

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

Smackdown

Date: June 13, 2017

Location: Smoothie King Center, New Orleans, Louisiana

Commentators: Tom Phillips, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

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

Opening sequence.

New Day/Breezango vs. Colons/Usos

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

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

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

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

Sami Zayn is way too enthusiastic about the upcoming six man tag and talks strategy with AJ Styles and Shinsuke Nakamura. AJ seems a bit disturbed by Sami's energy. Nakamura: "I like him." Styles: "You would."

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

Naomi vs. Tamina

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

Rating: D. The more I watch her, the more I think Tamina has no real reason to be around. She's not imposing, she doesn't have anything all that special in the ring and she doesn't really have a character. She's a warm body who can fill in a spot and I'd much

rather have them develop someone interesting than leave her in there for such uninteresting matches.

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

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

Randy Orton promises to win the title back.

Charlotte vs. Natalya

Feeling out process to start as we see Becky Lynch watching in the back. We come back from a very early break with Charlotte being thrown shoulder first into the post. It doesn't seem to do much though as she comes back with something like an exploder suplex, followed by a moonsault which actually connects. Charlotte heads up again but gets powerbombed down for two. A small package gives Natalya the same but it's Natural Selection to give Charlotte the pin at 7:16.

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

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

Video on a WWE fan who has survived liver disease.

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

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

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

We take a break and come back with Sami fighting up and getting clotheslined right back down. Owens' backslash hits knees but Corbin headbutts Sami in the chest to keep him in the wrong corner. Sami kicks Corbin in the face and dodges the other two before low bridging Corbin to the floor. Ziggler and Owens pull the partners to the floor though and there's still no hot tag. A Helluva Kick out of nowhere puts Corbin away at 12:48.

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

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

Overall Rating: D+. This was the show that I was dreading and it's not all that surprising. They went with the "throw everyone together and call it developing the big match" formula here, which isn't

interesting and does nothing for the pay per view. At least it's done now though, save for the following week when we do the exact same matches and call it fallout. I'm still interested in Sunday's show, but only because of the ladders instead of the feuds and stories. That's not good, and shows how ineffective the build to this show has been.

Results

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

Naomi b. Tamina – Split legged moonsault

Charlotte b. Natalya – Natural Selection

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

Ziggler/Kevin Owens – Helluva Kick to Corbin

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New Column: Eyes Rolling

All the Way to the Bank

You've seen me complain about the Money in the Bank build for awhile now so now let's put it all in one column, plus a few potential substitutions.

<https://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-eye-rolling-way-bank/>

Smackdown – June 6, 2017: The Summer DoIdrums

Smackdown

Date: June 6, 2017

Location: Blue Cross Arena, Rochester, New York

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton

We're two days past the most recent Raw pay per view and since this is WWE, that means we're less than two weeks away from the next Smackdown pay per view. In this case that would be Money in the Bank, which means we're getting more matches between all the participants. Tonight that would be Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Kevin Owens which will be non-title because the belt means nothing at the moment. I mean, it would be asking too much to have the focus be on a ladder match and a title despite them having nothing to do with one another. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Shane McMahon announcing the first ever women's Money in the Bank match.

The participants for the women's match are in the ring as Shane comes out to open things up. Shane introduces everyone and unveils the women's briefcase, which is white instead of red or blue.

Everyone hits their catchphrases with Becky calling Natalya out for ripping off Bret's famous line.

Naomi comes out to talk about how important this is but Lana cuts them off in a VERY nice blue dress. In short she wants in the match but Naomi breaks up laughing. Lana: "What's so funny?" Naomi: "Bugs Bunny. And you." Naomi doesn't think Lana has done enough to warrant being in the title picture so Lana says she can beat the champ. Shane says no and sends her packing, drawing a WE WANT LANA chant.

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

Charlotte drops a knee on Natalya to start and stops to do the Carmella dance. It's off to Becky to work on the arm, only to have Charlotte sent outside as we take a break less than three minutes in. Back with Natalya kicking Becky in the ribs but getting elbowed in the face, allowing the hot tag off to Naomi. House is cleaned with a series of kicks, including the dancing variety to Tamina. Naomi gets two off a springboard crossbody but here's Lana to trip her up. Tamina uses the distraction to hit a superkick for the pin at 10:48.

Rating: D+. This was all about setting up Lana and there's nothing wrong with that. Lana has the potential to be a major star and the division could certainly use some extra star power. The match was nothing to see, though Lana getting a future title shot could certainly be interesting.

Mojo Rawley gives Shane McMahon a speech about wanting a shot, mentioning the Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal win and defeating Jinder Mahal. Shane is willing to give him an opportunity to be in the ladder match if he can beat Mahal tonight. That's fine with Mojo.

AJ Styles vs. Dolph Ziggler

Rematch from last week where Ziggler won. Feeling out process to start with AJ working a headlock and shouldering Ziggler down. Ziggler gets in a dropkick of his own though and AJ is knocked outside as we take a break. Back with Ziggler holding a chinlock and

getting two off a Fameasser. Ziggler's superplex is broken up but so is the Phenomenal Forearm. Instead AJ sunset flips him for two and they hit a pinfall reversal sequence, only to have AJ reverse into the Styles Clash for the pin at 6:57.

Rating: C. You could have penciled in Styles winning the second this match was announced because that's how the build to the Money in the Bank match works: one person wins to gain momentum, then they reverse the wins to put both guys back to even and then none of it matters because the surprise participant wins more often than not.

