/Shinsuke Nakamura b. Kevin Owens/Baron Corbin – Kinshasa to Owens

Breezango b. Colons – Unprettier to Primo

Dolph Ziggler b. AJ Styles – Superkick

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Backlash 2017 Preview

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

Kickoff Show: Tye Dillinger vs. Aiden English

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

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

Baron Corbin vs. Sami Zayn

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

As much as I want to go with Zayn here, Corbin makes more sense. Just give him the win and let him start getting back on his feet.

Orton vs. Corbin would work fine for a major match, as would Corbin winning Money in the Bank. As much as Zayn needs a win as a member of the "Smackdown Live" roster, Corbin needs it more at the moment. Unfortunately that's the case far more often than not for Zayn and it's going to become a problem one day.

Luke Harper vs. Eric Rowan

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

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

Naomi/Charlotte/Becky Lynch vs. Welcoming Committee

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

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

Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Breezango

What the heck happened to American Alpha? They lost the titles and I don't remember seeing them again since. Maybe we could have more

time for them if we didn't need the Welcoming Committee or Rowan vs. Harper in a hoss battle that people don't care about. Maybe we could have some time to build them up and give them some personality (you know, the thing that GOT THEM OVER IN NXT) to go with the wrestling ability. Oh yeah this match.

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

Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Dolph Ziggler

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

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

US Title: AJ Styles vs. Kevin Owens

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

I'll take Styles to win here as it seems there's more interest in Owens doing the chasing than actually holding the title, or at least

that's been the case for most of his title reigns. There are a lot more options to go after champion Styles than Owens, who could easily move up to going after Orton, assuming he retains the title.

Smackdown World Title: Randy Orton vs. Jinder Mahal

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

Unfortunately I think we're going to keep going with this story as Mahal wins by DQ or countout and we get a rematch at "Money in the Bank 2017" in Orton hometown of St. Louis. As usual, WWE sacrifices their core audience for the sake of whatever their long term planning is, as people are really bored with Mahal but that's what we're getting no matter how many people change the channel.

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

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Smackdown – May 9, 2017: The British Curse Turns Blue

Smackdown

Date: May 9, 2017

Location: O2 Arena, London, England

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

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

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

Opening sequence.

Here's Orton to get things going and he has the title back, thanks to Shane McMahon taking it from Jinder last week. Orton says he lost because of Mahal, not because of Wyatt or that refrigerator. Before

Orton can get too far, here's Mahal to show off his promotional pictures with the title. Mahal promises to begin a new age at Backlash before speaking I believe Punjab.

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

Becky Lynch vs. Natalya

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

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

Lana is coming soon.

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

It's Fashion Files time! They're at the 02 Arena this week and Fandango is dressed as Sherlock Holmes while Breeze is a standard British cop. Fandango: "Cheerio." Breeze: "No thanks. I've already had my breakfast." They find some spilled lead paint that would only be worn by Uggos. That must be a ruse so Breezango can't tell them

apart but it doesn't really matter. The paint leads to a room where roaring is heard. They think something nefarious is going on in there but it's just the Ascension warming themselves up. Breeze: "I'm getting too old for this s***e." More funny stuff here as Breezango continues to look good.

Luke Harper vs. Erick Rowan

Rowan throws him to the floor to start as the announcers talk about how these two are running amuck with no one to guide them. Back in and Rowan scores with a spinning kick to the face and a splash for two. Harper suplexes his way out of the head vice but the discus lariat is blocked. Instead Erick gets two off a Side Effect and grabs the mask. The distraction (as the referee tries to figure out what the mask is supposed to look like) allows Rowan to poke Harper in the eye and grab a reverse spinning powerslam for the pin at 4:23.

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

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

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

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

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

Breezango vs. Ascension

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Back with AJ getting the hot tag to come in and clean house as everything breaks down. The running forearm drops a seated Corbin

and Sami hits a big flip dive onto all three villains. Owens breaks up the Phenomenal Forearm though and Styles and Corbin are down. It's Mahal breaking up the tag though and dropping a knee for two on Styles.

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

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

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

Results

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

Erick Rowan b. Luke Harper – Spinning reverse powerslam

Breezango b. Ascension – Last Dance to Viktor

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

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Smackdown – April 18, 2017: It Didn't Make Any More Sense Live

Smackdown

Date: April 18, 2017

Location: KFC Yum! Center, Louisville, Kentucky

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

Smackdown is in a weird place and is basically at the mercy of the upcoming Raw pay per view until we can settle things down. Randy Orton is the World Champion and has a lame duck challenger in the form of Bray Wyatt, who is now on Raw. Tonight we'll have a Six Pack Challenge to crown a new Smackdown #1 contender. Let's get to it.

I was in the arena for this show so I'll have a bit of a different perspective.

In Memory of Rosey who passed away earlier in the day.

We open with a long recap of the Superstar Shakeup.

