

Smackdown – August 22, 2017: Definitely Not Glorious

Smackdown

Date: August 22, 2017

Location: Barclays Center, New York City, New York

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

It's the final night in Brooklyn as Summerslam has come and gone. Jinder Mahal is still the Smackdown World Champion and AJ Styles is still the US Champion. One of these titles was retained in a much better match than the other and I'll let you guess which of those was which. Let's get to it.

Here's AJ Styles to open things up. He says this is still the place that he built because he beat Kevin Owens on Sunday. Therefore, tonight he's reinstating the US Title Open Challenge and it starts right NOW. The fans want a certain Canadian but get Kevin Owens instead. AJ says this isn't happening because he's already beaten Owens. Kevin blames the whole thing on Shane McMahon so here's Shane to offer a rebuttal.

The boss wants to know what Owens' issue is so Owens goes on a rant about how Shane can survive a helicopter crash and fall out of buildings but he gets grazed on Sunday and can't get up. We see a clip of AJ being pinned though his foot was on the rope before one. Owens says this isn't fair and complains until AJ agrees to put the title on the line tonight.

Shane agrees to make the match, but Owens wants one more thing: he wants to pick the referee. AJ says the referee doesn't matter because he'd count the pin no matter what. There's a little girl in the front row who could probably count a three count just fine so he'll agree to anyone as referee. The match is made for later tonight but Shane says that this is Owens' last shot as long as AJ

is champion.

Daniel Bryan is in his office when the Singh Brothers come in to introduce Jinder Mahal. Jinder takes credit for Summerslam but Daniel says he's tired of seeing the Singh Brothers interfere. Therefore, tonight Shinsuke Nakamura gets to face the two of them in a handicap match.

Owens runs into Sami Zayn in the back and wants him to be guest referee. Sami watched his DVD recently and says they've been fighting for so long that it seems like they don't even remember why they're fighting. Owens points out that Sami hasn't done much since arriving here and wants Sami to think about it. Sami doesn't say no. Here's Aiden English to sing his song but he's cut off.....by GLORIOUS DOMINATION!

Bobby Roode vs. Aiden English

The fans go INSANE for the entrance and Roode seems to be a face, at least for the night. They take turns posing at each other with Roode clotheslining English to the floor and sending us to a break. Back with English in control but Roode drives him into the corner for some chops. A forearm sets up the Blockbuster as JBL says Roode needs to win to get some beer money. English hits a Director's Cut for two but walks into a spinebuster. The Glorious DDT ends English at 6:28.

Rating: C-. Barely enough to rate but this was all about the debut and the fans going nuts for the entrance. Roode was definitely a face here but that can easily be changed once we're out of a smark haven like New York. He's a natural heel and once you have him wrestle like this for a few weeks and then let his real self shine through.

Post match Roode says everything he does is big box office and in a New York minute Smackdown has gone from great to GLORIOUS.

Chad Gable comes in to Bryan's office where the boss says he's sorry for the Jason Jordan thing. There was a catch to moving Jordan to Raw though: Angle suggested someone to be signed to Smackdown. That

would be Shelton Benjamin, who is Chad's new partner. They'll be having a match next week, though Shelton doesn't seem thrilled.

Sami won't be the referee.

Usos vs. Hype Bros

Non-title. Jey and Mojo start things off with the twins taking him down into the corner. That doesn't last long though as Mojo kicks him away and brings in Ryder to clean house. Everything breaks down and Mojo heads outside to run Jimmy over. A superkick drops him though, allowing Jey to superkick Ryder down for the pin at 3:14.

Rating: D+. Just a quick match here to remind you that the Usos are awesome and one of the best teams on Smackdown. Unfortunately it also reminds you that they're one of the only teams on Smackdown as the division is looking weaker and weaker every single day. The Usos need challengers and this didn't do that problem any favors.

Post match the Usos say the whole division is on notice.

Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Singh Brothers

Mahal is at ringside and the Brothers, in dress pants and dress shirts, don't have to tag. An early Good Vibrations has them in trouble and the Brothers are quickly sent outside. Nakamura tells Mahal to come on and the Brothers jump him from behind, only to have Nakamura grab a triangle choke for the tap out at 2:47.

Mahal jumps Nakamura from behind but takes Kinshasa for his efforts. Breezango offers to be the referee but Owens tells them to get away. Baron Corbin comes up and offers his services. If Owens wins though, he wants the first shot. That's cool with Owens.

Here's Natalya, now with a Hart Foundation style jacket, for her first comments as champion. Summerslam will be remembered as the day the Glow was unplugged because she's the best there is, the best there was and the best there ever will be. She holds up the title and says she's restoring it to glory, meaning it's back to normal. Carmella comes out for their tag match but says she's biding her time to cash in.

Natalya/Carmella vs. Becky Lynch/Naomi

Feeling out process to start and we take a break less than a minute in. Back with Becky dropping a leg on Natalya until a forearm cuts her off. Natalya tries for a tag to Carmella but she drops to the floor and tells Natalya to do her thing. Becky gets the tag off to Naomi for the reverse Rings of Saturn but Natalya slips out. Carmella gets tagged from behind and caught in the Bexploder, setting up the split legged moonsault for the pin at 7:43.

Rating: D+. Sweet goodness I forgot how much I can't stand the "I'M GOING TO CASH IN ANY DAY" period. They tease the heck out of it for weeks if not months at a time and it's the same story every year. For now we're stuck with Natalya as champion and Carmella almost as a mustache twirling villain. Lucky us.

Dolph Ziggler mocks a lot of the characters who get more TV time than him and has plans for next week.

Lana is on the phone in the locker room and says she'll see someone next week. Tamina comes in and asks what's up with her path to the title. Lana tells her to close her eyes and think about everyone who has been against her over the years. The path to being the dominant champion begins next week.

Corbin cuts AJ off and says he wants a shot at the title. AJ tells him to answer the open challenge.

US Title: AJ Styles vs. Kevin Owens

Styles is defending with Corbin as guest referee. Owens bails to the apron to start and Corbin cuts AJ off from going after him. The distraction lets Owens get in a forearm to take over early on. A forearm cuts Owens off though and we take a break. Back with Owens getting two off a fall away slam into the barricade.

We hit the chinlock for a bit until AJ fights back with his series of strikes. The running seated forearm gives AJ two but he stops for a staredown with Corbin. There's the Calf Crusher and Owens gets a finger on the ropes. AJ rolls it over to the middle of the ring and AJ is annoyed at the rules being called properly. Owens knocks AJ

into Corbin to start another argument with Corbin shoving AJ into a rollup for two.

A double clothesline puts both guys down though and we're at a standstill. Cue Shane McMahon because we can't have these two in a match without all this extra stuff. He yells at Corbin, allowing Owens to hit a low blow for two with Shane pulling Corbin out of the ring. That's enough for Corbin who walks out and throws Shane the shirt. Owens is livid and the Phenomenal Forearm retains the title at 12:45.

Rating: C+. Just like Sunday, there's a good match in there underneath all the nonsense with the referees. I get that they want to get to Owens vs. McMahon (possibly in the Cell because that's how the calendar works) but do we really have to sacrifice what could have been a pair of great matches to get there? There's good stuff in there somewhere but it was the same problem as Sunday: too much focus on anything but the wrestlers and that gets old.

Owens looks furious to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This show really didn't work and there's not much other way to put it. Mahal isn't interesting on top, there's little of interest in the midcard, the tag division basically doesn't exist and Shane seems ready to swallow up another good chunk of the show to set up one more match to prove that he's still got it. Aside from Roode's debut, there's nothing on here to get excited about and that's really rare for Smackdown.

Results

Bobby Roode b. Aiden English – Glorious DDT

Usos b. Hype Bros – Superkick to Ryder

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Singh Brothers – Triangle choke to Samir

Naomi/Becky Lynch b. Carmella/Natalya – Split legged moonsault to Carmella

AJ Styles b. Kevin Owens – Phenomenal Forearm

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Smackdown – August 8, 2017: Watch the Show While I Explain Gilligan's Island

Smackdown

Date: August 8, 2017

Location: Air Canada Center, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Commentators: Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

We're still in Toronto this week and it's time to keep hamming home the Summerslam build. The main event this week is Randy Orton vs. Jinder Mahal because IT CAN NEVER BE OVER. Other than that we have a pair of women's matches and Shane McMahon talking a lot because that's what he does. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of John Cena vs. Shinsuke Nakamura last week with Nakamura becoming #1 contender. It also includes Baron Corbin attacking both of them after the show and taking an AA through the announcers' table.

Here's Cena to open things up. After acknowledging that some fans are happy to see him while some of them aren't, he goes over losing

to Nakamura last week. Then he found out that Nakamura isn't scared of anything and that Nakamura hits REALLY hard. They were into the match and then he remembers waking up because he had lost. No blind referee and no Montreal Screwjob (fans: "YOU SCREWED BRET!"). No, he just lost. Then he got up, dusted himself off, and shook Nakamura's hand because he was the better man.

This brings out Baron Corbin, with new music. Cena cuts him off and calls Corbin a dumpster fire, just like someone's sign says. Corbin teases heading to the ring but decides not to because he has the briefcase. There's no point to Corbin going after him so he'll take his leave. Cue Daniel Bryan, to say it's Corbin vs. Cena at Summerslam.

Usos vs. Sami Zayn/Tye Dillinger

Tye hammers on Jimmy to start and Jey has to save his brother from a very fast Helluva Kick. That means a break about forty five seconds in because that's how WWE works these days. Back with Jey missing a splash in the corner and Sami flipping out of a belly to back suplex for the hot tag to Tye. The ten stomps in the corner have Jimmy in trouble but everything breaks down. Sami hits a big flip dive over the top, followed by Dillinger hitting a Sky High for two on Jey. The Tyebreaker is broken up though and Jimmy kicks the knee, setting up the Tequila Sunrise to make Dillinger tap at 6:45.

Rating: C-. Dillinger and Sami seem to be the local heroes to act as jobbers here and that's kind of sad. The match was watchable and Sami's dive was good, but my goodness Zayn needs a story that doesn't involve beating up Mike Kanellis. Usos vs. New Day III doesn't do much for me but it's not like there's anyone else for New Day to defend against.

Post match the Usos call out New Day so here's Big E. for a distraction, allowing Kofi and Xavier to come in and clean house. Jey has to save Jimmy from a beating with a chair.

Orton is ready for Mahal tonight.

It's time for Fashion Peaks with Tyler Breeze telling Ascension that

they were in his dream last week. They're more interested in pie as Breeze tries to figure out the dream. They leave and Fandango appears behind Breeze with his tie wrapped around his head. Breeze: "Don't tell me it takes eighteen episodes to return you to normal!" Some coffee brings Fandango back to normal and he says he was kidnapped by aliens. He could leave any time he wanted but the anal probes kept him around. Fandango: "UH....I mean wardrobes!"