It's Fashion Files time. Breeze is looking at the list of suspects when Fandango comes in. He took the bottle of cologne to the boys in the lab and found out that there are no boys and no lab. Fandango doesn't think it's cologne, which means it's not the Colons' cologne. They have no idea what's going on, which means they're getting close. We cut to New Day in the back and then coming into the office, where they become black and white. Big E. says they need help with a case. Breeze, thinking: "New Day, new case."

Big E. isn't sure if it's a yes or a no because they're not saying anything. They have a present for Breezango: rompers (a kind of zip up shirt). Fandango doesn't like the fabric and says they don't take bribes. Breeze has put his on though and Fandango thinks it looks pretty good. As for the case, New Day wants some information on the Usos. Breezango has three boxes of stuff and talk with their minds, sending New Day walking away awkwardly. Breezango, again thinking: "New case rocks!"

Mojo Rawley vs. Jinder Mahal

Non-title and a win sends Mojo to the Money in the Bank ladder match. Mahal has a VERY long entrance so Mojo shoulders him to the floor to start. Back in and Mojo hits a hard clothesline, only to have one of the Singh Brothers offer a distraction. Mahal gets in a kick to the face to take over before sending Mojo shoulder first into the post. The Khallas gives Jinder the pin at 3:57.

Rating: D. Well that was the same Mahal match you would expect on Main Event but now he's the World Champion. As usual, that's my

biggest issue with him: he's so average that it's almost unthinkable to have him as World Champion. Even Justin Credible, who would have been the poster boy for that kind of champion before Mahal won, had some good charisma. Mahal is just dull and average, which isn't worth watching.

Post match Mahal says he dismantled Mojo's dreams, just like he'll do to Orton at Money in the Bank.

Orton is ready to win his title back.

Shinsuke Nakamura video, featuring him painting.

New Day vs. Colons

Kofi is on the floor this time as Primo wristlocks Woods to start. Xavier fights out and hits a discus forearm before bringing in Big E. We get stereo abdominal stretches and take another early break. Back with Woods hitting a missile dropkick and bringing Big E. back in to clean house. A big flip dive takes Epico out and the Midnight Hour is enough to finish Primo at 7:26.

Rating: D+. Just a quick match to remind us that New Day is a good team. It makes sense to put them in the title match this soon, even though they don't need to win the belts for a long time, or ever really. The Colons are good for the heel jobber tag team roles and the match served its purpose just fine.

Post match the Usos come out to call New Day old news. Jey has jokes about all three of them, including asking if E. is an initial or a bra size. Oh and Woods has weird shoes.

Sami Zayn has been watching a lot of footage of his opponents to get ready for the ladder match. He thinks Nakamura is the big threat to win and that's why he'll be on commentary for the main event. Cue Baron Corbin to hit Zayn with a ladder.

Naomi demands that Shane give her a match with Lana at Money in the Bank. She's willing to put the title on the line so Shane makes the match.

Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title and Corbin is on commentary instead of Sami. Feeling out process to start until Nakamura kicks him out to the floor. We take an early break and come back with Owens kicking Nakamura down for a chinlock. Nakamura fights up with some elbows and the running knee into the corner. The reverse exploder is countered but Owens hits the Cannonball. It's too early for the Pop Up Powerbomb though as Nakamura fights out and kicks Owens in the head. Now the exploder connects and the Kinshasa knocks Owens silly for the pin at 10:15.

Rating: D+. That would be three weeks in a row that Nakamura has pinned Owens and we're still waiting on the first mention of the US Title. The Title doesn't matter though because "building momentum" is all that matters at this point. That's the one idea and if the US Title has to be punched in the face to accomplish it, that's just what we're going to do.

Oh and in case you thought that win mattered, Corbin lays Nakamura out with End of Days.

Overall Rating: D. When did Smackdown get this boring? You have the entire midcard trading wins in the name of building momentum, even though JBL flat out said that getting a pinfall has nothing to do with climbing a ladder. The US Title might as well be a participation ribbon and Jinder Mahal is World Champion. Oh and the women are doing the same thing the men are doing and it's roughly about as interesting. When is Money in the Bank again so we can get back to something interesting?

Results

Tamina/Carmella/Natalya b. Naomi/Charlotte/Becky Lynch – Superkick to Charlotte

AJ Styles b. Dolph Ziggler – Styles Clash

Jinder Mahal b. Mojo Rawley – Khallas

New Day b. Colons – Midnight Hour to Primo

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Kevin Owens – Kinshasa

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Smackdown – May 30, 2017: Back in the Fall

Smackdown

Date: May 30, 2017

Location: Philips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Tom Phillips, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

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

Charlotte says she's ready to face anyone.

Carmella will make a fabulous champion.

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

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

Tamina says she'll win.

Opening sequence.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Here are the Usos to brag about beating American Alpha and Breezango so no one is left. As you might expect (or should expect if you've been paying attention), heeere's New Day. Jey: "Did you three get lost skipping down the Yellow Brick Road?" Kofi: "It's more of a skip clap." Big E. gets right to the point: they want the titles. The Usos threaten to shoot New Day so Kofi brings up Shane McMahon, who has granted them a title shot at Money in the Bank. The Usos leave as Big E. and Woods carry Kofi around. This did exactly what it needed to do.