Here's Charlotte for an opening chat. She's been on Smackdown Live for seven days now and for some reason she hasn't received her shot at the Smackdown Women's Title. Maybe Shane McMahon and Daniel Bryan have been watching Fast and the Furious but she's getting furious very fast. She wants her title shot now so here's Naomi to

interrupt.

Naomi doesn't think we have queens on this show and she's never scared (I feel a Nikki Bella appearance coming, perhaps in the form of talking to a camera and a stupid, forced argument with Brie). The fight is on but here's Shane McMahon to say not so fast. They'll have a match tonight and if Charlotte wins, she gets a title match next week. The brawl is on again and Naomi clears the ring.

Natalya is in Shane's office and says she deserves the title match. Shane brings up the loss at Wrestlemania and says all she had to do was ask for a one on one match. Cue Carmella and James Ellsworth to say Carmela should get the shot. Tamina comes in to ask about her shot. An argument ensues because that's what WWE thinks women do until Natalya says they should band together against Charlotte.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Sami Zayn vs. Jinder Mahal vs. Erick Rowan vs. Luke Harper vs. Mojo Rawley

One fall to a finish and the winner gets a shot at the Smackdown World Title. Everyone pairs off to start with Harper and Rowan being the only two to stay in the ring. Sami replaces Rowan but charges into a Falcon's Arrow for two as we take a break. Back with Rowan, Ziggler and Zayn all about to be superplexed.

Dolph and Rowan crash to the mat but Sami sunset bombs Mahal for two. Ziggler superkicks Zayn but Harper blasts him with the discus lariat for a near fall of his own. Almost everyone winds up on the floor (Complete with those still stupid crowd shots, because we're not smart enough to know that something is exciting on our own. No, we NEED to see what some average fans think of a clothesline to really get the full feeling.) with Harper hitting a big dive.

Rowan's spinning kick gets two on Ziggler in a good false finish before Ziggler gets powerbombed onto the pile at ringside. We take a second break and come back with Rawley cleaning house and hitting the running punch to knock Ziggler out. Mahal dumps Rawley and steals a VERY close two, followed by Ziggler running back in for two off a Zig Zag on Rowan.

Harper's Batista Bomb gets two on Dolph but Mahal sends him into the steps. For some reason Sami dives onto Harper instead of going for a cover, followed by the springboard moonsault to Rawley. Back in and Sami hits the exploder on Mahal but two men (the Bollywood Boyz, though not announced by name) grab his feet, allowing Jinder to grab a cobra clutch slam for the pin and the title shot at 18:42.

Rating: B. Choice of a winner aside, this was a heck of a match with some outstanding false finishes. There were multiple possible winners here and one major surprise ending, which is always going to help something like this. I had a lot of fun with the match, though I could go with a regular match for a title shot instead of some multi-person circus, even an entertaining one like this.

As for Mahal.....yeah I'm not sure on this one. I get the idea of trying something fresh but is Jinder Mahal really the kind of guy you want to make the focal point when you're in a new era? Odds are Orton destroys him but that's going to make for a long four weeks as we get to Backlash. I'm sure Mahal looking like he swallowed a few boxes of IC0-PR0 products has nothing to do with his push either.

Post match Mahal says people boo him because he's not your typical All-American and comes from a wealthy family. Americans don't accept diversity but they'll have to accept Jinder Mahal. Cue Randy Orton to say Mahal won the Jackpot with a prize of an RKO. First though, Orton has to burn down the House of Horrors (whatever that is).

Bray Wyatt pops up on screen to talk about torturing Randy and showing him what fear means. The show went to a break here, during which Rowan tried to sneak in and attack Orton, only to take the RKO. During the entire post match promo exchange, Zayn sat at ringside staring at the announcers, completely distraught.

New Day is coming, likely as soon as Kofi's ankle is healed up.

Video on Shinsuke Nakamura.

AJ Styles is ready to win the US Title when Baron Corbin interrupts. Corbin says AJ didn't pin him last week so none of it matters.

Styles is more than willing to face Corbin tonight so the match is

made.

Charlotte runs into Natalya, Tamina and Carmella, who completely fail to intimidate her.

Naomi vs. Charlotte

Non-title but if Charlotte wins, she gets a title shot next week. The Glow entrance is still insane and really cool in person. Charlotte sends her into the corner and grabs an early chinlock to slow Naomi down. The Figure Four necklock with the faceplants and front flips keep Naomi in trouble and it's right back to the chinlock. Naomi pops up for a slugout and hits those dancing kicks, capped off by a big one to the head for two.

Back from a break with Charlotte grabbing a dragon sleeper of all things and getting two off a neckbreaker. A knee to the back of the head gets the same as this has been almost all Charlotte so far. She's just a few steps ahead of Naomi and there's no much the champ can do about it. Naomi makes her comeback with a clothesline and what looked like a sitout Stunner for two. The Rear View is easily blocked though as Charlotte kicks her in the back. Natural Selection gives Charlotte the pin at 12:51.