Apparently the aliens gave him the ability to see the future and he knows that whoever walks through that door next stole Tully the horse. This brings in.....ARN ANDERSON, to ask where he can find catering. Fandango asks if he destroyed Tully and Arn admits that he did because everyone knows Arn was the boss of the team. Arn takes some donuts and leaves, with Tyler saying their work has just begun. So yeah, that was awesome.

Lana vs. Charlotte

We see a clip from backstage last week with Lana saying Tamina is her inspiration. Charlotte throws her down to start and seems to enjoy chopping away. Lana's sunset flip is a complete failure and a backslide is blocked just as easily. Charlotte struts and WOO's at her but Lana slaps her in the face. That means a big boot into the Figure Eight to make Lana tap at 2:28. Lana is still over matched but she didn't get embarrassed here, at least not like she did before.

Here's Shane McMahon to talk about being guest referee for the US Title match at Summerslam. Shane gets straight to the point and brings out Kevin Owens and AJ Styles. The boss asks Owens about what he said last week when Owens ranted about Shane being a horrible referee. Owens apologizes but suggests that Shane might screw him just like Bret Hart. Kevin: "Of course, he deserved it!" You can imagine the hatred this brings so Owens calls himself another legendary Canadian. He's worried about AJ though because he and Shane had so many issues just back in March.

AJ doesn't buy the idea of a McMahon as referee but Shane says he doesn't operate like that. Owens isn't done yet and brings up a clip

from 1998 with Shane as a guest referee. He screwed Steve Austin that night and Owens says there are several other options, all available on the WWE Network.

Shane says he doesn't trust Owens but he doesn't recommend giving him a reason to get involved. Styles wants to forget about Shane and fight right now. That's not cool with Owens though as he'd rather have the match in an American city that matters. A fight is about to break out with Shane getting in the middle of it, earning himself a Pele kick.

Lana is annoyed at her loss when Tamina comes in to laugh at her for wanting to be a more ravishing version of her (Tamina). The loss was bad, but now Lana is going to help Tamina get hers. I have no idea what any of that means but Tamina being involved takes away most of the potential interest I could have.

Naomi vs. Carmella

Non-title. Naomi kicks her in the head to start and hits a sliding slap to put Carmella on the floor. Back from a break with Carmella putting on a chinlock until Naomi starts fighting back with a jumping elbow and the dancing kicks. A running jawbreaker drops Carmella and Naomi goes up, only to have Carmella grab her hair. The referee pushes her away but here's James Ellsworth from underneath the ring to shove Naomi off the top. Carmella gets in a superkick for the pin at 6:19.

Rating: D+. Carmella winning is fine but it's not like Naomi has anything interesting going on at the moment (Natalya hasn't been interesting for years). Really we're just waiting for the cash-in at this point and that makes for some really dull moments, like having Ellsworth's return be a big deal.

Carmella doesn't even tease cashing in the briefcase because that's not what the script calls for at the moment so there's no point in acting like it's happening yet.

Post break Natalya tells Carmella and Ellsworth to stay out of her business at Summerslam. Carmella threatens her with a cash-in.

Earlier today, Nakamura sat down with Renee Young to talk about becoming #1 contender. He's faced top level talent in NXT and even more since he's gotten here, but Cena has been the man for a long time. Nakamura beat him anyway and will be watching tonight's main event. At Summerslam, the Nakamura dynasty begins.

Jinder Mahal vs. Randy Orton

Non-title and the Singh Brothers are gone due to injuries. Orton hammers away to start and takes it to the floor for some whips into the barricade. The belly to back suplex onto the barricade sets up a clothesline, followed by another drop onto the announcers' table. Back in and Mahal stomps away to the biggest face pop of his career. Another clothesline sends Mahal back outside but he shoves Orton away to break up the RK0 through the table. Back with Mahal dropping some knees but missing a charge into the post.

Orton gets two off a superplex and rains down some right hands in the corner. The powerslam gets two and JBL talks about Mahal being all alone like Gilligan. Does JBL not understand the concept of Gilligan's Island? Mahal gets two off a jumping knee to the face but the Khallas is countered into the hanging DDT. The RK0 is countered and Mahal tries another Khallas, only to have Orton reverse into the RK0 for the pin at 11:45.

Rating: C+. I think I liked this one more than any of their matches, which is a good sign for Mahal going forward. You know, assuming you think he has a chance to leave the pay per view with the title. Mahal losing clean is the worst thing that could happen to him though as he's not a great champion in the first place and this only makes him look like someone who can't win on his own against a bigger name. None of it matters if he loses at Summerslam but it's still not the best idea in the world.

Orton goes to leave and gets superkicked by Rusev to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. I wasn't feeling this episode as the World Title match only saw Nakamura looking at Mahal when it needs hype more than anything else at this point. This show felt like they weren't putting in a ton of effort on much of anything and the show kind of

came and went. It wasn't bad, but it didn't feel like a show with two weeks to go before the second biggest night of the year.

Results

Usos b. Tye Dillinger/Sami Zayn – Tequila Sunrise to Dillinger

Charlotte b. Lana – Figure Eight

Carmella b. Naomi – Superkick

Randy Orton b. Jinder Mahal – RK0

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Smackdown – May 2, 2017: The Chris Jericho Alarm Clock

Smackdown

Date: May 2, 2017

Location: Save Mart Center, Fresno, California

Commentators: Tom Phillips, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

Things are back to normal now and that means we're in the Jinder Mahal Could Be World Champion Era. Mahal cost Randy Orton the House

of Horrors match on Sunday to help set up the title match at Backlash in just under three weeks so Orton is likely out for revenge. Tonight we have Chris Jericho defending his newly regained US Title against Kevin Owens, which sounds like something could be up. Let's get to it.

Earlier today, Jinder Mahal was in a photo shoot with the stolen Smackdown World Title. Shane McMahon came up and took it back while saying Mahal would be facing Sami Zayn tonight.

Opening sequence.

Here's Shane to introduce Chris Jericho as the newest member of the Smackdown roster. See, this is the new Show of Jericho so smack it down man! Cue AJ Styles, who will face the US Champion, whoever that is (Owens) at Backlash. Styles reminisces about their previous issues and says he's looking forward to Backlash where he can take the title.

That doesn't sit well with Jericho, and do you know what happens when you don't sit well with Jericho? It turns out that you get cut off by Owens, who is reminded that he tapped out. Owens wants AJ to get out of his ring so Styles goes up the ramp for a brawl. Shane: "SPLIT EM UP!" Jericho: "LET THEM FIGHT!" Shane gets his way as security breaks it up.

Sami Zayn vs. Jinder Mahal

Zayn is still banged up after Baron Corbin attacked him last week on Talking Smack, earning Corbin a suspension for the week. Mahal elbows him in the back of the head to start but Sami speeds things up with a headscissors. A dropkick sends Mahal outside and we take a break. Back with Sami in a chinlock for a good while until Jinder gets two off a clothesline. And never mind as it's right back to the chinlock.

Sami misses a dropkick but starts his clothesline based comeback, followed by the high crossbody for two. The corner climb tornado DDT looks to set up the Helluva Kick but one of the Singh Brothers pulls Mahal to the floor. The other grabs Sami's foot, setting up the

cobra clutch slam to give Mahal the pin at 10:57.

Rating: C. I think I might be starting to like Mahal and I don't know what that means. Mahal certainly isn't the next big thing in WWE but they've built him (with the Brothers) into enough of a threat that it could make for a good one off match. It's a simple act and sometimes that's all it needs to be.

Becky Lynch comes up to the Welcoming Committee and mentions them all by name for no apparent reason. They think Becky should be getting the shots that Charlotte gets but she doesn't seem convinced.

Dolph Ziggler and some friends of his watch a Shinsuke Nakamura video and aren't impressed. Ziggler runs his mouth about Nakamura and insults Shane, who is of course right behind him.

Tye Dillinger vs. Aiden English

English isn't happy with Tye for cutting off his song. Dillinger starts fast with a forearm and clothesline before stomping away in the corner. As usual, the TEN chants seem to be more over than he is but take what you can get. Tye loads up the Tyebreaker but spins English around into a facebuster instead of the backbreaker for the pin at 1:05.

English seems to have a breakdown post match.

Jericho is about to talk to Renee Young (who he calls Ronnie) when he runs into the crying Aiden English. There's no need to cry when you can sing and have a hairy chest. That being said, do you know what happens when you cry on Chris Jericho's new show? HE JUST MADE THE LIST! And so did Renee for no apparent reason!

Charlotte doesn't think much of the Welcoming Committee so they beat her down.

Naomi/Charlotte vs. Carmella/Natalya

And there's no Charlotte due to the attack. An early atomic drop doesn't do anything to Carmella so Naomi kicks the heck out of her leg. Carmella's kick has no effect either and it's time for the dancing kicks. The fresh Natalya comes in and poses a bit before

getting sunset flipped for two.

A headscissors puts Natalya on the floor but she blocks a baseball slide (that's a new one) and sends Naomi face first into the steps. The double teaming puts Naomi in real trouble with Carmella shouting about Naomi wanting to kick her. Natalya and Naomi collide on a double crossbody and here's a banged up Charlotte to take the hot tag. Now it's Charlotte's turn to get taken down by the numbers game and we take a break.

Back with Natalya fighting out of a bodyscissors with ease since Carmella really isn't that big of a threat, even when Charlotte is injured. Carmella misses a Bronco Buster and the real hot tag brings in Naomi for a springboard crossbody. The Rear View should finish Carmella but Natalya offers a distraction, allowing Carmella to grab a rollup with tights for the pin at 11:42.

Rating: C-. Not much to see here but that's all you can really ask for with people like Carmella and Natalya as your top heels. Natalya has been around forever and still doesn't really have a character aside from being a member of the Hart Family and Carmella isn't exactly ready for this spot. Not a bad match but the heels need a bigger star to make this story work.

The Welcoming Committee beats on Charlotte and Naomi until Becky Lynch slowly walks out. She shakes hands with the Committee before throwing Ellsworth into the women and hammering on all of them. Tamina superkicks Becky down and the Welcoming Committee stands tall.

Sin Cara vs. Dolph Ziggler

Ziggler elbows him in the mask to start but eats a springboard elbow for his efforts. A big kick sends Ziggler to the floor and Cara only somewhat botches the suicide dive when his feet get caught on the ropes. Back in and Ziggler gets two off a neckbreaker before they botch...I think a reversal to a suplex where Ziggler couldn't stick the landing. Ziggler quickly recovers with a fireman's carry slam but the Fameasser is countered into a powerbomb. Not that it matters as Ziggler gets the superkick for the pin at 4:33.

Rating: D. The botches hurt it but Cara got in a lot more offense than you would have expected. That helps a match like this so much as it at least makes Ziggler look like he had to break a sweat. Cara might not be great but he's a step above the Brooklyn Brawler so he should take a bit more effort.

Lana vignette.