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

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

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

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

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

Breezango vs. Colons

Breezango is still wearing the same stuff from the film noir bit,

including Breeze in the dress. Primo rips off the dress and the wig (because of course there's a wig) but Fandango squirts Primo with the water gun. Back from a break with Fandango in a chinlock, followed by Epico getting two off a Downward Spiral. Epico pulls Breeze off the apron so he bails under the ropes, only to come back as the janitor. Fandango and Epico fight over the mop, allowing Breeze to grab the Unprettier for the pin at 8:04.

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

AJ Styles and Dolph Ziggler are ready to fight tonight.

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

Dolph Ziggler vs. AJ Styles

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

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

Rating: C+. Standard Smackdown main event as they try to push Ziggler for some momentum. I'm still not sure how winning a match via pinfall gives you the momentum necessary to climb a ladder but then again I've never been the biggest fan of this time of the year in the first place.

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

Results

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

Breezango b. Colons – Unprettier to Primo

Dolph Ziggler b. AJ Styles – Superkick

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Smackdown – May 23, 2017: Do You Know the Way to St. Louis?

Smackdown

Date: May 23, 2017

Location: Huntington Center, Toledo, Ohio

Commentators: Tom Phillips, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

Somehow we're living in Jinder Mahal's WWE, which could mean several things. First of all, we're in for a Punjabi celebration tonight, which could mean a good number of possibilities. On top of that Mahal needs a challenger, who is likely to be Randy Orton in a rematch. We're also about a month away from Money in the Bank so it could be time to set up the ladder match. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the end of Backlash with Mahal winning the title.

Mahal and the Singh Brothers arrive with a police escort and the champ having a rug laid out for him. So....yeah he really is the new JBL, complete with his own Bashams.

Here's Shane McMahon to open things up. He's impressed that Mahal won the title but we need to move forward. First of all, Randy Orton is cashing in his rematch contract at Money in the Bank in his hometown of St. Louis, Missouri. On that same show we'll be having the Money in the Bank ladder match and it's already time to announce the five (SWEET) competitors: AJ Styles, Baron Corbin, Sami Zayn, Dolph Ziggler and....someone other than Kevin Owens, who comes out here despite Shane saying he's not in the match.

The actual fifth entrant is Shinsuke Nakamura but Owens isn't cool with being left out because he beat Styles at Backlash and AJ is in

the field. Maybe he's not in there because Shane is jealous of Owens beating AJ when Shane couldn't do it. Shane actually agrees and makes Owens the sixth entrant. Corbin tells Owens to stop talking and promises to win. AJ says his catchphrase because this house isn't being blown down by a lone wolf. He calls Owens WWE's Eric Cartman and says he doesn't care who he has to beat.

Sami can't say much as Corbin cuts him off and calls him the Rudy of Smackdown Live. That sounds like Corbin wants a rematch but Owens and Ziggler get in an argument before anything can happen. Dolph promises to win again but Nakamura introduces himself as Mr. Money in the Bank. Shane makes AJ/Nakamura vs. Owens/Ziggler and Zayn vs. Corbin for tonight.

Natalya/Carmella vs. Becky Lynch/Charlotte

Carmella headlocks Becky to start but a dropkick sends Carmella outside for a break. Back with Charlotte coming in off the hot tag and cleaning house, only to get dropped by some double teaming. Naomi dives onto Tamina and it's back to Becky for a quick Disarm-Her and the tap at 7:40.

Rating: D+. Some might call this fine, but I'd like to think I can come up with something a little better than that. If nothing else it seems like a waste of time as they might as well have just done this on Sunday if they're going to beat the Welcoming Committee this easily. The stable (if you can call it that) continues to be nothing more than a way to fill in time and the alliance of heroes is pretty clearly only there for the sake of waiting around until they all fight each other.

Sami Zayn vs. Baron Corbin

Neither gets an entrance....and Sami rolls him up for the pin at 21 seconds. They were on a roll for the first half and it was looking like it had serious potential but that next six seconds just fell apart. At least they fixed it in the end.

Corbin beats the heck out of him after the match, including crushing his head against the top of the barricade with a series of elbows.

Sami does a stretcher job.

AJ thanks Nakamura for what he taught him in Japan but now they're both going after the same thing. At Money in the Bank, Nakamura is going to turn AJ's house into his playground.

It's time for the final Fashion Files, which takes place in Shane's office (including a wanted poster, accusing the Mean Street Posse of gang activity). Breeze brings in his stuff and thinks they're fired. They even turn in their (squirt) guns and a bunch of cleaning supplies. Shane: "You do know that you're not real cops right?" Fandango: "That's what my dad tells me." Breeze takes his pants off but Shane says they're having singles matches against the Usos tonight. They're back on the case and Fandango takes a doughnut.

Here's the Punjabi celebration, complete with a band and dancers. Mahal says 1.3 billion people are celebrating the new champion and the Americans hate him because he's different. He's proven everyone wrong and showed that India is on the rise while America is in decline. We hear some Punjabi and fireworks go off with no one interfering to wrap it up.

Lana is still coming.

Jey Uso vs. Tyler Breeze

Tyler still has his bag of stuff....and rolls Jey up for the pin at 23 seconds after spraying him with the squirt gun. So he shot on Jey?

Jimmy Uso vs. Fandango

Breeze puts on a wig and gets Jey to chase him into the ring, allowing Fandango to roll Jimmy up for the pin at 44 seconds.

Fandango: "You Usos look like you just got caught wearing white after Labor Day." Breeze wants a rematch for the titles, which is actually on right now.

Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Breezango

The Usos are defending and we're joined in progress with Fandango coming in off the hot tag. A tornado DDT/dropkick combination gets

two on Jey but it's quadruple superkicks to set up the Superfly Splash, only to hit Fandango's knees. Jey gets small packaged for two and the Last Dance crushes Jimmy, only to have Jey hit the Superfly splash for the pin to retain at 2:48 shown. So to recap, the champs lose on joke finishes and then the popular act loses a short match after losing their big title shot two days ago. Yeah I'm sure this kind of booking has nothing to do with the ratings being so bad. Clearly just the NBA.

Natalya comes in to Shane's office and demands a title shot. The rest of the Welcoming Committee, Becky and Charlotte come in with the same demands. A big argument breaks out (because that's what women do, at least in WWE's eyes) so Shane makes a fatal five way #1 contenders match for next week.

Kevin Owens/Dolph Ziggler vs. AJ Styles/Shinsuke Nakamura

That argument cost us AJ/Nakamura's entrances. AJ shoves Ziggler around to start before it's off to Nakamura vs. Owens, which the fans certainly seem to enjoy. Some early strikes put Owens on the floor but the threat of a Kinshasa sends him bailing to the floor. Back from an early break with Ziggler raking Nakamura's eyes across the top rope before grabbing a headscissors to keep him on the mat.

We hit the chinlock (required in an Owens match) for a long bit until Nakamura fights up, only to be taken back down until we take a second break. Back again with Nakamura getting over for the hot tag to AJ, who immediately brings the strikes. A good series of them sends Owens to the floor but he drops AJ again and we're back to the chinlock.

AJ fights up again and kicks his way to freedom, allowing the hot tag off to Nakamura. House is cleaned again with a series of kicks but Ziggler grabs a Fameasser for two. Everything breaks down and Ziggler saves Owens from the Styles Clash, only to eat a running knee from Nakamura. The Kinshasa ends Owens at 24:33.

Rating: B. Insert your own complaint about the champ taking a fall when Ziggler is right there. This felt like a bit match and a lot of that is due to having an actual dream team for the face side. I can

live with this kind of a match instead of the normal ten minute trading wins between the ladder match participants. It's always nice to have the main event feel important and that's what this did.

Overall Rating: C-. The main event was good but I don't think it's enough to make up for the rapid fire matches we had in the middle of the show. Was there really a need for three matches in a row to have a rollup finish in less than a minute? Is that really the best possible option? They kept Mahal short, which is probably best for everyone involved. He's not the worst idea in the world but we're certainly at the point where the less of him we see, the better. We're firmly on the way to Money in the Bank though and that can make for some dull shows, which hopefully isn't the case this year.

Results

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

Sami Zayn b. Baron Corbin – Rollup

Tyler Breeze b. Jey Uso – Rollup

Fandango b. Jimmy Uso – Rollup

Usos b. Breezango – Superfly splash to Fandango

AJ Styles/Shinsuke Nakamura b. Kevin Owens/Dolph Ziggler – Kinshasa to Owens

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Backlash 2017: So That Happened

Backlash 2017

Date: May 21, 2017

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Commentators: Byron Saxton, Tom Phillips, John Bradshaw Layfield

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

Kickoff Show: Tye Dillinger vs. Aiden English

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

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

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

Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Dolph Ziggler

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

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

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

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

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

Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Breezango

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

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

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

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

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

Sami Zayn vs. Baron Corbin

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Welcoming Committee vs. Charlotte/Becky Lynch/Naomi

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

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

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

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

US Title: AJ Styles vs. Kevin Owens

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

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

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

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

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

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

We look at the Kickoff Show match.

Erick Rowan vs. Luke Harper

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

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

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

Smackdown World Title: Randy Orton vs. Jinder Mahal

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Results

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Dolph Ziggler – Kinshasa

Usos b. Breezango – Superkick to Fandango

Sami Zayn b. Baron Corbin – Helluva Kick

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

Kevin Owens b. AJ Styles via countout

Luke Harper b. Erick Rowan – Discus lariat

Jinder Mahal b. Randy Orton – Khallas

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NXT – April 12, 2017: Feel the Power of the New Guys

NXT

Date: April 12, 2017

Location: Full Sail University, Winter Park, Florida

Commentators: Nigel McGuinness, Tom Phillips, Percy Watson

We're finally back to normal as NXT returns home. We're also just over a month away from Takeover: Chicago, meaning things need to get set up in a hurry. The big story tonight is the return of Drew McIntyre, who hasn't been in WWE for several years and has done a lot of growing up in that time. Let's get to it.

There's a new theme song and of course it's rap based because Heaven forbid we have a rock theme on any of these shows.

Aleister Black vs. Corey Hollis

Hollis is ready to go while Black stands with his arms behind his

back...until Black Mass is good for the pin at 30 seconds.

We look at Tye Dillinger debuting on Smackdown.

Tye is thrilled at being on Smackdown but there's unfinished business around here. Earlier today he talked to William Regal and gets to face Eric Young in a steel cage next week.

DIY vs. Dylan Miley/Michael Blaze

Miley is a big guy with a great look for the late 80s. Ciampa can't take him down with a headlock as Miley just lifts him into the air. Gargano tries the slingshot but gets caught in a very delayed vertical suplex. It's off to Blaze who gets kicked in the head, followed by a running chop in the corner. A running knee knocks Miley off the apron and Meet in the Middle finishes Blaze at 2:59. Miley is going to get somewhere based off this performance as he's built like a tank and looks like a monster.