Rating: C+. This was an odd one as they could only do so much with the booking. The problem is Charlotte is so far above every active woman on the Smackdown roster that there's almost no point in having her beat anyone up. I'm not wild on the champion losing clean but in this case it was the only real option.

Charlotte WOOs at her detractors.

Colons vs. American Alpha

They're Primo and Epico again, which is probably better for everyone involved. This is the result of the Colons attacking Alpha last week as they debuted on Smackdown. Chad takes Epico down with ease and it's time to work on the arm. A Primo distraction allows Epico to send him into the post though and things slow down. Epico gets two off a double underhook gutbuster, only to have Chad grab the armbar over the ropes. Jordan comes in off the hot tag but Primo kicks him

in the face, sending Jordan into a rollup for the pin at 3:15.

Rating: D+. The time killed them here but the bigger issue is how far American Alpha has fallen. It seems that they received the WWE death sentence a few months back: they were declared bulletproof. If you're branded as such, you can forget about winning almost anything significant most of the time as WWE would rather have you put everyone over than keep you strong, which is about as bad as things can get. It also doesn't help that American Alpha hasn't been allowed to do any of the stuff that got them over in NXT but that's a very common problem in WWE.

Video on Lana, who likes to dance on chairs.

Video on Tye Dillinger.

Kevin Owens vs. Gary Gandy

Non-title. This is a Face of America Open Challenge and Gandy is from Louisville. Pop Up Powerbomb ends Gandy at 34 seconds.

Post match Owens says he's the Face of America as long as he's the US Champion. No one can take that away from him and now he's going to sit in on commentary for the main event.

AJ Styles vs. Baron Corbin

Corbin shoves him down as Kevin talks about AJ stealing his moniker from John Cena. Owens: "The only way he's taking this title from me is by stealing it too." AJ gets tossed outside and dropped face first onto the apron as we take a break. Back with Corbin holding a chinlock before sending him ribs first into the post.

Baron tries his slide under the ropes into the clothesline but gets sent into the post instead. A chokebreaker gives Baron two more but there's the Calf Crusher for the submission attempt that isn't going anywhere. One heck of a Deep Six gives Corbin a close near fall, only to have AJ hit him in the head a few times. They head outside again with AJ loading up the Clash but Corbin backdrops him onto Owens. One more forearm off the steps drops Corbin long enough for Styles to beat the count at 13:12.

Rating: C+. Not bad here but the time caught up to them again with

the quick ending being designed to take care of Corbin while also advancing Styles vs. Owens. That's a pretty impressive list of things to accomplish in one match and they pulled it off well enough. They were really smart to keep Corbin from getting pinned though, which makes me think he might be next in line after Mahal.

Overall Rating: C. This was a good show with one MAJOR issue holding the rest of it back. As good as the rest of the show was, I don't think anyone is going to care about anything on here aside from Mahal becoming #1 contender. Honestly, is there anything else to talk about on here? Charlotte gets a title shot and has three pests to deal with, the Colons are getting a push and we still have Styles vs. Owens to look forward to. Overall the show is going to be looked at for Mahal alone and that's not the best thing in the world.

Results

Jinder Mahal b. Sami Zayn, Erick Rowan, Luke Harper, Dolph Ziggler and Mojo Rawley – Cobra clutch slam to Zayn

Charlotte b. Naomi – Natural Selection

Colons b. American Alpha – Rollup to Jordan

Kevin Owens b. Gary Gandy – Pop Up Powerbomb

AJ Styles b. Baron Corbin via countout

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Smackdown – April 11, 2017: The Ugly Stepchild of WWE

Smackdown

Date: April 11, 2017

Location: TD Garden, Boston, Massachusetts

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

It's the second night of the Superstar Shakeup which means we'll be seeing a lot of new names showing up tonight. That primarily means names from Monday Night Raw but there's also the chance of some people from NXT or maybe even the cruiserweights of 205 Live. Let's get to it.

We open with the debuting Kevin Owens(in a suit), who declares this the new Kevin Owens Show. Now some people might be confused about how a Canadian can be the face of the United States but it makes perfect sense. Canadians are just better athletes than Americans and there's no denying it. Just look at the Montreal Canadiens defeating the Boston Bruins all the time. There's no one in the back that can beat him because he is the new face of America.

Cue Baron Corbin of all people to say that Owens can't beat him up. Last week Corbin beat Dean Ambrose up so badly that he ran off to Raw. Last night, Ambrose beat Owens up so badly that he came here so that means Corbin should get a US Title shot. Owens says no but here's the debuting Sami Zayn (JUST LET HIM STAY AWAY FROM OWENS FOR FIVE MINUTES!) to send Owens into a near fit because he can never escape. Sami wants a shot as well but here's AJ Styles, who is actually still on Smackdown.