And now, the Fashion Files from the Fashion Police. We go to a police station where Breezango are investigating the Usos for a variety of crimes. Fandango: "They're twins." Breeze: "Identity theft!" Along with making their outfits making Breezango's eyes hurt, Tyler thinks they're guilty of Jimmy and Jey walking. The big bust goes down in Chicago on May 21.

The best part here is everything in the background, ranging from a framed picture of the Big Boss Man to various news articles about the tag match to some wanted posters. A few examples are John Cena with whereabouts unknown, Nakamura as the King of Strong No Style and the Colons for real estate fraud. This is what giving a fresh team a shot can do for you as this was the first entertaining thing to happen to the division since American Alpha won the belts in the first place. Breezango might not be the best team in the world but they're likeable and this was funny so give them a one off chance.

US Title: Chris Jericho vs. Kevin Owens

Jericho is defending and Styles is banned from ringside. They waste no time in getting the fight started with Jericho stomping on the injured hand that cost Owens the title on Sunday. Owens sends him into the steps though and takes over without too much effort. The backslash keeps Jericho in trouble and he's thrown outside for a Cannonball against the barricade.

Back from a break with Jericho escaping the Pop Up Powerbomb but Lionsaulting onto knees. The second attempt works fine and it's off to the Walls. This time Owens makes the rope but another Pop Up Powerbomb is countered into the Walls in the middle of the ring. A much better tease of the tap out sets up Owens making the ropes again and it's back to the floor. Owens nails a loud superkick and

DDTs him onto the ramp. Back in and another superkick sets up the Pop Up Powerbomb to give Owens the title back at 12:40.

Rating: B. I wanted to see more of this but they did the right thing by having Owens hit a big move with the superkick on the floor and then get in a few more moves to win the title back. It felt like Owens proving himself to be the better man and that's exactly what it needed to be. The ending wasn't exactly a surprise but Owens has the title back and that's what matters.

Medics come in to check on Jericho, who takes another powerbomb. Owens leaves and a very woozy looking Jericho is carried out. Of course Kevin comes back out and puts a chair around Jericho's neck which is sent into the post. Owens slowly walks up the ramp to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. There was no secret to the fact that this was all about the main event and almost nothing more. You can see a lot of the Backlash card from here and they're actually doing a good job of setting up a show on such short notice. The title change felt like a big moment and it sets Owens on a roll before Backlash. It's not a great show and it was rather dull at several points (namely the women's tag) but it worked well enough.

Results

Jinder Mahal b. Sami Zayn – Cobra clutch slam

Tye Dillinger b. Aiden English – Fireman's carry into a facebuster
Carmella/Natalya b. Naomi/Charlotte – Rollup with a handful of tights

Dolph Ziggler b. Sin Cara – Superkick

Kevin Owens b. Chris Jericho – Pop Up Powerbomb

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Smackdown – April 4, 2017: The Two Point Show

Smackdown

Date: April 4, 2017

Location: Amway Center, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Tom Phillips, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

Now this could be interesting as we could get the post-Wrestlemania moments without as smarky of a crowd. A lot of people are going to get tired of how over the top things get on Raw and I'm not sure how strong that's going to be here. The big name people are expecting tonight is Shinsuke Nakamura as there's no reason for him not to show up here. Let's get to it.

I was in the arena for this show, sitting in the upper deck with the hard camera on my left and the rigging above the ring blocking part of the Titantron. The dark match saw American Alpha defeat the Vaudevillains in about 4:00 with the Steiner Bulldog to English in Gotch's final match with the promotion.

As you might expect, we open with a long recap of Wrestlemania.

Here's Randy Orton to open things up. Do you remember when he said "If you can't beat em, join em? And when the time is right, screw em?". Well he forgot part of it: When you get in the ring with them, beat them up! Randy proved that he's the master but here's Bray on screen to say this has just begun. Sister Abigail promised him so many things so he wants a House of Horrors match. Orton doesn't know

what that is but he agrees.

The screen goes off and Bray appears in the ring for the brawl. Erick Rowan, in a new mask, comes out from underneath the ring and the announcers don't recognize him despite the BIG RED BEARD. Luke Harper comes out for the save, likely setting up a tag match later tonight.

Miz and Maryse didn't think much of the proposal on Sunday because it felt like good marketing. Tonight though, they're calling out Cena and Nikki, possibly for the last time with the Superstar Shakeup looming.

Women's Title: Naomi vs. Alexa Bliss

Bliss is challenging and is even more serious than usual. JBL wants to know if Naomi can do it two nights in a row because he can't count. Naomi sends her face first into the buckle and we head outside for a break. Back with Bliss in control due to Naomi tweaking her knee again. Bliss cranks on the leg and the fans can't decide between DELETE, STUPID IDIOT or basic applause. Unfortunately they do have the "1-2-SWEET!" chant for near falls, which just sounds horrible.

Naomi comes back with a kick to the face for two, only to have Bliss grab a DDT for the same. The Rear View gets two but Naomi gets pulled off the ropes for a crash. Not that it matters as she grabs a sunset flip but switches over to the reverse Crossface to retain the title at 10:18.

Rating: C+. As usual, the wrestling doesn't matter here but this was a fine story with Naomi having an injury and Bliss working it over as well as she could. Naomi even used her new finisher to retain the title in the one on one match. This was a nice little match and that's all it needed to be. Odds are Bliss goes to Raw after this and there's nothing wrong with that.

Here's Curt Hawkins to ask why no one is talking about him. He wants some attention so let's have an open challenge. I think you know what's coming.

Curt Hawkins vs. Tye Dillinger

The fans had been BEGGING to explode for Tye all weekend as that TEN chant was going crazy for every show I took in. You can see the emotion on Dillinger's face as he's spent a LONG time trying to get here. Dillinger immediately snapmares him down and cartwheels into the TEN so we can get that out of the way. A series of strikes drops Hawkins and sets up the ten left hands in the corner. The Tyebreaker is good for the pin at 1:53. This was all it needed to be, though I have a bad feeling Tye is going to find out that his chant is more over than he is.

Mojo Rawley's mind is blown by winning the Battle Royal and wishes he could have seen Andre on a dance floor. This is the biggest moment of his night and the bar has been raised. Now it's time to throw some weight on it. I really hope this goes somewhere for him. This year at Axxess, I was waiting in line to get inside the Elimination Chamber when Rawley walked by during the session change. It took Rawley about six minutes to walk thirty feet as he stopped and talked to, shook hands with, high fived or took pictures with every single fan on the railing. You don't see that often and it's a classy move.

Here are Miz and Maryse to Cena's full entrance, complete with Maryse doing Nikki's dance. If you pay attention from a distance, you could tell it was Miz by the way he moved but at a glance, you really could be fooled by this. Doing the robotic Cena voice, Miz says rule #1 is you can't say John Cena sucks. Maryse thanks "John" for being manipulated into doing whatever she wanted, including giving her this rock (the size of a small doorknob). They're leaving WWE and going to Hollywood, where you won't be able to see us.

They go to leave (a shame as that means no more Maryse as Nikki, which really works for her)....and we've got a man playing a violin. You know what that means: SHINSUKE NAKAMURA makes his debut with the fans singing/humming/WHOAing/whatever it is you call making the sounds of his wordless music to the pop of the night.

We go to a break with Nakamura posing, during which Dolph Ziggler

came out to challenge him for the dark match main event.

Dean Ambrose vs. Baron Corbin

Non-title street fight. Corbin stomps him down in the corner and chokeslaves Dean down (Bliss actually does it better) before going outside for a chair. Dean baseball slides it into his face and knocks Corbin into the crowd as we take a break. Back with Corbin spearing Ambrose through a table in the corner for no cover, followed by a good whipping with a strap.

Dean sends him head first into a chair wedged in the corner and now it's his turn to give a whipping. The top rope elbow to the floor drops Baron again and Dean puts him on a table. Another elbow puts him through it but Baron grabs End of Days back inside for the quick pin at 11:03.

Rating: B-. This should have been the Wrestlemania match as I'm still not sure what the point was in having Dean win the first match clean. Corbin needs the title a lot more than Dean so this should set up another gimmick match of some kind on a big Smackdown as I can't imagine they'll wait for whatever the next Smackdown pay per view is. Good stuff here though.

Here's Shane McMahon to talk about the Superstar Shakeup. After soaking in the cheers, Shane thanks the fans for being so hospitable over the last week. This Monday's Shakeup could send anyone anywhere but everyone should be hoping they come to Smackdown, the land of opportunity. Cue AJ Styles to say he doesn't want to go anywhere. Everyone knows that this is the house that he built and he shake's Shane's hands. A tease of more violence seems to be a joke and AJ walks away in what feels like a face turn.

Luke Harper/Randy Orton vs. Wyatt Family

Orton and Rowan get things going with Erick hitting his spinning kick as we take an early break. Tom: "Can Orton and Harper get back in this?" It was one kick man. Back with Bray missing a charge into the corner and Harper coming in off the hot tag. The fans around me thought that would be Harper rejoining Bray and that really wouldn't

have surprised me. Harper is quickly sent outside for a running clothesline from Rowan, setting up a pull on the face.

It's back to Bray for some slow stomping, followed by a hard right hand for two. Rowan hammers away some more in the corner and rips at the face again. Bray grabs a chinlock before missing a charge, allowing for the tag off to Orton. The DDT looks to set up the RK0 but there go the lights and Bray winds up on the ramp. Orton RK0's Rowan for the pin at 12:13.

Rating: C-. You could really tell the crowd was getting burned out at this point and after so many days, that's not the most surprising thing. The fact that you could pretty much write the script for this match the second it was announced didn't help either. Wyatt's team losing again makes it feel like we're seeing the same stuff we've seen before, which isn't a good sign after the mess of a title match on Sunday.

After the taping and 205 Live, Nakamura beat Ziggler in about 8:30 with Kinshasa in a pretty standard dark match.

Overall Rating: C+. This was a good show but the Orton vs. Wyatt stuff is almost completely out of steam and the rematch, which is likely taking place at Backlash, is six or seven weeks away. The Dillinger and Nakamura debuts worked really well and....did anything else happen on this show? They can't possibly consider Rowan returning as a major moment so this is pretty much a two point show that was pretty normal otherwise.

Results

Naomi b. Alexa Bliss – Reverse Crossface

Tye Dillinger b. Curt Hawkins – Tyebreaker

Baron Corbin b. Dean Ambrose – End of Days

Randy Orton/Luke Harper b. Wyatt Family – RK0 to Rowan

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Wrestlemania XXXIII

Preview: Shane McMahon vs. AJ Styles

Please....don't mess this up.

I don't know how to feel about this one. The story has been quite strong, but at the end of the day it's McMahon vs. Styles at Wrestlemania after the incredible year that Styles had. As a Styles fan, here's what worries me the worst: if the match is good, McMahon gets all the credit. If the match is bad, Styles gets all the blame. Styles has his work cut out for him here and the fact that it's a regular match means this could be something of a mess.