Miley destroys Blaze post match. Oh yeah he'll be pushed soon.

We look back at Asuka defeating Ember Moon at Takeover.

After the loss, Ember Moon walked through the empty arena, talking about how this was supposed to be her moment and destiny. Revenge is sworn.

Ruby Riot vs. Kimberley Frankele

That would be Kimber Lee of course. Kimberly takes her into the corner to start but gets armdragged down. Cue Nikki Cross for a distraction, allowing Kimberly to get in a backbreaker. Riot fights back with a series of knees and a Pele kick to the face for the pin at 2:21.

Video on the Authors of Pain.

Billie Kay and Peyton Royce are at the Performance Center and yell at Aliyah and Liv Morgan. A fight ensues with Kay being knocked into a water tub.

Oney Lorcan vs. Drew McIntyre

McIntyre's music has a bagpipe entrance. I'd assume that's going to be changed one day as it's really not working for him. Drew, who

looks huge compared to Oney, drives him into the corner and throws him down with a belly to belly. Back in and Oney scores with some running uppercuts to send Drew outside for a running flip dive. A top rope dive is pulled out of the air and Drew slams him into the apron.

We take a break and come back with McIntyre throwing him off another suplex and scoring with a hard headbutt. Lorcan breaks up a superplex but gets caught in a choke throw. Back up and Lorcan just unloads with strikes to the head, only to get caught in a very hard reverse Alabama Slam. The Claymore (running jumping boot to the face, not named here) ends Oney at 8:50.

Rating: B. I'm scared to rate it any lower in case they hit me that hard. This was one of the hardest hitting matches I can remember in a very long time that didn't involve Shinsuke Nakamura. McIntyre looked like a brawler but that size difference was bordering on comical as he towered over Lorcan, though Oney was slugging right back. Really fun match here and a good way to show that Drew can slug it out with anyone.

Post match Drew says he has all the raw talent in the world and can put the Smackdown on anyone but he only wants to be right here.

Here's Shinsuke Nakamura for his big farewell. He came here a year ago and wanted to become the best in the world. One year later he calls NXT his home. Over that year, he's learned a lot of things from a lot of people, including the fans. He's learned that the people around here are crazy for things like singing his song. That strikes up the band as Nakamura calls NXT the fans' style. He will always be NXT because we are NXT. Nakamura does his dancing poses as the locker room comes out to the stage to send him off. Even Finn Balor appears to close out the show.

Overall Rating: B-. This is another odd show as it was all about showcasing new talent instead of really moving things forward. That was a goal accomplished tonight as McIntyre got to look good, along with Ruby Riot, Black and Miley (especially him) doing the same. This show helped to start restocking the shelves, though there's a

long way to go to really have that all set up.

Results

Aleister Black b. Corey Hollis – Black Mass

DIY b. Dylan Miley/Michael Blaze – Meet in the Middle to Blaze

Ruby Riot b. Kimberly Frankele – Pele kick to the face

Drew McIntyre b. Oney Lorcan – Claymore

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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 RKO but there go the lights and Bray winds up on the ramp. Orton RKO'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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Quick Notes From Smackdown Live

Really quick as I have a 13 hour drive ahead of me tomorrow. 1. American Alpha b. the Vaudevillains in about 4:00 in the dark match.

2. Nakamura was by far the most over thing all night. The place just came unglued for him.

3. I really, really hope "1-2-SWEET!" doesn't become a thing on kickouts.

4. Tye got a great pop.

5. People were expecting Harper to turn on Orton, which wouldn't have surprised me.

6. Some people left for 205 Live but it was hardly an exodus.

7. Nakamura beat Ziggler in the post show dark match in about 8:30 with Kinshasa.

8. THE beach balls were in action ALL NIGHT LONG. One fan caught and popped two of them, turning him into the most hated man in the building and my personal hero for the night.

9. During the four way on 205 Live, a fan in the upper deck was just destroying Perkins every few seconds with some hilarious lines that were cracking up all the sections around him. Then he said:

"Roman Reigns is a better professional wrestler than TJ Perkins!"

Everyone else: "NO! NO! NO!"

Fan: "I APOLOGIZE! I PLEDGE TO FADE AWAY AND CLASSIFY MYSELF AS OBSOLETE!"

10. Everyone was just done near the end of Smackdown. It was a very, very long week and I think people are going to realize how tired they are when they wake up tomorrow.

I'll have a week in review thing up sometime later this week (along with all the other shows I've missed) but I won't have anything up tomorrow save for Raw 2002 and the column, both of which are already done.

Thanks for bearing with me this week guys and thank you all so much for letting me get to do this. I got to do stuff

this week that I never thought I'd get to do and it was some of the most fun I've ever had as a wrestling fan. Thank you all for supporting me and allowing me to do this as it's only possible with all of your help.

KB

NXT Takeover – Orlando: Homecoming

Takeover: Orlando

Date: April 1, 2017

Location: Amway Center, Orlando, Florida

Attendance: 14,975

Commentators: Nigel McGuinness, Tom Phillips, Percy Watson

It's time for the big one again as NXT gets to run a major show from its home city. Wrestlemania is in Orlando this year and that means we get a special Takeover right down the road from Full Sail University. The main event is Bobby Roode vs. Shinsuke Nakamura II for the NXT Title in what might be Nakamura's farewell. Let's get to it.