AJ gets a huge face reception and says this place is still about him. This brings out Daniel Bryan to say Owens vs. Chris Jericho is still on for Payback and the winner will officially be on Smackdown.

The title can't be defended until then though, but tonight we're going to crown a new #1 contender for the US Title. Tonight it's Styles vs. Corbin vs. Zayn for the future shot.

Randy Orton vs. Erick Rowan

Non-title. Orton hammers away to start but gets shoved into the corner. Erick rains down right hands until Orton grabs the powerslam and does the Garvin Stomp. They head outside with Rowan getting sent into the steps, followed by the elevated DDT. The RKO is loaded up but Bray appears on screen, already making the Superstar Shakeup seem worthless. Seriously it hasn't even been twenty four hours. Wyatt says he's everywhere and will see Orton in the House of Horrors. The lights come back up and Rowan hits Orton with the steps for the DQ at 3:50.

Rating: D-. I was tempted to not rate this one as a minute and a half of it was spent on watching Orton listen to Bray. Hopefully things are all square after Payback as these show vs. show matches defeat the point of the Shakeup (just do the Shakeup later). The match was a squash until the ending and I'm kind of glad they didn't have Rowan just lose clean again.

Rowan gives Orton a full nelson slam.

Tag Team Titles; Usos vs. American Alpha

Alpha is defending in their rematch after losing the belts last month. The Usos don't even get an entrance. Jimmy and Chad start things off with Alpha using some early double teaming to take over. Both champs are sent to the floor and we take an early break. Back with Jimmy kicking Jason in the face but getting sent hard into the corner. The hot tag brings in Chad to clean house, including a great looking moonsault for two on Jimmy.

Some double teaming puts Gable in trouble but the Superfly Splash hits knees for two. The Steiner Bulldog gets a very close two with Jey making a save. Alpha is sent outside for stereo suicide dives but you don't dive at suplexers as Alpha grabs stereo belly to belly suplexes. Back in and Jey makes a blind tag, setting up a superkick

into the Superfly Splash to retain at 8:51.

Rating: B. Good stuff here as you would expect but can we PLEASE have someone show up to bolster the division a little bit? Right now it's these two and whomever else we can find as jobbers that week. With a roster as deep as WWE has, there's really no excuse to not be able to put four teams together for a regular division.

Post match the Shining Stars run in and leave American Alpha laying.

Mojo Rawley vs. Jinder Mahal

Rob Gronkowski is in the front row again. Mahal starts fast and takes Rawley down for a kneedrop and armbar. Jinder makes the mistake of going after Gronkowski though and gets a cup thrown on him, allowing Mojo to take him back inside. The running right hand puts Jinder away at 2:41. At least it was short.

Mojo celebrates with some New England Patriots.

Here's Shane McMahon to address the Women's Division. They've acquired some new talent but he'd like to have the entire division come out here. This brings out Naomi, Natalya, Carmella (with James Ellsworth) and Becky Lynch. Since that's the entire division so far, Shane stops to congratulate Naomi but Ellsworth takes the mic to say Naomi is horrible.

Naomi threatens violence and says bring out the new talent. That would mean a long introduction for a second generation star and the daughter of a Hall of Famer: Tamina! I don't think that really counts as a new talent as she was out injured and never officially on Raw. Shane isn't done though and brings out Charlotte for the real big surprise.

Sin Cara and Rusev (no mention of Lana) are coming to Smackdown.

Here's Aiden English on his own to ask for a spotlight. In a callback to his NXT days, English sings a song about himself, only to be cut off.

Aiden English vs. Tye Dillinger

Tye gets the important things out of the way first with a snapmare

and cartwheel into TEN. English takes him into the corner and sings that this is his show. The Tyebreaker is good for the pin on English at 2:20.

Video on AJ Styles.

Video on Lana dancing around a chair in a very revealing red dress. She's on Smackdown too and seems to be her own act instead of with Rusev.

Here's Dolph Ziggler to talk about how awesome he is and how the Superstar Shakeup doesn't matter. Cue Shinsuke Nakamura for his full entrance. Ziggler asks who Nakamura thinks he is so the fans sing his song. Nakamura says his name and blocks a superkick, setting up the BRING IT pose. Ziggler bails of course.

Video on Baron Corbin.

New Day is coming to Smackdown. Now that helps things a lot.

Video on Sami Zayn.

Sami Zayn vs. AJ Styles vs. Baron Corbin

The winner gets a US Title shot at some point after Payback. Styles and Zayn go after Corbin to start but he suplexes both of them at once without much effort. A double clothesline sends Corbin outside, leaving us with a Zayn vs. Styles showdown. Corbin pulls Styles to the floor but Sami moonsaults onto both of them as we take a break. Back with Corbin in full control, hitting a side slam and big boot for two on Styles.