With my fingers heavily crossed, I'll take Styles, though don't be surprised if they actually give McMahon the win to keep him strong or some nonsense like that. Either way, I can't imagine the match being anything more than a messy brawl because McMahon can't even throw a good punch. Watching Styles try to carry McMahon to a passable match could be a disaster but there's always the chance that the old magic could come back for the boss. I mean, it didn't last year but it's a possibility. Maybe.

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Smackdown – March 21, 2017: Oh Shane....Just Stop

Smackdown

Date: March 21, 2017

Location: Mohegan Sun Arena, Uncasville, Connecticut

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga, Tom Phillips

We've got two shows left before Wrestlemania XXXIII and it's not likely that any brand new ideas are going to be added to the card. Odds are we'll have Dean Ambrose vs. Baron Corbin confirmed and we're guaranteed to see American Alpha defending the Smackdown Tag Team Titles against the Usos. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Shane McMahon vs. AJ Styles from last week, including Daniel Bryan firing AJ.

Bryan is in his office when AJ comes in. Shane isn't here tonight but Bryan warns AJ to watch his steps. Styles says tonight, everyone is going to find out what it means to beat up Shane McMahon.

Mauro Ranallo is out sick this week. This is starting to get a bit suspicious.

Here's AJ to the ring for a chat. It's been seven days since he did what he did to Shane and he doesn't feel a bit wrong about his

actions. Shane's challenge is accepted because AJ wants to be part of Wrestlemania but the question is why would Shane want to face him at Wrestlemania. As for tonight, he's going to be waiting for Shane to arrive again and we'll see if it's even worse than last week.

Baron Corbin asks Bryan if Dean Ambrose has accepted his Wrestlemania challenge. Bryan hasn't heard from Ambrose in weeks so tonight, Corbin can face Randy Orton.

Tag Team Titles: American Alpha vs. Usos

Alpha is defending after the Usos beat them last week. Jordan takes Jimmy down to the mat to start and the twins are in early trouble. A double clothesline sends both Usos outside and it's all champions as we take a break. Back with Gable fighting out of a chinlock but getting sent chest first into the buckle ala Bret Hart.

Chad breaks away but gets sent to the floor instead making the tag. That's good for a nine count before Gable is put in the Tree of Woe. Of course he powers up to avoid a charge and the hot tag brings in Jordan. An Angle Slam (they're just trolling us now) gets two on Jey but Jimmy escapes the Steiner Bulldog.

Back to back superkicks puts both champs down and the Superfly Splash is good for a very near fall. Jordan breaks up another splash and Jey is superplexed down. The Steiner Bulldog is only good for two as Jimmy makes the save. I completely bought that as the finish. With the other three down on the floor, Gable moonsaults down onto everyone. Back in and Jordan gets crotched on the middle rope, allowing Jimmy to superkick him down for the pin and the titles at 12:32.

Rating: B+. This was great stuff with some really strong false finishes. They also really surprised me as I didn't think the Usos had a chance after the Superfly Splash was only good for two. It's not like American Alpha has done anything with the titles (not their fault) so maybe changing the belts can give them a shot in the arm for all of a few days. I just hope they don't put the rematch on Wrestlemania because the card just does not have room for it.

AJ is waiting in the parking lot.

Luke Harper wants Bray Wyatt next week.

Miz and Maryse have a special never before seen episode of Total Bellas. It's Maryse as both Bellas (a really, really good look for her) and of course mocking everything the two of them do. Maryse as Nikki: "Of course I'm Nikki! I'M THE ONE WITH THE HAT!" Maryse as Brie: "BRIE MODE!" Cue Miz as John Cena, who has a bunch of rules like no singing. Since Nikki has followed a rule, he'll pop a question to her, meaning he has a big balloon labeled "the question" which he pops.

Again, I have no idea why I'm supposed to boo Miz and Maryse. If you watch the show, which is supposed to be REALITY, this is exactly what Cena and the Bellas are like. Cena is a control freak who has a ridiculous set of rules and the Bellas are two of the dumbest people who have ever lived. Why am I supposed to cheer for them?

Baron Corbin vs. Randy Orton

Corbin shoulders him down to start but gets sent into the corner for some uppercuts and right hands. A hard whip into the post keeps Orton down though and it's off to a break. Back with Corbin sliding underneath the ropes and back in for his clothesline. Orton grabs the powerslam (that's always good looking) but can't hit the elevated DDT.

Instead they go outside with Orton sending him into various metal objects like a good viper is supposed to do. Now the DDT hits but of course it's too early for the first RK0, meaning Corbin gets two off Deep Six instead. They head outside again (happening too often) and Corbin goes into the steps. Back in again and here's Ambrose for the distraction, setting up the RK0 for the pin at 12:49.

Rating: C+. Pretty good stuff here as Corbin has the size to make his offense look good against someone like Orton. There was no doubt that Orton was going over here (save for a surprise by Wyatt) because there's no reason to have him lose so close to his biggest match of the year.

Corbin vs. Ambrose for the title is official at Wrestlemania.

Orton is in the back talking about his match when the lights start to flicker. He tells Bray to show himself but here are an army of people in sheep masks to beat Orton down. Bray appears and seems to bless Orton with a red X on the end. Wyatt kneels in front of him and says Orton changed him by exposing his one weakness. The power of Sister Abigail lives inside him forever and it's time to sing.

Breezango vs. John Cena

Tyler Breeze is dressed as Nikki Bella, which is far too common of a thing tonight. Before the match, Fandango gives Cena fashion tickets and introduces Breeze as his muscle. This brings out the real Nikki. The bell rings and Cena does his normal stuff but here's Breeze to the apron. Nikki comes in to spear him down and hits the Rack Attack 2.0. Stereo STF's give us simultaneous taps at 1:29. For a Southpaw Regional Wrestling related match, I've seen worse.

Carmella vs. Becky Lynch

Natalya is on commentary and comes in to hit Carmella for the DQ.

Post match Mickie James and Alexa Bliss come out for the big brawl with Bliss being the last woman standing.

Time for more Total Bellas with Miz (as Cena) reading his affections for Maryse (as Nikki) off cue cards and giving her a diamond.....Dallas Page yoga set. As we see the kitchen (the TV kitchen where the unseen servants prepare food off camera so we can feel relateable to the show you see), Miz gives her a WWE ring ("It's to scale!"). Later, in the bedroom, which is TOTALLY where Cena sleeps, Miz agrees to tie the knot. On his shoes you see. Maryse is sad to end things. These are hilarious and makes me cheer for Miz and Maryse even more.

AJ is still waiting but is disappointed when Rhyno and Heath Slater arrive. With fifteen minutes left. Why is Shane even bothering to show up at this point?

Actually never mind as Shane is in the arena, which doesn't please AJ. Back from a break with Shane, sporting one heck of a black eye,

calling AJ out. We see Styles making the long walk to the ring and he takes his time going through the curtain. AJ wants to apologize but Shane beats on him anyway. Styles suplexes him into the barricade and loads up the announcers' table, only to have Shane hit him in the head with a monitor. Shane goes up top for the big elbow....which MIGHT have grazed AJ's forearm. The fans call BS on it as Shane slowly gets up to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. As is almost always the case this time of year, the wrestling wasn't the point and if you think it was, you're missing the point. This was all about setting up Wrestlemania (and cracking me up with the Total Bellas stuff) and they did so on a bunch of matches. The Shane elbow looked horrible but I don't think anyone was expecting him to really be able to pull that off after last year's performance. This show did its job, which is more important right now.

Results

Usos b. American Alpha – Superkick to Jordan

Randy Orton b. Baron Corbin – RK0

John Cena b. Fandango – STF

Carmella b. Becky Lynch via DQ when Natalya interfered

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Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XVII: Holy Repo Man on a Stick This Show is Great

Wrestlemania XVII

Date: April 1, 2001

Location: Astrodome, Houston, Texas

Attendance: 67,925

Commentators: Jim Ross, Paul Heyman

After putting up with last year's mess, this is my reward. Many people including myself consider this to be the greatest wrestling show of all time and I can't say I argue that point whatsoever. It's a four hour spectacular headlined by the main event to end all main events for this era: Austin vs. Rock II for the world title. Other matches on the card include HHH vs. Undertaker for the first time along with TLC II, Angle vs. Benoit and Vince vs. Shane to FINALLY end their drama. I'm getting antsy now so let's get to it.

The opening video is a history of Wrestlemania along with shots of people around the world watching it. This includes a couple watching it in the back of a car. What kind of a portable TV can get a PPV feed? Anyway this is an awesome video that makes Wrestlemania seem like a worldwide event that everyone can get into. That's an awesome idea and the video makes it work.

Intercontinental Title: Chris Jericho vs. William Regal

Jericho is defending and this is a result of him not liking Commissioner Regal's regime. Basically he thinks Regal is boring and therefore relieved himself in Regal's teapot. Regal responded by

having the RTC and the Dudleys beat up Jericho on various nights. Jericho came back by dressing up by Doink for no apparent reason and putting Regal in the Walls of Jericho.

Regal pounds away to start but Jericho forearm him out to the floor. There's a big dive by the champion to take Regal down before he drops Sweet Willy B on the barricade. Back inside and a jumping back elbow off the top puts Regal down again before they head to the mat. Jericho tries for the Walls but Regal escapes and sends the still injured shoulder (from the aforementioned beatdowns) of Jericho into the post. A quick suplex gets two for Regal and it's back to the arm.

Jericho comes back with an elbow but Regal takes him down with a rollup for two more. Another suplex puts Jericho down again but Regal can't keep him down. The fans start cheering for Jericho as Regal takes off a turnbuckle pad. The referee is ok with this for some reason as Jericho's shoulder goes into the steel. Jericho comes back with a pair of enziguris before a middle rope missile dropkick gets two.

Jericho misses a charge in the corner and nearly hits the post head first. In a surprising move, Regal goes up top for a butterfly superplex which gets a delayed two. Jericho trips the legs and tries the Walls again but the shoulder gives out, allowing Regal to hook the Regal Stretch (STF with a half nelson) but Jericho makes the rope. Jericho fights back again but gets kicked in the shoulder, only to send Regal into the exposed buckle and hit the Lionsault to retain. That was a really sudden ending and JR sounded surprised so maybe it was called on the fly.

Rating: B-. This was exactly what an opener was supposed to be: fast paced, hard hitting and it told a good story. They beat on each other for seven minutes straight with nothing of note looking bad. The idea of the shoulder injury was a perfectly fine story to keep the match going and the Regal Stretch worked for a climax. This was a really good opener and it hit every point it was supposed to hit. Shane McMahon in his WCW-1 limo shows up. He bought WCW on Monday,

setting the stage for the Alliance.

Bradshaw is worried about Taz not being here for their match so he goes on one heck of a rant about how awesome Texas is before going on about how THIS IS WRESTLEMANIA.