I was in the arena for this show so it's going to be my second look at it.

We open with a HHH voiceover talking about how this is our night to make history. Tonight we show the world that we are NXT and we are home.

The opening video looks at NXT over the years (or at least NXT from Full Sail), which really does include some amazing moments and stars getting their starts. This turns into a video on Roode vs. Nakamura, which is a fight over Roode fighting for himself and Nakamura fighting for the fans. The Women's Title gets a quick look as well.

Sanity vs. Tye Dillinger/No Way Jose/Roderick Strong/Ruby Riot

Sanity all has black paint around their eyes, making them look like Deadpool. Actually hang on a second as Sanity jumped No Way Jose at Axxess and has put him out of action. We have a replacement though.

Sanity vs. Tye Dillinger/Roderick Strong/Ruby Riot/Kassius Ohno

The good ones hit the ring at a run and the brawl is on in a hurry. The women officially start things off with Cross throwing Riot across the ring by the hair. I still have no idea how that doesn't make anyone scream. Ruby sends Cross into the corner so it's off to Wolfe, meaning Ohno has to come in. That earns Wolfe and Young a big right hand each with Kassius easily taking over. At Takeover. Kind of makes sense no?

Young offers a distraction though and Wolfe takes over like the cheater he is. Another big elbow cuts off the heel control though and it's off to Strong for some speed. Roderick does his running leapfrog (one of my favorites) and backbreakers Wolfe before kicking Dain in the head. I do love how face teams always stay on the apron and let their buddy fight everyone off at once. It's just not polite otherwise you see. Dain runs him over though as the SHAVE YOUR BACKS chant start up.

Roderick's comeback is cut off by a running dropkick and it's off to Young for some choking. A top rope elbow draws Tye in for the save and there go the TEN chants. Eric misses a charge in the corner though and NOW it's off to Tye with the hot tag. House is cleaned as everything breaks down, including Tye hitting a high crossbody on Wolfe, straight into a dive on Young for a sweet sequence.

Wolfe makes the save so Ohno loads up a dive but Wolfe moves just in time. Not that it matters as Ohno manages to bail by landing hands first on the apron and flipping onto his feet outside. Cross breaks up Ruby's dive and the closest thing you'll get to an NXT catfight breaks out.

That leaves Tye vs. Eric with Dillinger cleaning house, including a superkick for a close two on Dain. Onno BLASTS Wolfe with a forearm

and Strong Sick Kicks Young to the floor. Roderick vs. Dain looks to give us a rather interesting showdown but the women jump on their backs. Tye loads up the Tyebreaker on Dain but Wolfe makes a save, setting up the Ulster Plantation (One Winged Angel) for the pin on Dillinger at 12:21.

Rating: B. This was a really good choice for an opener and could have been a classic if Tye had gotten the pin and FINALLY won something but instead let's have him job again. You have to imagine a big showdown with Dillinger facing Young once and for all, but if he loses, I have no idea what's left for him in NXT. At some point you have to actually win something and Tye hasn't quite pulled that off yet. Also, Ohno was the only real option here. He's been featured too much on NXT TV lately and he had to get a spot on here, especially with a great tease of something with Sanity going forward.

Edge and Beth Phoenix are here.

Andrade Cien Almas vs. Aleister Black

No real story here other than it's Black's debut and he needed an opponent. Black's entrance (which I couldn't see from the upper deck) is straight out of Nosferatu as he rises up from what looks like a casket and onto the stage. Black slingshots over the ropes and lands in a sitting meditation style position, which is almost guaranteed to become a signature pose.

They trade armbars and headscissor escapes to start until Black misses a swinging kick, leaving Almas to pose at him. Back up and Black kicks him to the floor for a dive, only to moonsault back into the mediation pose. Back in and Almas takes him into the corner for a stomping and one heck of a slap. A missile dropkick gets two for Almas and it's time to start in on the arm.

Nigel isn't sure on this as Black mainly uses kicks but figures it might just be overconfidence. Almost immediately thereafter, Black starts firing off the kicks to send Almas outside for a huge middle rope moonsault. Back in and Almas grabs a cross armbreaker over the ropes, followed by something like the Rings of Saturn (I'm glad

that's becoming more popular).

Black ducks the running knees in the corner and they trade kicks to the head for a double knockdown. A moonsault kick to Black's head sets up a snap German suplex for two so Black starts snapping off kicks. Black Mass (a spinning kick to the head) knocks Almas silly at 9:35.

Rating: B-. This was fine without much of a story other than Almas getting cocky, as is his nature. I wasn't wild on him at first but this was a solid debut performance. The meditation pose is going to be a winner for him, especially once we get to know him a little bit better. I also like the Black Mass as sometimes you just need to kick someone in the head.

Also of note, I wasn't really able to pay much attention to the finish live as the fans in section 220 decided they were more important than the rest of the show. This included declaring their section's greatness, chanting TWENTY after each near fall ("1-2-TWENTY!" Get it?) and calling the other sections around them S-A-W-F-T. You can imagine how this went and you can hear the other sections telling them to shut up during the ending.

We recap the Tag Team Title match, which is almost guaranteed to be the best match on the card. DIY and the Revival tore the house down for the better part of six months but the Authors of Pain took the belts from DIY, setting up a three way feud. This meant a triple threat elimination tag, which for once made perfect sense.