AJ grabs the Hoshi Geroshi on Sami but gets blasted by a clothesline from Corbin to put all three down. Corbin takes a knee to the face and Sami grabs the Blue Thunder Bomb for two on AJ. Baron gets back up for one heck of a Deep Six on Sami with AJ making the save. The springboard 450 gets two on Corbin with Sami making a last second save this time around. That earns him a Pele kick but the Clash is backdropped to the apron. The Helluva Kick drops Corbin, only to have AJ hit the Phenomenal Forearm for the pin on Sami at 16:42.

Rating: B. Corbin is getting better and better every single week and working with people like AJ and Sami is only going to help him even

more. AJ winning is a bit of a surprise but he immediately elevates the US Title. I do wonder who is next for Orton after this as you would think AJ would have been a good choice for the next challenger after Wyatt.

Overall Rating: B-. While I'm going to need some more time to figure out how much I liked the second half of the Superstar Shakeup, the first instinct would be to think that it went a lot better for the red show. The big names here are New Day, Charlotte and Owens, but the problem is a lot of the names are nothing. I mean, Sin Cara? The Shining Stars? Jinder Mahal? Those aren't exactly exciting names. Then again, did anyone really expect WWE to put a focus on Smackdown?

The show itself was good enough with a good Tag Team Title match and main event but we still don't really have a feel for how things are going to go on this show. The problem is we won't until after Payback, which makes things a bit more complicated than they need to be. Smackdown has potential but they're lacking a top level star (remember that Cena is going to be gone for well over a month), which is a problem they've had for a long time.

Results

Randy Orton b. Erick Rowan via DQ when Rowan used the steps

Usos b. American Alpha – Superfly Splash to Gable

Mojo Rawley b. Jinder Mahal – Running punch

Tye Dillinger b. Aiden English – Tyebreaker

AJ Styles b. Baron Corbin and Sami Zayn – Phenomenal Forearm to Zayn

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Monday Night Raw – April 4, 2016 (2017 Redo): Travel Packages

Since I'm ridiculously backed up due to being in Orlando, I needed something to fill in the space. Here's a fresh version of last year's post-Wrestlemania Raw to bridge the gap a bit.

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 4, 2016

Location: American Airlines Center, Dallas, Texas

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

We'll wrap up the redos with this one as I was in the building for the post-Wrestlemania XXXII Raw as well. After the previous night's exhausting Wrestlemania, it was off to the smark show of the year which kind of serves as the company's season premiere. There aren't a ton of loose ends to tie up after last night but Roman Reigns is the new World Champion. Let's get to it.

The opening recap looks at....oh come on you can figure this one out. If nothing else that My House song is insanely catchy. Don't let the shortness of the video fool you: the show sucked.

Cole and the announcers let us know that this show's audience is "non-traditional" but THEY'RE HAVING FUN! Which is why so many chants are called stupid! One chant that was stupid: a group of fans chanting about TRAVEL PACKAGES before the show started.

Here's Vince McMahon (in case you thought it was Vince Russo) to open things up. The fans sing No Chance along with the music, which Vince says was the same chance that Shane had last night against Undertaker. As of this morning, there is no more lockbox over his head (it doesn't make a difference as we still don't know what was in there) and no one controls him.

Last night he watched his son take a beating but only one moment really got to him: watching Shane dive off that Cell to prove a point. After a Shane-0-Mac chant, Vince tells us to enjoy the show...and here's Shane. With Vince looking concerned, Shane calls himself the only man in the family. Shane thanks the fans and says he'll never forget last night. Naturally that means a YOU STILL GOT IT chant because the fans only have a limited set of choices.

Shane goes to leave but Vince says no one upstages him. Let the idiocy begin. Vince has often thought about how crazy it would be if Shane ran Monday Night Raw (I guess he forgot Shane running the show, albeit with Stephanie, back in 2008). The fans tell Vince to LET HIM RUN IT so the boss actually gives in, making EVERYTHING WITH THE UNDERTAKER COMPLETELY WORTHLESS.

I've heard that Shane was supposed to win until Undertaker nixed the idea, which would line up with what we're seeing here. This was stupid back then and looking back on it, this really was one of the dumbest things they've done in a long time. At least wait a few weeks and come up with something better than "eh screw the stipulations". That's some Russo level nonsense and it just so dumb.

Here's New Day for a title defense and a chat as the place just EXPLODES for them. New Day merchandise was by far and away the most popular during the weekend so it makes sense to have them here. Things didn't go well last night but Kofi got to dance with Shawn Michaels but Xavier (who now has a smaller trombone for some reason) didn't have so much luck. He took a Stunner from Steve Austin and, upon further review of the tape, Woods admits it was entirely his fault.

On a more positive note, they have the final piece of Wrestlemania Booty0's, which Woods holds up before singing Lion King's Circle of Life. The place sings along with him (as they should, though me being a diehard Disney fan has nothing to do with this opinion) before we hit all the catchphrases.

Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. League of Nations

New Day is defending against Sheamus and Wade Barrett. The champs easily clean house to start (as you should against losers like the League) and Kofi is tossed onto Sheamus with an accompaniment on trombone. Sheamus eventually shoves Kofi off the top so Woods runs over with the cereal for comfort. Barrett gets in a good kick to the ribs and we take a break with Kofi fighting out of a chinlock and the fans doing the Wave.

Even Sheamus joins in on it so Woods grabs the mic and says if you do the Wave, you like Sheamus. And so much for the Wave. This was the second time Woods had to do something like that as he used the same method to cut off a WE WANT ROCKSTEADY chant during the break. The fans call themselves awesome as Kofi drops Barrett and gets over for the hot tag to Big E. That means a bunch of belly to belly suplexes and the Warrior Splash for no cover. The League is knocked off the apron and a quick Midnight Hour retains the titles at 8:44.

Rating: C-. It's kind of amazing to think that New Day had EIGHT MORE MONTHS with the titles after holding them since Summerslam. In another note, Sheamus would be one of the people to take them off New Day and with another international partner. Not that there's any connection but I don't have anything else to talk about here.

Post match Sheamus says he's sick of losing and there's something wrong. Fans: "HOW YOU DOIN?" With an Enzo Amore chant breaking out, Sheamus Brogue Kicks Barrett off the team and out of the company. The whole team would be done in less than a month. Of course ignore the whole complaints about losing when they just won at Wrestlemania. Again, it's almost like that result was to just screw with the fans, which is the worst kind of booking.

The three members stand alone...and we've got Wyatts. An easy beatdown ensues as the fans sing about having the Whole World in His Hands. This would be the start of Bray's quickly canceled (due to injury) face turn. Why that turn has never been tried again isn't clear, but the fans are DYING to cheer for Bray and have been since he debuted. When you perform that well, it's hard to argue against them.

Vince leaves because he knows this is going to be a disaster.

Summer Rae vs. Sasha Banks

Before the match, Summer says her team lost but at least she didn't fail like Sasha. The place again goes nuts for Sasha's entrance, who says she's Sasha and Summer isn't. Summer gets in an early shot to set up a chinlock, only to have Sasha fight up with running knees in the corner. The Bank Statment wraps Rae up at 1:40.

Apollo Crews vs. Tyler Breeze

This is Crews' main roster debut and the NXT chants are out in full force. Crews speeds things up to start but eats a hard superkick for two. Not that it matters as Crews hits the gorilla press into the standing moonsault, followed by a Toss Powerbomb for the pin at 1:57. Just a squash, but Crews is a REALLY weird callup as he doesn't really have a character. He's insanely athletic and has a great look but there's no character to him and he doesn't really have anything for people to care about. That's not his fault of course as he just needed more development.

Video of Roman Reigns and Charlotte on the Today Show.

Here's Roman Reigns and MY GOODNESS the booing is louder than it was at Wrestlemania. The announcers are right there to try and write it off as a weird crowd thing but JBL gets even worse by saying Roman FINALLY made it to the top of the mountain. You know, the three time World Champion. Not that it matters though as Reigns gets in what might be the worst line of the year: "I'm not a good guy. I'm not a bad guy. I'm THE guy." Reigns gives an open challenge for the title and here's Chris Jericho.

Chris gets straight to the point by demanding that he get the title shot after defeating the internet darling AJ Styles. Speaking of Styles, he's up next on the interruption list, only to have Kevin Owens limp out before AJ can speak. Cue Sami Zayn to fight with Owens, leaving AJ to be sent outside. A big spear drops Jericho and Reigns smiles in the boos. Of note, Sami immediately grabbed his shoulder and RAN to the back under the cover of darkness. This went nowhere but was rather scary live.

We look back at Shane being put in charge of the show.

Shane makes AJ vs. Jericho vs. Owens vs. Zayn for the #1 contendership. Reigns approves.

The announcers recap the show and tell us about last night's Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal.

Baron Corbin vs. Dolph Ziggler

This is Corbin's main roster singles debut after winning last night's battle royal. Before the match, Corbin says the trophy is the only thing you need to know about him. Fair enough actually and the way you use a battle royal like the Andre version. Ziggler tries to duck away to start until Corbin sends him to the apron. One heck of a boot puts Dolph on the floor and we take a break.

Back with Ziggler fighting out of a nerve hold as the fans have dueling chants about.....a beach ball. Yeah a fan brought one in and it was being batted around, completely taking the focus off of the match. You know, because that's what matters when a brand new talent is brought up and making their Raw debut. I'm sure most of them will be chanting for NXT all night long too.

Now it's a YOU SOLD OUT chant because a security guard took the ball. Ziggler makes his comeback with a Stinger Splash and the running DDT, only to charge into a massive Deep Six. They head outside with Corbin booting him into the crowd for the double countout at 11:03.