Right to Censor vs. APA/Taz

The RTC is a censorship group with Val Venis, Goodfather and Bull Buchanan with Steven Richards outside. They censor stuff, the other three don't like it, let's fight. Oh and Jackie is with the good guys but no one cares about her. It's a big brawl to start with the RTC getting destroyed very quickly. We start with Faarooq vs. Buchanan with Bull hitting the climb the rope clothesline for an early two. Off to Taz who gets kicked in the head and triple teamed by RTC.

Venis comes in with some knees to the ribs for two before it's off to Goodfather. He continues the destruction of Taz including the non-Ho Train for no cover. There's the hot tag to Bradshaw as the beating shifts. Venis gets caught in the fallaway slam as everything breaks down. A double spinebuster crushes Venis and there's a belly to back superplex for good measure. Goodfather misses a charge in the corner and Bradshaw kills him dead with the Clothesline for the pin.

Rating: C-. This is pretty easily the worst match of the show and it's certainly not bad at all. This was short and almost sweet which is what it was supposed to be. The idea here was to have the censors get beaten up by the Texan and give the fans a good feeling which is exactly what happened. Not a good match or anything but it's completely watchable.

Trish wheels in the comatose Linda to be in attendance for Vince destroying Shane later. Your McMahon Drama Recap of the Night: Vince is screwing Trish while Linda has been medicated to the point where she can't move while Stephanie is being Daddy's Little Girl. Stephanie tells Trish to be ready for the celebration post match and Trish is perfectly fine with this. Yep, perfectly.

Hardcore Title: Raven vs. Big Show vs. Kane

Raven is defending and brings out a shopping cart of goodies with him. Before Show is here, Raven tries to jump Kane for no apparent reason. My guess would be drug related mental issues but that's just speculation. Show makes the LONG walk down the aisle, only to have Raven tossed over the top rope and down onto him. Raven is easily caught so Kane dives off the top and takes them both out, getting two on Kane.

We head into the crowd with Show never getting into the ring and the brawl is on. Bird Boy's philosophy seems to be let the monsters brawl and sneak in some shots where he can. A street sign to Kane's head staggers him, only for Kane to throw Raven nearly through a wall. Show chases Raven away and tries to lock themselves into a kind of storage area. Kane will have none of that and breaks the door down to keep beating up Big Show.

Raven tries to choke Kane with a gardening hose but Kane basically lassos him with it before throwing Raven through the window of a small office. Show knocks Kane through the office door before they brawl through the wall between the offices. Raven stomps away before stealing a golf cart, only to have Big Show jump on the back.

Kane steals one of his own and brings the referee along on the chase. According to Raven, there was supposed to be a chase scene around the arena but it never happened. Also they almost hit some cables that would have cut the power to the entire stadium, which would have been awesome and awful at the same time. They fight to the catering area and the Snapple is destroyed, much to Heyman's chagrin.

Now we head back up the steps to the stage where Kane goes nuts on Big Show, only to get clotheslined back down. Show loads up a gorilla press on Raven but Kane kicks them both off the stage. A legdrop from Kane onto Show is enough for the pin and the title in a crushed part of the set.

Rating: C+. This is a fun hardcore match with the cool brawling spots mixed with the fun and goofy stuff which is how you make for a

good hardcore match. These kind of matches were rare, but for the most part this was a more serious kind of Hardcore Title match, which usually makes things better. Kane would hold the title for awhile before it fell back into the goofy style.

Angle tells Edge and Christian that he didn't tap out to Benoit because there wasn't an official bell or an official referee, so it wasn't an official tap out. The Canadians slowly walk away.

Jimmy Snuka is at WWF New York.

A fan from Australia is here. That's rather cool.

The Rock arrives, 40 minutes into the show.

European Title: Eddie Guerrero vs. Test

Test is defending and Eddie has the Perry Saturn with him. Eddie tries to jump him to start but gets thrown around by the pure power of the champion. A spinning powerbomb gets two for Test and they head to the floor almost immediately. Back in and Eddie gets in a shot to take over before pounding away in the corner. The champion comes back with a clothesline for two before heading up top.

While up there though Test has to counter a hurricanrana before hitting a jumping back elbow to the face for two. A big boot from the champion misses Eddie though, causing Test's ankle to be caught in the rope. The match has to stop for a second to get him loose because Eddie can't pin him while in the ropes. Eddie stomps away on the leg on the floor a bit before heading back inside to work on it in the ring.

Off to a sleeper by Guerrero now as the fans seem to be getting a bit bored. Test fights out of it after a few moments and hits the tilt-a-whirl slam to put both guys down. Another tilt-a-whirl ends in a powerbomb for two for Test but Eddie kicks him low to break up a full nelson slam. Saturn slips in while the referee is yelling at Eddie for the Moss Covered Three Handled Family Credenza (a swinging neckbreaker), giving Eddie a two count.

Test gets back up and hits a pumphandle powerslam for two before kicking Saturn's head off. Eddie gets kicked as well but they have

to wait for Dean Malenko to come down for his run-in, causing a stupid looking (fits Test perfectly) pause. As Test beats up Dean, Eddie gets the title belt and hits the champ with it for the pin and the title.

Rating: D+. Again, if this is the worst match I have to watch, I'm going to be perfectly fine with this. Test was fine here with Eddie doing almost all of the work and making things as simple for Test as possible. It's pretty dull stuff but another Texan winning isn't going to hurt things at all, especially with it just being for the lower midcard title.

Mick Foley promises to call the street fight fairly.

Austin is here, 55 minutes late.

Kurt Angle vs. Chris Benoit

On his way to the ring, Angle rips on Texas for various reasons, primarily the lone star flag. Oh and cowboy hats are stupid. This match was made on Raw because neither guy had anything to do for Wrestlemania. It's as simple as it sounds, but do you need anything more than that for this pairing? Angle still insists that he didn't tap out to Benoit on Raw. Heyman: "This is as excited as a man can get with his clothes on."

Angle takes it to the mat to start which is fine with Benoit as the struggle begins. Benoit sits out and it's a standoff, drawing a nice ovation from the crowd. It worked so well before that they do it again, drawing a bigger ovation this time. Angle hits a kind of suplex to take it to the mat for a third time but Benoit sits out again as they fight for position. They roll into the ropes for another break and the fans are pleased yet again.

Benoit takes it to the mat again and tries the Crossface, sending Angle into the safety of the ropes. Kurt bails to the floor for a breather as he isn't sure what to do with Benoit here. Back in and Angle has to get to a rope to escape another Crossface attempt. Angle blasts Benoit with a right hand to shift the style and momentum here as they head outside. Benoit goes first into the

announce table and shoulder first into the steps to keep Kurt in control.

Back in and Angle gets two off a belly to back suplex. A belly to belly gets no cover by Kurt and neither does the second one Angle hits in a row. Benoit comes back with a clothesline as the only advantage of the match so far is gone. Benoit starts slugging away in the corner before hitting a knee to Angle's ribs. A back elbow to Angle's face gets two as does a snap suplex ala Dynamite Kid. Benoit follows up with a superplex and holds his neck afterwards. He would be about three months from neck surgery that put him out for over a year.

Speaking of neck injuring suplexes, Benoit rolls some Germans but Angle rolls through the third one into the ankle lock. Benoit escapes that into an ankle lock of his own for good measure. The stealing finishers was one of Angle's major deals so this shouldn't be a surprise. Benoit tries the Crossface but Angle blocks it from going on full. Angle puts Benoit in the Crossface for good measure but Benoit gets a foot on the ropes.

Angle accidentally charges into the referee, just before Benoit puts Angle in the Crossface for an unseen tap out. Benoit releases the hold and gets caught in the Angle Slam for two. Angle's moonsault hits Benoit's knees, allowing Benoit to go up for the Swan Dive. That gets two, but Angle rolls through and hooks the tights for the win.

Rating: B+. It's Angle vs. Benoit at Wrestlemania. Did you expect this to be anything less than awesome? This wasn't as good as their masterpiece at the 2003 Rumble, but it would be a match of the year candidate on any other show. That's what you expect from these two though, and this is an excellent match that is overshadowed by the rematches they would have later.

William Regal is annoyed at Michael Cole but walks into his office to see Kamala standing on his desk and rubbing the picture of Queen Elizabeth on his stomach. It's as disturbing as it sounds.

We get a video from the Wrestlemania pep rally at Fort Hood in Texas

with a bunch of wrestlers and Divas. There was a parade and the commander got a chair. The WWE people got plaques and Lita looks so unimpressed it's unreal. Angle of course would rather have a medal. This was pretty cool.

Angle says he won but Benoit jumps him and puts on another Crossface, making Kurt tap again.

We recap Chyna hurting her neck and then coming back as a Playboy cover girl. This doesn't sit well with the RTC, who injured her neck in the first place. Tonight it's Ivory vs. Chyna for the Women's Title again, but this is more about revenge than the title.

Women's Title: Chyna vs. Ivory

For one of the only times ever, Chyna looks great here. Ivory holds the belt to her face before the bell, but the referee is shoved away to let Ivory hit Chyna in the back with said title. Ivory gets in a few more shots but Chyna catches a boot in the corner. The destruction begins and Ivory is beaten down in the corner. A powerbomb kills Ivory dead but Chyna pulls her up at two. Instead it's a gorilla press slam for the pin and the title. Chyna would bail on the company about a month later without ever losing the title.

Vince gives Trish some instructions about Linda tonight, making sure that Linda won't be brought out until Shane is totally immobile. Cole comes in to ask about Monday night so Vince promises something shocking tonight.

We recap Vince demanding a divorce from Linda while openly having an affair with Trish. Linda had a breakdown so Vince had her medicated to the point that she was basically a vegetable. Shane returned to destroy Vince and challenged him to a match at Wrestlemania. Vince said ok but there were bigger things to take care of.

On March 26, Vince appeared on Nitro saying that he had bought his competition. At the end of the broadcast though, Shane appeared as well, saying that he had bought WCW when Vince had waited too long. Vince had wanted to sign the contracts here at Mania, allowing Shane

to swoop in and steal it. I'm thinking that's not legal, but it's wrestling so how much sense does it need to make?

Vince McMahon vs. Shane McMahon

This is a street fight of course with Mick Foley as guest referee. Shane has some WCW "stars" in a private box. You can see Shawn Stasiak, Stacy Keibler and I think Bobby Eaton up there. Stephanie is here with Vince but Trish and Linda are being saved for later. Vince slaps Shane and we're ready to go in a hurry. Shane gets pounded down in the corner but comes back with a spear and a bunch of elbow drops.

Stephanie gets in the ring and slaps Shane in the face, causing a chase sequence. Shane stops to hit Vince in the head with a sign before beating him over and over in the back. A clothesline off the barricade puts Vince down again before Shane whips him into the barricade. Shane blasts him in the back with a kendo stick over and over before peppering him with left jabs and a big right cross. Other than the brief flurry to start this is all Shane.