Tag Team Titles: Revival vs. DIY vs. Authors of Pain

The Authors are defending but before the match, William Regal presents some snazzy new title belts (the Women and NXT Titles will get new belts as well), possibly due to the Women's Title being involved in Paige's sex tape. Revival and DIY stare each other down before they both turn to face the Authors, drawing the first major pop of many. Rezar is sent into the barricade so DIY grabs a table, even though this shouldn't be No DQ (I believe a DQ would count as an elimination).

Akam goes into the steps and the four challengers stare each other down, setting up the showdown that the fans really wanted to see. Nigel is beside himself as the champs are recovering while the other four fight each other. We settle down to a regular match until Akam tags himself in for a double clothesline.

Ciampa's high crossbody is caught but he kicks Rezar in the head, only to have Revival back down the steps instead of taking a tag. That's smart in this kind of a match, which shouldn't be surprising given how intelligent those two come off most of the time. With the referee distracted, Dawson sneaks in for a DDT on Akam to give Ciampa two. Dawson comes in legally but takes a shot to the ribs. This time it's DIY dropping to the floor because they're just that smart.

Gargano tags himself in and gets two off the slingshot spear before kicking Dawson in the head. Johnny adds a slingshot DDT and the fans are WAY into this, just as you would expect them to be. The champs catch a dive so Ciampa tries a suicide dive of his own, only to have the Authors THROW GARGANO THROUGH THE AIR to break it up. Things slow down with Akam working on Gargano's ribs, including throwing him up into a torture rack. Johnny finally sends Rezar into an uppercut from Dawson, allowing the hot tag off to Ciampa.

It's time for a series of strikes into a pair of German suplexes on Rezar, followed by the running knee for two. With Rezar reeling, Gargano tries a powerbomb from the apron through the table but can't put him down. Ciampa's help isn't enough so Revival punches Rezar in the jaw, setting up the double powerbomb through the table for the big crash and an even bigger cheer as the giant is in trouble. That leaves Akam on his own...and all four surround him.

Since he's a monster though, he actually drops all of them on his own because screw it. A chop block brings Akam down though and Dawson slaps on the reverse Figure Four. Gargano thinks about breaking it up but adds his version of the Crossface for the double submission. The partners grab Rezar so he shoves them into Akam and company for the save, drawing a loud round of boeing. A series of

strikes drop Rezar and it's Dawson/Gargano hitting DIY's double strike. Naturally this means Ciampa and Wilder give Akam a Shatter Machine, sending the fans even further into orbit with the champs going outside.

The fight is on and Ellering cheers both teams on in a perfectly logical (yet still amusing) moment. Gargano and Wilder hit stereo dives on the champs and Ciampa goes up top, only to have Dawson SUPERPLEX HIM ONT THE BIG PILE OF PEOPLE, putting all six down at once. Dawson goes after Gargano (Nigel: "NO! This is a mistake!") It turns out that he's right as the Authors get back in for the Last Chapter and the elimination on Ciampa at 18:54. You could feel the energy going out of the crowd at that point and it never recovered for the rest of the match (or show for that matter).

The fans chant DELETE (because they're such big fans that they forgot the Hardys were 40 minutes away at Ring of Honor) but have to settle for Revival, who are now the most over team in the world. A German suplex/top rope elbow gets two on Rezar but Akam kicks Dawson in the face. Almost stereo powerbombs earn the champs a NO ONE LIKES YOU chant as this is getting brutal. Rezar spears Wilder into the barricade while Akam sends Dawson into the corner. The Super Collider retains the titles at 23:43.

Rating: A-. Give this a more popular and less deflating ending and it's the Match of the Year so far. Those first seventeen minutes or so were as smart and well thought out that I've seen in years but as soon as the Authors turned into Super Cena, everything went flying out the window. In theory this means DIY and Revival are heading to the main roster (this is being written after Revival debuted on Raw) and if that's the case, this is the logical move. If DIY sticks around though, I have no idea what they're thinking.

The NXT fans want to see DIY vs. Revival in their awesome matches and the Authors are as far removed from that as they could possibly be (not saying they're bad, but that they're not what the fans want). It makes them look unbeatable though and that means the team that takes them down will be even more awesome than anyone could

imagine. It's a great match but the ending really brings it back to earth.

We recap the Women's Title match. Asuka is sitting by a pool and says the division rises and sets with her. She's said she'll keep the title forever but Ember Moon is undefeated as well. Asuka might be a more complete wrestler than Moon but she has the biggest weapon in NXT (close enough) in the Eclipse. That's the whole idea: if Ember can hit that one big move, nothing Asuka can do matters. The video goes on a good bit longer than it needs to, which is a pretty common problem in WWE.

Women's Title: Ember Moon vs. Asuka

Ember is challenging and has some of the best theme music in NXT at the moment. No special entrance for Asuka but I believe she has new gear. After the Big Match Intros, Regal presents the new title which looks like a cross between a UFC belt and the old X-Division Title. I really liked the first one but come on: it had to change eventually.

They lock up and go to the mat to start with neither being able to get any kind of an advantage. Stereo dropkicks go nowhere and it's time for a standoff. Asuka offers a handshake but pulls her hand back instead, showing quite a bit of confidence (fair enough). Shoulders go nowhere as they're doing a great job of portraying both of them as equal. The flying hip attack only sees Ember nip up...and make a not funny face in her way of saying bring it. Yeah that looked dumb.