Rating: D. Not only did the beach ball chants waste a lot of time but THIS is how you use a Raw debut? I get that they're setting up a match later on but you can't have Corbin beat up some goof and do this on Smackdown? Ziggler getting beaten up is fine but let Corbin get a pinfall first you know?

Corbin beats Ziggler up even more and hits End of Days on the floor. Stills of Lesnar vs. Ambrose from last night.

Here's Zack Ryder for a chat, which Lillian introduces as a match. That's what would happen in a bit but the producers EXPLODED on Lillian (off camera of course) with Garcia yelling right back. On the broadcast, Cole wrote it off as Lillian being excited and thrown off by Ryder shocking the world, which is all it needs to be. Just say she assumed it was a title match but got ahead of herself. Why does that require yelling at her?

Anyway, Ryder tells the amazing story of meeting Razor Ramon as a kid and getting to hold Razor's Intercontinental Title. Last night they took another picture with Razor holding HIS Intercontinental Title. That's just awesome and was one of my favorite parts of the whole show. On top of that Ryder thanks his father, who is sitting

in the front row (and is in better shape than 90% of the roster). Cue Miz to call Ryder a one hit wonder who got lucky last night. Miz yells about how that was supposed to be his night with his wife watching from the crowd. Ryder: "Sucks to be you bro." Miz issues a challenge for a title match and we're on.

Intercontinental Title: Zack Ryder vs. The Miz

Ryder is defending. Miz can only get half of the Reality Check before Ryder gets in a dropkick. A middle rope dropkick is good for two and Ryder one ups himself with a middle rope hurricanrana. Back from a break with Ryder being sent to the floor for a big crash before Miz unloads with left hands. Ryder fights back with a middle rope dropkick (again) but gets caught with a short DDT for two.

Zack counters a suplex into a neckbreaker and the Elbro is good for two. The Broski Boot isn't allowed to connect of course so Miz drops him face first on the barricade, right in front of Papa Ryder. Oh yeah you know where this is going. Trash is talked and Zack's dad pushes him down. It's not a DQ for some reason but here's Maryse coming over the barricade to slap dad in the face. The distraction lets the Skull Crushing Finale give Miz the title at 10:58.

Rating: C+. Better match than I was expecting with the obvious ending. Maryse coming back turned out to be the greatest thing that could have happened to Miz, who really needed a boost just like this. They really are perfect for the roles and the fact that they're really married makes it even better. That was pretty much it for Ryder as a singles guy and really...it's not that surprising.

A lot of gloating ensues.

Owens says Sami won't leave him alone but he's on to bigger and better things. Like destroying the Roman Empire and becoming the new World Champion. Sami isn't costing him the WWE Title because tonight, the road to KO Mania II begins.

The Vaudevillains are coming. On Smackdown!

Here's the women's division with Lita standing next to the new Women's Title. She wants to do this right, which means Charlotte needs to come out here to be presented with her title. The fans immediately cut her off with HEY! WE WANT SOME BAYLEY but Cole says Bayley isn't here. You know, in case you had a reason to be interested in this segment. Charlotte actually thanks the fans for

getting her here but the fans keep singing for Bayley.

It turns into a WOMEN'S WRESTLING chant which Charlotte actually seems to enjoy. Charlotte starts talking about how great her dad is and how much he helped as this turns into the heel speech you would expect. She mocks a lot of the women for being here so long while she's dominated in less than a year. Sasha and Becky walk out (Charlotte: "I didn't bank on you leaving!" with the rest of the ladies following.

Natalya is the only one left and goes into a speech about how Charlotte needs to learn respect. It was Natalya who gave Charlotte a great match at Roadblock and she has the heart of a champion. Charlotte laughs it off because the title proves that she has the better family. The fight is on and Sharpshooting ensues.

So at this point we had about ten women in the ring at once and somehow, WWE decided that we had enough for two divisions. On top of that though, NATALYA, the least interesting woman on the roster, gets the first shot at the new champ? That was a huge blow for the division and I think everyone knew it. The segment was good other than that but sweet goodness that was a bad ending. Oh and finally: can we PLEASE stop with the "my family is better than yours" stuff? It puts too much focus on the old guys, which defeats the purpose of the whole thing.

AJ says he's here to be World Champion.

The Shining Stars are coming and somehow they're still here a year later.

Usos vs. Dudley Boyz

Tables match. It's a huge brawl to start and in theory there are no DQ's here, as there certainly shouldn't be given how violent the match is supposed to be. JBL flat out says there's no strategy here, which means there's really not much of a point for commentary either. Or a referee. Or the match in general really.

Bubba takes over on Jey and it's What's Up, only to have Bubba say SCREW YOU instead of ordering D-Von around again. Double dives put the Dudleyz up against the announcers' table and we take a break. Back with Bubba getting superkicked onto a table as a NAKAMURA chant breaks out. I know it's the big show of the year for this nonsense but it was old five minutes into the show.