A monitor shot to Vince's head knocks him out so Shane can put him on the announce table. For the big spot of the match, Shane loads up the top rope elbow through the table but Stephanie pulls Vince away, sending Shane crashing through the table. Here come Trish and Linda with Linda completely sedated. Vince wakes up and sees them there so Trish helps him to his feet, with an AMAZING cleavage shot.

Trish surprises everyone by slapping Vince, turning face in the process. Stephanie goes after Trish, triggering a catfight in the ring. Mick pulls Stephanie off of Trish, only to get slapped in the face for his efforts. Stephanie runs from Trish and does the worst looking fall in the history of bad looking falls to let Trish catch up before leaving the arena. Back at ringside Vince wakes up and calls his wife a very bad name but Foley stops any potential domestic violence. Vince is fine with that and blasts Mick in the back with a chair.

The oldest McMahon puts Linda into the ring as Shane is still out cold. Linda is sat in the corner of the ring in a chair as Vince

throws Shane back into the ring. Now it's time for four garbage cans to be thrown in as well so Shane can get beaten up yet again. Vince picks up the third can but as he takes too long, Linda stands up to an ERUPTION from the crowd. She kicks Vince between the legs to stun him, allowing Foley to come in and beat the tar out of the owner of the company. Mick knocks Vince down in the corner and Shane hits the Coast to Coast dropkick, sending a garbage can into Vince's face for the academic pin.

Rating: B. All things considered, this was excellent. This is what you call intricate storytelling with at least five feuds/stories (Vince vs. Shane, Vince vs. Mick, Vince vs. Linda, Stephanie vs. Linda, Trish's turn) being blown off in one single match. On top of that, the match wasn't that bad with some decent bumps considering that they're both non-wrestlers. The drama was the key here though and it worked REALLY well.

The Hardys aren't sure if any of the three teams will ever be the same after TLC II.

HHH and Undertaker are getting ready. To this day I still want one of those X7 baseball jerseys. They were AWESOME.

Tag Titles: Dudley Boyz vs. Hardy Boyz vs. Edge and Christian

The Dudleys are the champions coming in. There's no story to it, but was there ever to one of these things? Edge and Christian get double teamed to start and the Dudleyz hit a double flapjack on Christian. Both sets of Boys fight in the corner with Jeff hitting Poetry in Motion on both at once. Cue Edge and Christian again with the ladder before Edge brings in a chair. The Canadians put Matt in the Tree of Woe and stand on his crotch. No wonder Lita left him for Edge.

Edge stats to climb but Matt makes the stop and goes up himself. That goes badly for him of course as Edge uses the chair as a stepping stone to take Matt down with a clothesline. Jeff dropkicks Edge off the ladder before joining with his brother to dropkick a ladder into the Dudleys' faces. There are two ladders in the ring now in opposite corners. Christian is slammed down and hit with a stereo splash/legdrop from the Hardys. The Dudleys are back in now

and there's What's Up.

It's Table Time with Edge being placed on the first one, but Jeff tries a hurricanrana to Bubba, only to be powerbombed through Edge through the table. This is nonstop action so far. The Dudleys set up four tables at ringside as Paul tells us of Big Daddy Dudley's construction company in Dudleyville. Currently there's a table in the corner and three ladders in the ring. Bubba picks up a ladder and CRACKS Matt in the head with it before setting it up next to the other two. All three are set up in a row in the middle of the ring so here's a six way climb.

Matt and Christian go flying first with Matt landing on the ropes and Christian falling all the way to the floor. Jeff and D-Von fall into the opposite ropes and Edge and Bubba fall backwards, to put all six guys down. Edge is the only one halfway standing and Christian sets up a table on the floor. Bubba dumps a ladder to the floor to clear the ring out a bit as Spike Dudley, Bubba and D-Von's cousin, runs in. He hits Edge low and puts Christian through a table with the Dudley Dog off the apron.

Edge and Christian's friend Rhyno runs in and destroys everyone in sight before sending Edge up the ladder to get the belts. Cue Lita to jerk Edge off. The ladder. Anyway with the thong sticking WAY out, Rhyno picks her up but gets hit low by Spike. Lita goes up for a rana on Rhyno and Spike cracks him in the head with a chair, sending Rhyno into the ladder, knocking Edge into the ropes. A Doomsday Device puts Rhyno down again but Lita CRACKS Spike in the head with a chair. She then takes off her top, giving us the biggest pop of the night. Not that it matters as she walks into a 3D and is now done for the match.

The Canadians come back in with chairs to take the champions out before Christian brings out the huge ladder. It's on the floor but it's still taller than the ones in the ring. Jeff, ever the crazy man, goes ALL THE WAY to the top and hits a Swanton onto Spike and Rhyno (read as Rhyno barely gets hit and Spike takes every bit of it). The super ladder is set up in the ring now and it's a race

between D-Von and Christian. Matt moves the ladder away, leaving both guys hanging from the cord holding the belts.

Both guys fall down, but Jeff gets up on a regular ladder and tries to walk on the other small ladders like a tightrope. Jeff loses his balance though and has to hang from the cord as well. Bubba grabs the ladder and walks away with it while Jeff's feet are still in it, pulling Jeff's body back. The feet pull away and Jeff swings forward, right into a spear from Edge off the super ladder, drawing a BIG gasp from the crowd. That's the spot that made everyone realize Edge was going to be something VERY special.

Matt and Bubba go up on the super ladder, but Rhyno shoves it over, sending them crashing through the four tables at ringside. D-Von goes up now but Edge grabs his feet, allowing Rhyno to give Christian enough of a boost to beat D-Von to the top and get the titles, finally ending this carnage.

Rating: A+. If you're looking for pure insanity and non-stop violence, this is the pinnacle of the genre. These nine people went for over fifteen minutes and never once stopped beating on each other. The spots are insane and the big spots still have you in awe. This match holds up incredibly well and is just as impressive as it was twelve years ago. Absolute masterpiece that blows away every MITB match that I can remember.

Video on Axxess. I need to go to that someday.

We get the all time attendance record announcement: 67,925. That's AWESOME.

Now for the fun part of the show to give the fans a chance to breathe. Here are MEAN FREAKING GENE OKERLUND and Bobby Heenan to do commentary for the next match.

Gimmick Battle Royal

Luke, Butch, Duke Droese, Iron Sheik, Earthquake, The Goon, Doink, Kamala, Kimchee, Repo Man, Jim Cornette, Nikolai Volkoff, Michael Hayes, One Man Gang (He couldn't fit into the Akeem gear), Gobbledy Gooker (complete with video from Survivor Series 1990), Tugboat,

Hillbilly Jim (biggest reaction of the entrants), Brother Love, Sgt. Slaughter

Take eighteen of the goofiest gimmicks of all time, throw them in a match, have fun. I thought this was awesome when I was 13 and it's still awesome to this day. The entrances take nearly three times longer than the match but that's beside the point. Repo Man is put out in about two seconds as is the Gooker. Quake puts Tugboat out before Kamala throws him out as well.

People are thrown out right and left with Doink being eliminated to a chorus of booing. The final four are Brother Love, Slaughter, Hillbilly Jim and the Sheik. Within about 12 seconds it's down to Sheik and Jim with Sheik winning because he can't go over the top to the floor. This was like three minutes long and it worked just fine all things considered. Slaughter puts Sheik in the Cobra Clutch post match.

We recap HHH vs. Undertaker. HHH beat Austin at No Way Out and then said there was nobody left for him to beat, so here came the Dead Man. HHH jumped him from behind and choked him with a chair a week later. Taker came back with a pipe, earning himself a restraining order from Stephanie.

There was no restraining order against Undertaker's brother Kane though, so he kidnapped Stephanie and threatened to throw her off a balcony unless Taker got a one on one match with HHH at Wrestlemania. HHH responded by destroying Undertaker's motorcycle. Taker called the ring his yard, giving HHH the great line of "Your yard is in the middle of his world." This was the match I was looking forward to more than any other on the card.

HHH vs. Undertaker

Taker gets to do his long bike ride down the aisle, meaning he can speed it way up, which looks pretty awesome. I use that word a lot in this but it's true. The fight starts on the floor with HHH losing a slugout. They break ANOTHER Spanish announce table with Taker still pounding away. We get in the ring for the opening bell where HHH hitting the jumping knee to the face. Taker has no interest in

selling that though and pounds on HHH in the corner even more.

A big backdrop puts HHH down as do some clotheslines in the corner. Taker powerslams the Game down and there's the jumping clothesline to do it again. HHH breaks up Old School though and hits a neckbreaker for two. A few elbows to Taker's neck have him in even more trouble and there's a neckbreaker for two. See what psychology is like? It's not that hard. Taker comes back with rapid fire punches but gets caught in a facebuster.

HHH goes to the floor and gets the sledgehammer but the referee takes it away from him. Instead HHH loads up a Pedigree but gets catapulted into the referee, crushing him in the process. There's a chokeslam to HHH but the referee is slow to count, meaning it only gets two. Taker beats up the referee to knock him out cold before throwing HHH out to the floor. HHH is backdropped into the crowd and the brawl is on. Taker punches him up to the tech area which is a very rare sight.

HHH tries to climb away to escape, but he climbs up higher and higher. Taker catches him anyway and pounds him in the head before sending him up to the next level. HHH finds a chair and blasts him ten straight times about the head and body. He loads up another shot to the head but Taker grabs him by the throat and chokeslams HHH off the tower onto something we can't see. It winds up being a crash pad but the throw looked GREAT. Taker wants more and drops an elbow off the tower down onto HHH for good measure.

Before HHH can be taken to the back by EMTs, Taker beats him up even more and even knocks down the medics. We head back to the ring where the referee hasn't moved for six minutes and hasn't been looked at whatsoever. Back to the ring with HHH basically dead. Taker picks up the sledgehammer but HHH kicks him low to save his life. A big boot to the face of HHH takes him down though and it's time for a slugout.

HHH loads up a Tombstone but since he's not Kane (or Sid apparently, Taker easily counters into one of his own. There's STILL no referee though as he's been out cold for ten minutes (from a kick in the

back and an elbow drop mind you). Taker finally shakes him back to life before loading up the Last Ride. HHH grabs the sledgehammer though and knocks Undertaker silly with it....for two. I lost my mind on that kickout back in the day.

Taker is busted open and HHH is having a fit. The Game pounds away at the cut in the corner but makes the fatal mistake of going to the middle rope for more leverage, allowing Taker to grab the Last Ride to plant HHH and make himself 9-0 at Wrestlemania. Taker lays on the ropes after the match and the shot of him busted open but smiling is sweet.

Rating: A. This is one of the great matches that no one talks about for various reasons ranging from their rematches to the match that immediately followed it. It's absolutely great though with both guys beating the tar out of each other and some excellent drama on the near falls. This was the match that made sure you knew Taker was still a player while keeping HHH strong at the same time. Great fight.

Some fan won a contest here because of a poster.

As JR says, the time is upon us.