Another hip attack sends Ember outside and it's time to really take over with some spinning elbows to the head. A third hip attack drops Ember and Asuka fires off kicks to the chest. The Asuka Lock is broken up and Ember blasts her in the jaw to send the champ outside. They're doing a really good job here of having Ember hang with Asuka until one big shot cuts her off all over again.

Case in point, Ember kicks her in the head but takes a Shining Wizard for two. The Asuka Lock goes on (To very little reaction for some reason. Even live this didn't feel important.) with Asuka on

Ember's back, allowing Ember to drop backwards for the break. A good looking superkick drops Asuka and even more kicks have her reeling. Ember's springboard is broken up though and a German suplex gives Asuka two.

Asuka loses a slugout and gets capture suplexed for two more. Ember loads up the Eclipse and throws Asuka off the top...only to have Asuka shove the referee into the ropes for the heel turn. Somehow that's not a DQ (I need to read that WWE Book of Rules) and Asuka kicks her in the head to retain at 12:12.

Rating: B. Commentary really helped this one a lot as Nigel was selling the heck out of the idea that Asuka had met her match. That's the story here and it worked really well: Asuka couldn't beat Ember using her standard stuff and was in real danger from the Eclipse so she cheated to win instead. I'm fine with Ember losing as she never got to hit the Eclipse (so there's your rematch) and you have Ruby Riot, Kimber Lee and Nikki Cross ready to challenge too. In your big surprise of the night, DREW MCINTYRE is in the crowd. That's the best news I could hear as McIntyre was all over Wrestlemania weekend and I've wondered why he isn't WWE Champion like, now for example. I'm very happy with this and it couldn't have been much of a better choice.

We recap Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Bobby Roode. As mentioned earlier, it's basically Roode being out for himself and Nakamura being out for the fans.

NXT Title: Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Bobby Roode

Nakamura is challenging and does his entrance behind a translucent screen where you can see his shadow. That feels very Michael Jackson-esque for some reason. The fans of course sing Nakamura's song (despite it not having any words) and it's yet another awesome entrance. Granted they also sing Roode's song as Roode spins around on a pedestal, accompanied by two pianos (TAKE THAT REBY!). Regal brings out the new belt, which looks almost identical to the Women's Title.

We're ready to go, but first this reason why I can't stand Twitter. Phillips: "These fans are on their feet and they're ready for this hashtag NXT Championship match!" Roode goes straight for the knees as the fans like both these guys. A headlock doesn't get the champ very far so Nakamura lays him on the ropes for the head on Roode's chest spot. Roode laughs off the bring it but gets caught up in the rapid fire strikes to bring him down.

Nakamura drops a knee and sends him into the corner for Good Vibrations. Roode gets in a dropkick and knocks Shinsuke off the apron and into the barricade for a crash. Nakamura seems to have hurt his shoulder but Roode opts to just stomp him down in the corner. Being the cocky jerk that he is, Roode stops for the GLORIOUS pose but still manages to chop Nakamura in the corner.

We hit the nerve hold for a long stretch (softening up the neck for the DDT) before Nakamura gets in a kick to the head for a breather. It's time to start in with the knees, including one in the corner and one on the apron. Roode comes right back with a heck of a clothesline and a chop block to start in on the knee again. The knee is wrapped around the post and we hit a bad looking Figure Four. Nakamura turns it over to, sending Roode straight to the ropes so he can get right back to the knee.

Another hold is countered into a cross armbreaker but Roode gets to the ropes again. Nakamura fires off strikes in the corner but knees the buckle by mistake. That earns Roode a series of kicks from the good leg so he grabs a Backstabber to put both guys down. They slug it out with Nakamura kneeing his way out of a suplex and dropping another knee for two. Kinshasa sends Roode bailing to the floor but he kicks the ropes to hit Nakamura low.

The Glorious DDT connects for two and again Nigel is right there to sell the heck out of it. Roode goes to get the bell but gets kicked in the head, followed by the exploder. Kinshasa is countered into one heck of a spinebuster for two and Nakamura is done. Back up and Roode drives him into the corner for a tornado DDT into the Glorious DDT to retain at 28:14.

Rating: B+. This was....long. The first match had far better drama with the story around the knee while this was just more long than anything else. That's not to say it's a bad match but I did like the first one earlier. The key here though is Roode winning clean without ever really doing anything all that complicated to counter Nakamura's insane offense. Roode is a very basic wrestler but he does everything so proficiently that it's hard to beat him. It's a very good match and pretty clearly Nakamura's swan song, but not as good as the predecessor.

After the show ended, Nakamura got the big sendoff with his music playing and taking a bow to all parts of the arena. See you Tuesday.

Overall Rating: A-. This show has one problem: it's going to be compared to Takeover: Dallas. Last year's show was one of the best of all time while this was just a really good one. There's absolutely nothing bad on here but the lack of title changes hurt things. This show felt like a big goodbye instead of NXT showcasing itself, which is one of the problems that a developmental territory is going to have. It's an outstanding show though and definitely worth watching, only being held back by what happened last year.

Results

Sanity b. Tye Dillinger/Kassius Ohno/Roderick Strong/Ruby Riot – Ulster Plantation to Dillinger

Aleister Black b. Andrade Cien Almas – Black Mass

Authors of Pain b. The Revival and DIY – Last Chapter to Dawson

Asuka b. Ember Moon – Kick to the head

Bobby Roode b. Shinsuke Nakamura – Glorious DDT

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