Double powerbombs are countered into a double superkick (you can guess who did what), followed by double clotheslines off the barricade. The double Superfly Splashes through the tables miss and the bell rings, which is a bit premature. Bubba throws Jey through a table for the real win at 8:57.

Rating: D-. This was really boring and I have no idea why this even needed to happen. The Usos beat them clean at Wrestlemania so now they lose a gimmick match the next night on Raw? Nothing to see here and the match went on FAR longer than it really needed to. This could have been done on any other show and it really held things back here.

Sami Zayn is ready to prove everyone wrong and get to the main event when Owens comes in and powerbombs him through a table.

The Dudleyz are still out here (after yelling at fans while the lights were down for Sami's interview) but they're interrupted by the debuting Enzo Amore and Big Cass to a MEGA pop. We hit the usual catchphrases with the fans eating them up like a big bowl of.....oh if only there was a WWE themed food eaten from a bowl. Enzo thinks the Dudleyz are jealous because they're just ugly. He's even willing to punch D-Von's lazy eye straight. More insults ensue but no violence follows. Cass' spelling lesson takes us out.

More Wrestlemania stills.

Zack Ryder gets his rematch on Smackdown.

Dr. Phil is guest host next week. The place went SILENT when that was announced, as it should.

AJ Styles vs. Kevin Owens vs. Chris Jericho vs. ???

One fall to a finish. Sami is officially out due to injury and is replaced by.....the returning Cesaro! That's your big surprise for the end of the show and I've certainly heard far worse ideas. He's a popular guy so let him come out there and give the fans something to cheer about. If nothing else we get the debut of the tearaway suit. It's a brawl to start (duh) with the Canadians being sent outside, leaving Style vs. Cesaro for a pop inducing showdown.

A big dropkick staggers Cesaro but he grabs a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker to put Styles down and the show on a commercial. Back with a KO MANIA chant as Jericho works over Styles in the ring. Chris spends a bit too much time posing though and Owens has to save

him from the Cesaro Swing. The greatest friendship that ever lived hadn't begun yet though so I'm not sure why Kevin would do that.

Since it's a four way match, we hit the Tower of Doom with Cesaro getting to do the powerbomb, meaning we HIT THAT CROWD SHOT BABY! Yeah they were even doing it back then. Swiss Death drops AJ for a close two and Owens gives Jericho the package piledriver slam for the same. AJ is back up for a springboard 450 for two more on Chris as Cesaro makes the save.

It's time for the Uppercut Train and you know the fans are getting behind that thing. Even Jericho comes back in to make it a three stop train. The Swing makes its return as Jericho goes spinning until Owens makes the save. Kevin's Pop Up Powerbomb gets two on Styles but Jericho gives Owens a Codebreaker for a near fall of his own.

The fans cheer for Cesaro as he and Jericho slug it out (you know you've made it if a smark crowd is cheering for you over Jericho) but Chris grabs the Walls. Cesaro fights out and reverses into a Sharpshooter but it's AJ's turn for the save via the Phenomenal Forearm. Another Codebreaker gets another two on Styles but he comes back with his Strike Rush into the Styles Clash for the pin on Jericho at 16:44.

Rating: B+. Yeah this is still great with the near falls and a lot of doubt about who is actually going to pull off the win. Styles getting the title shot was a great way to bring him back to the forefront after the interesting loss at Wrestlemania. Cesaro not being involved in the fall was a good idea as you don't want to kill off his momentum right off the bat. Owens vs. Sami will be fine too so this was a very well booked match.

Styles can't believe it and celebrates to end the show. This went on for a good while to really end the night.

Overall Rating: C. This really doesn't hold up all that well with the lack of drama for the debuts and surprises. It also reinforces the issues with the crowd, who are just never going to shut up no matter what they do. There's good stuff on here, such as Shane not coming back out for a long speech (keep the people wanting him) and the main event, but stuff like that tables match and a lot of the short matches don't work too well. It's still watchable but the big reason to care about it is gone, which makes it a louder show with

an obnoxious crowd that has to be saved by a great main event. Still though, it was fun which is what matters.

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Wrestlemania XXXIII

Preview: Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal

All aboard!

This one belongs on the pre-show, for the sake of the entrances taking up too much time alone. At the moment there are a ton of jobbers filling out a lot of the spots, meaning this is about what you would expect from this kind of thing. At the moment there are twenty five entrants, though you can almost guarantee five more being added at minimum. As is so often the case, only a handful of them are realistic options.

For my money (and almost everyone else's), those options are Big Show, Braun Strowman and Sami Zayn, but I'll throw in Mojo Rawley and the recently added Killian Dain. There's a real chance to make someone in this battle royal and they've been pushing the heck out of Rawley on TV as of late. Throw in how cool he was at Axxess and

I'd love to see him go somewhere, especially in a match that doesn't have to be some big game changer if they don't want it to be. The rest of the filed will be pure filler, but it could be really interesting to see what surprises they might throw out.

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