We recap Austin vs. Rock II which is summed up by one line from Austin: "The fact is Rock, you got the WWF Title and I want it." This is backed up by the mother of all hype videos, set to My Way by Limp Bizkit. I'm not a fan of their music but this video is AMAZING. Debra was originally involved but thankfully that was dropped after about eight seconds. This was the best kind of build there was: take two superstars who seemingly cannot lose and put them together in a title match. These two beat on each other for months on end until this night arrived.

WWF World Title: Steve Austin vs. The Rock

Heyman says this is the match that both men need to win and neither man can afford to lose. Right before the entrances, Fink tells us that this is now No DQ, which is a surprise to everyone. Austin's pop is awe inspiring as the face absolutely lose their minds at his

entrance. Rock gets a VERY mixed reaction as Austin is a folk hero here in Texas. The brawl is on immediately and Austin hits the Thesz Press and middle finger elbow, only to be taken down by a swinging neckbreaker. The Rock Bottom and Stunner are countered and Austin throws Rock to the floor. We're maybe 45 seconds in at this point.

They fight into the crowd with Rock taking over with more right hands. Back to ringside with Austin hitting a clothesline to put Rock down before adjusting his knee brace for a bit. They're back in the ring now with Austin hitting a running crotch attack in 619 position followed by a superplex for the first two count of the match. Austin takes off the turnbuckle pad and pounds away to A LOT of booing from the crowd. A back elbow gets two for Rock before he clotheslines Austin to the floor.

They fight over to the announce table with Austin coming back with a bell shot to the face. Rock is knocked onto the announce table which breaks a few seconds later. We head back inside for Austin to pound away to even more pops from the crowd. Rock comes back with right hands but Austin drops both him and a leg for two. Rock is busted open and Austin chokes away in the corner. Austin stops to yell at the referee and gets his head taken off by a lariat from Rock.

The champion pounds away with right hands before getting the bell. It goes upside the head of the also bloody Austin but only gets two. We're at the point now where the pinfall attempts get more and more intense. Rock keeps pounding away but Austin won't stay down. Back to the floor with Austin firing off more fists as JR is in all his glory calling it. A slingshot sends Rock head first into the post and man did he BOUNCE off that thing. Back inside and Rock scoops the legs for the Sharpshooter in a call back to WM 13 where Austin is dripping blood while in the hold. He makes the rope this time though and we keep going.

Rock flips Austin off, earning himself a Sharpshooter from Austin. Well there's a twist. It's a terrible Sharpshooter but it gets the job done. Rock powers out though with blood dripping in between his teeth, again ala Mania 13. Back to the Sharpshooter on Rock but he

makes the rope this time to escape again. Austin busts out the Million Dollar Dream of all things and the bloody Rock is in trouble. Rock fights up though and we get another callback to a Bret vs. Austin masterpiece with Rock climbing the rope and backflipping onto Austin for two, making him break the hold in the process.

Out of nowhere Rock hits a Stunner on Austin but he can't follow up. It eventually gets two...and here's Vince. Austin's whip spienbuster gets two but he walks into one by Rock which sets up the People's Elbow. Vince breaks it up though by pulling Rock off Austin, earning himself a death stare from the champion. Now we know something is afoot given the history between Vince and Austin. Rock chases Vince but runs into a Rock Bottom from Austin for another very close two.

The Stunner is countered and Hebner is knocked to the floor, allowing Austin to hit a low blow. Vince brings in a chair and clocks Rock with it on Austin's instructions, getting another delayed two count. Now the fans are cheering for Rock a lot more but aren't as pleased when Rock hits a Rock Bottom out of nowhere. Vince gets pulled into the ring for a beatdown but it's a Stunner to Rock for only two. That probably should have been the finish, but instead Austin gets the chair and gives Rock the mother of all beatdowns with it, hitting him SIXTEEN TIMES. Rock is DEAD and Austin covers the body for the pin and the title.

Rating: A+. Yes there's kind of weak ending, yes there were some lame points, but it's Rock vs. Austin II for the world title in the main event of Wrestlemania. This is a masterpiece by definition alone. I think I might be the only person on the planet that likes this turn still, but it was in front of the wrong crowd. If this was ANY other state in the country it would have been booed like there was no tomorrow, but instead gets cheered, which is where the problem came from. Still though, excellent match and worthy of being the main event of the greatest show ever.

Vince and Austin shake hands, officially ending the Attitude Era. Beer is consumed and Rock is hit with the belt one more time for good measure.

Overall Rating: A++. It's the greatest show of all time. Normally I would say if there was a rating higher than an A+ it would get that, so now there's a rating of A++ for this show and this show alone. With a mind blowing four matches at B+ or higher and absolutely nothing bad at all, how can this not be the best show ever? I've seen this show several dozen times and it doesn't get old no matter how many times I see it. It's still excellent and needs to be seen by all fans.

Ratings Comparison

Chris Jericho vs. William Regal

Original: B

Redo: B-

Right to Censor vs. Tazz/A.P.A.

Original: C-

Redo: C-

Raven vs. Kane vs. Big Show

Original: C+

Redo: C+

Eddie Guerrero vs. Test

Original: C-

Redo: D+

Kurt Angle vs. Chris Benoit

Original: B+

Redo: B+

Chyna vs. Ivory

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

Vince McMahon vs. Shane McMahon

Original: B

Redo: B

Edge and Christian vs. Hardy Boyz vs. Dudley Boyz

Original: A+

Redo: A+

Gimmick Battle Royal

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

Undertaker vs. HHH

Original: A+

Redo: A

Steve Austin vs. The Rock

Original: A+

Redo: A+

Overall Rating

Original: A+

Redo: A++

Yep it holds up.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/24/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-17-oh-yes/>

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Smackdown – March 14, 2017: Shane Over Stephanie

Smackdown

Date: March 14, 2017

Location: PPG Paints Arena, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Tom Phillips

We've got three Smackdowns left before Wrestlemania and now we have a #1 contender to Bray Wyatt's Smackdown World Title. However, that means we have issues between Commissioner Shane McMahon and AJ Styles and there's an official confrontation scheduled for tonight. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's Talking Smack with AJ Styles confronting Shane McMahon after last week's Smackdown ended.

Daniel Bryan is on the phone with someone and runs down the show when AJ comes in. He wants Shane and threatens to slap Daniel if he says anything. Daniel suggests being calm because AJ needs to worry about his career.

Here's AJ in the ring to complain about what happened last week. Yeah he has to jump through a bunch of hoops and he knows someone like John Cena would never have to do that. His rematch came in a triple threat match and then against five opponents in the Elimination Chamber.

After that, Styles won a battle royal (not really) and beat the other guy they said won clean in the middle of the ring to become the #1 contender. Oh wait because Randy Orton burned Bray Wyatt's house down (Styles: "AND DIDN'T GET ARRESTED OR GO TO JAIL!") and now he's in the main event of Wrestlemania XXXIII. On the other hand, AJ doesn't even have a match and he's going to do something about it.

David Otunga is filming a movie and Mauro Ranallo is snowed in due to the blizzard in the northeast so we have a two man commentary booth tonight.

Becky Lynch vs. Natalya

Becky sends her into the corner to start and offers a handshake, earning one heck of a slap to the face. The threat of a choke sends Natalya to the floor and we take a break. Back with Natalya slamming Becky on the floor and grabbing a chinlock. Naturally that means the comeback is on with the Bexploder into the Disarm-Her for the tap out at 8:50.

Rating: C-. A good chunk of this was in the commercial so you can only get so much out of it. This is all about setting things up for the Wrestlemania match, whatever that's going to be. I'm hoping it's not a battle royal but a gauntlet match sounds like it's going to eat up a lot of time. That being said, a gauntlet could be a great way to introduce someone new. Say, the Empress of Tomorrow?

Post match Carmella comes in and superkicks both of them down.

Video on John Cena hosting the Kids Choice Awards. It helps that Cena can come off like a big kid with ease so he's kind of perfect for the role.

Post break Carmella says she's the next champion.

It's time for MizTV with Miz introducing himself and Maryse as the special guests. First up we see a clip of last week's mixed tag with Cena and Nikki being taken down after their win. We also see Miz ripping into Cena on Talking Smack in another of those awesome promos that are going to be cast aside so Nikki Bella can get her marriage proposal.

Maryse tells a story about Nikki stabbing her in the back when she was going to come back to WWE and be on the first season of Total Divas. Then Nikki told her not to sign the contract because they could get a better one for more money. See, Nikki knew she could get what she wanted because she was dating Cena, meaning she was "untouchable". The contract fell through though and only the Bellas

got the big deal.

Cue Nikki and Cena to chase them off with Nikki saying Maryse wouldn't be here if she had anything to say about it. Maryse is the one who steals money every night because she's some brainless blowup doll. Nikki invites her into the ring for a fight but here's Bryan to say Miz running away makes Bryan want to punch him in the face. That makes him think of all the times Miz makes fun of him for not being able to wrestle and all the times that he (poorly) imitates Bryan's moves and the fact that Miz knows Bryan can't punch him in the face makes Bryan want to punch him in the face even more. However, Cena and Nikki can so the mixed tag is on at Wrestlemania.

Alexa Bliss vs. Mickie James

Non-title. They lock up hard to start before Mickie takes her into the corner for some hard stomping. Bliss sends her outside off a hard whip and we take a break. Back with Bliss holding a cravate before being sent into the corner. Alexa fights up and grabs her by the throat with some crazy looking eyes. A sunset flip gets two on Mickie but the MickDT is countered into a pinfall reversal sequence. One heck of a right hand looks to set up Insult to Injury but Mickie kicks her in the head for the pin at 8:38.

Rating: C. This was a bit better than I was expecting though as usual I can't stand the idea of a champion getting pinned clean in non-title matches. I'm still curious to see what the gimmick is going to be because they've been teasing the idea that it could be something more interesting than expected. Hopefully it's not just one big mess of a match but WWE has done worse things.

AJ is waiting in the parking lot when Shane arrives. The beating is on with Shane being beaten up against an ice machine and then going through the window of a car. Fit Finlay makes a cameo to get rid of AJ as Shane is bleeding from the top of the head.

Back from a break with a doctor checking on Shane and blood coming down his head. Shane doesn't want to leave and has to be helped into another room.

The Usos don't like what AJ did but AJ takes his bag to leave. Daniel stops AJ and fires him.

Mojo Rawley vs. Dolph Ziggler

They take turns throwing sweat at each other, which JBL calls one of the strangest things he's ever seen. Ziggler is thrown over the top and out to the floor twice in a row so he tosses JBL's hat. Back in and a dropkick gets one on Rawley but he throws Ziggler over the top for a third time. That's enough for Ziggler and he takes the countout at 2:29.

We look at the attack on Shane again. For some reason there was a camera inside the car.

Here's Randy Orton to discuss what happened a few weeks ago. Orton joined the Wyatt Family because he knew it was the only way to take them down. It could have been a single RKO but he wanted more. Now there's one more step to climb though and that's why at Wrestlemania, he's taking everything from Wyatt.

Cue Wyatt on screen to say Orton has stripped him down to nothing. Sister Abigail still beats in his heart though and now he has no boundaries, making him all powerful. Bray reaches down and digs through the dirt, which he then rubs all over himself. He says follow the buzzards and screams before the camera cuts. So Orton threatened Wyatt and then Bray soiled himself?

We look back at Baron Corbin lowering the forklift on Dean Ambrose last week. I still love the referees trying to lift the several thousand pound fork before realizing THEY CAN JUST PUSH THE UP BUTTON.

Corbin challenges Ambrose for Wrestlemania.

American Alpha vs. Usos

Non-title. Jordan starts fast with a dropkick and grabs a front facelock on Jimmy. We cut to a split screen with Jamie Noble and Finlay helping Shane through the back and come back with the Usos going up top at the same time but the champs stare them into a standoff. Back from a break with Jordan getting kicked out to the

floor so the Usos can take over.

Jimmy grabs a chinlock and it's back to the split screen as Shane goes through the exit but turns around, seeming heading back to the ring. Jordan sends Jimmy into the corner and makes the hot tag to Gable for some house cleaning. The Steiner Bulldog is loaded up but Gable gets caught in the ropes, allowing Jey to superkick Jordan for the pin at 10:39.

Rating: C+. This was just filler until we get to the Shane stuff, which I'm sure is going to come up right after the match. I wasn't wild on the idea of a champ losing and I'm much less into the idea of two champions losing in a single night. I really hope this isn't added to Wrestlemania either as the card is already bloated and this really doesn't need to be on there.

Shane stumbles out says AJ has an opponent for Wrestlemania. The show goes off the air less than five seconds later.

Overall Rating: B-. This was similar to last night's show as they were setting up angles and pushing ones they had already established instead of focusing on wrestling. Really, with so little time left before Wrestlemania, there's no real need to have a lot of in-ring action. One major difference here from Raw though: they did the stuff with Shane without cutting off the wrestling they had going, meaning no time is lost. Either go split screen like this or cut out some of the segments. It's not that hard. Anyway, good show here as they're making me want to see what they've got at Wrestlemania.

Results

Becky Lynch b. Natalya – Disarm-Her

Mickie James b. Alexa Bliss – Spinning kick to the head

Mojo Rawley b. Dolph Ziggler via countout

Usos b. American Alpha – Superkick to Jordan

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Thoughts On the Rumored Wrestlemania XXXIII Card

Just....wow. This has been floating around for a bit and if this is the case, I have no idea where we are on a lot of these things. Here it is with a thought or two per match.

WWE Universal Championship

Goldberg (c) vs. Brock Lesnar

Someone explain to me why this is the main event and for a title. Please, someone tell me why that's what we need. I can almost buy this as the main event (assuming Goldberg can go more than five minutes) but why in the world does this need to be for the title? Does the winner really need to take the title on hiatus for weeks at a time? That's their best idea?

WWE Championship

Bray Wyatt (c) vs. Randy Orton

If this happens, Wyatt better win. Orton doesn't need this and Wyatt is considered a choker so let him defend the title here and eventually drop it to someone over the summer. This should be a layup so I don't buy it happening, unfortunately.

RAW Women's Championship

Charlotte (c) vs. Bayley vs. Sasha Banks vs. Nia Jax

Again, this should be a layup (as well as a singles match but WE MUST GO FOUR WAYS!) and by that I mean....actually it should be Sasha turning heel and getting the big title win, setting up Bayley with the big singles win around Summerslam. I know people want to see Bayley win the title here but she's not ready yet.

Roman Reigns vs. The Undertaker

This is one of two schools of thought. If they try to have Reigns go in as the mega face, it doesn't matter who wins because Reigns will be blown into the Atlantic by the booing. If they have Reigns as the heel monster who spears old man Undertaker over and over until he can't get up anymore, I'm sold like Hercules to DiBiase.

Seth Rollins vs. Triple H

If they just absolutely have to do this (and they clearly do because it's HHH at Wrestlemania), please don't screw it up by having it go half an hour. This is nowhere near as big a match as WWE seems to think it is but it seems to be what we're getting, assuming Seth can walk again. I've heard rumors of Shane McMahon replacing Seth if he can't go but either way, HHH needs to go down here.

Kevin Owens vs. Chris Jericho

I could go for this being for the US Title and all they have to do is have Jericho put Owens on the List for some reason. This is the match that should happen, has been planned for months and needs to take place by schedule. Stop messing with the good ideas you have and everything will be fine.

AJ Styles vs. Shane McMahon

Of all the matches on the card, I think this one makes me madder than all the rest. AJ had one of the best years in

company history but for some reason he's stuck babysitting the boss at Wrestlemania. The match will have some big spots and entertaining moments but how much praise do you think AJ is going to get for it? This is going to be the Shane McMahon Show and that's a very sad moment for AJ.

John Cena & Nikki Bella vs. The Miz & Maryse

BRING BACK SHANE! Word on the street says this is Nikki's last match with Cena possibly proposing after the match. You know, because WRESTLEMANIA needs to be a Nikki Bella night. Cena isn't going to be around much longer and now we get to hear about how Nikki has just overcome so much and how she's earned all this and should get her happiness or whatever, because somewhere along the line she became Trish Stratus and Lita combined. I can't stand this for everyone involved as they all, save for Nikki that is, deserve so, so much better.

The Big Show vs. Shaquille O'Neal

You knew this one was going to happen and while that doesn't make it much better, it's still the case. This is going to eat up about fifteen minutes with all the introductions and pre-match shenanigans and that's fine really. It's going to come and go with no one remembering it so let's get it over with and worry about the rest of the show. I just don't care enough to get annoyed about it and that's fine.

Andre The Giant Memorial Battle Royal

So...this is Ambrose's spot I suppose. I mean, it's not like you could do one last match against Styles or have him defend against Baron Corbin. While the latter is still a possibility, it seems more likely that they'll put them both in the battle royal or on the pre-show because Nikki's proposal needs more time. I'll actually take Corbin winning again here, which would be a great idea for him.

This isn't the strongest card in the world but there's more to like about it than last year's show. At least there's no reason to believe New Day will lose to the League of Nations again. I still want to know what was up with that.

Best of 2016: Surprise of the Year

This is one of the last two because we're getting close to the Royal Rumble and that's FAR too late for the sake of doing a Best of series. Basically today we're looking at the Surprise of the Year, which I'm going to keep a bit shorter for the sake of time. There are a LOT of options here and it's going to take forever if I go into a bunch of details. These are in no particular order.

1. AJ Styles Debuts at the Royal Rumble.

Sweet goodness this worked, assuming you can ignore what WWE felt was the more important visual. This was AJ STYLES debut in WWE and for some reason we were looking at Roman Reigns. Styles actually appearing in WWE was almost unthinkable but here it was, in one of the most important matches of the year. That's one of those moments you remember and it worked really well here.

2. Dean Ambrose Cashes in Money in the Bank.

I know it might not be the biggest in the world but the cash-ins are always cool to see. Ambrose cashed in and beat Seth Rollins for the World Title, which meant that all three members of the Shield were World Champion in the same night. Ambrose actually winning was a surprise as he was a few steps below the other Shield members and he finally won the big one. Well done, especially considering how many times that briefcase has been cashed in before.

3. Goldberg Returns.

For someone who hasn't been around in over twelve years, Goldberg

made one heck of an impact and the place went nuts when he showed up again. Sure it was just for the sake of a video game but the place came unglued when he was announced and it set up a big moment down the line. That's hard to do with someone from a different generation but they pulled it off here.

4. AJ Styles Beats John Cena Clean.

You know how many people get to beat Cena clean? You can probably count them on your fingers (and toes if you're a little slow) and Styles is another one to have done it. People were expecting the whole "Cena loses then Cena wins" but instead, Styles becomes one of the few to get away with a perfect record against Cena, which is quite the year for someone who hasn't been around that long.

5. Zack Ryder Wins Intercontinental Title.

This was one of those things that you just couldn't imagine happening and the fact that he did it at Wrestlemania is even better. Ryder could barely win a single match and now he's the Intercontinental Champion. Sure he lost it the next night and sure I'm convinced that it was going to be Neville before he broke his ankle but Ryder won that title and there's no one that can take it away from him. Well save for Miz of course.

6. Rhyno/Brian Kendrick Have Titles in 2016.

These two hadn't even been thought of in WWE in years and they manage to win new titles. Rhyno is a bigger surprise given how good the tag division actually is over on Smackdown. I liked his run with Heath Slater even more than I was expecting to and the team worked very well. Kendrick wasn't the most thrilling Cruiserweight Champion but at least he put on a few good heel performances.

7. Cruiserweight Division Returns.

Speaking of the cruiserweights, they're back too! This is one of those things that has been talked about for years and they actually did it. I'm not sure we needed a Cruiserweight division but the tournament they used to bring it back was awesome too. 205 Live has become a lot of fun and that's an even bigger bonus. Good stuff here, which I didn't expect coming into the division.

8. Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte Main Events a Pay Per View.

Let me repeat that: women main evented a WWE pay per view. I really don't think this needs much more of an explanation.

9. Goldberg Squashes Brock Lesnar.

It's very rare that I sit in awe of something I see on a wrestling show but that's what happened here. I was genuinely shocked by what I saw and that doesn't happen. Goldberg didn't just beat Lesnar but rather DESTROYED him in less than ninety seconds. That's getting up there with an old Midnight Express time in the main event of a pay per view. Just...dang man.

10. Daniel Bryan Retires.

I'm not sure if this qualifies as a surprise after all the time that Bryan missed from the ring. Still though, the speech itself was incredible and Bryan looked like a star who never had the chance to stay on top. It made him a legend but it was a pretty big shock when we knew he wasn't coming back this time around.

11. Finn Balor Vacates Universal Title.

The fact that this happened so soon after he won the thing (another surprise in its own right) is what makes this one so big. Balor literally won the title in his third match on the main roster and then he goes down with a major shoulder injury. Above all else: just imagine what happens to his career if he lost that title match. He'd be lucky to get a Cruiserweight Title run at that point.

12. Shane McMahon Returns.

I don't know how to put this one into words. The wife and I were looking away from the screen and our necks snapped into place as our jaws dropped. Shane hadn't been around in nearly eight years and yet here he was on Monday Night Raw with his dad all over again. It was a genuine shock and that doesn't happen in WWE.

13. Another Brand Split.

Again, this is one of those things that is talked about all the time but for once they actually pulled the trigger. I'm still not sure the rosters are deep enough to pull this off but it's the wrestling world we live in now, McMahons and all. I like the idea well enough and it was certainly exciting, especially for the Draft when it actually happened.

Overall this was a two horse race. I had to think back to how shocked I was over Shane returning and the Lesnar squash and the more I thought about it, the more I couldn't get my head around Goldberg vs. Lesnar. That to me is the sign of a surprise having

lasting power and it's enough to give the main event of Survivor Series the win here.

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