

Smackdown – May 30, 2002: Brutality, Bald Men, and a Strange Edit

Smackdown

Date: May 30, 2002

Location: Saddledome, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're still in Canada and maybe we can find the next challenger to Undertaker for the WWE World Title. As much fun as it was to see him make Tommy Dreamer drink tobacco juice and then beat him up, I could go for an actual match with a challenger instead of just random attacks. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Hulk Hogan's retirement from last week to set up what is likely our show long story. Vince McMahon isn't going to let Hogan retire as punishment for Hogan leaving him ten years ago. An explanation for what he means by that might be nice for the casual fans.

Tag Team Titles: Rikishi/Rico vs. Billy and Chuck

Rikishi and Rico are defending and Rico comes out to the challengers' music. Chuck gets sent into the corner for an early Stinkface attempt but Rikishi has to deal with Rico. A double flapjack plants the big man but he comes right back with a double clothesline. Rico tags himself in as Rikishi sits on Chuck's chest, leaving the Samoan to superkick his partner right into the cover to retain the titles. If this is the best they can do with the Tag Team Titles, drop them already because this is an embarrassment.

Hogan arrives.

Torrie Wilson kisses Maven and sexual escapades are implied. Tajiri watches from behind a door. So in other words, Torrie and Maven are Booker and the NWO while Tajiri is Goldust, even down to sneaking around

behind them to eavesdrop.

Christian vs. Maven

Maven knocks him outside to start and scores with a dive as the announcers plug Tough Enough 2. Back in and Maven's middle rope bulldog gets two but here's Tajiri to kick Maven in the head, setting up the Unprettier for the fast pin.

Vince is on the phone for some exposition about how Benoit is allowed to go to either show because he's injured. Since when was that written into the Draft charter? Dawn Marie Rinaldi (the last name was later dropped), a paralegal, comes in to give Vince something to sign. Chris Jericho interrupts them to complain about his match with Faarooq tonight. Vince doesn't think much about that as HHH has to face Test tonight as well. This is your "Still To Come" segment. The Canadian leaves and Vince gets comfortable with Dawn. I guess Stacy is off this week.

GET THE F OUT!

Chris Jericho vs. Faarooq

We start with the power game, including a clothesline to put Jericho on the floor. A hot shot onto the barricade has Jericho in even more trouble and Faarooq drops a knee for two. Jericho realizes he's only fighting Faarooq and gets in a middle rope dropkick to take over. With the wrestling not working, Jericho pulls off a turnbuckle pad followed by the bulldog. The Lionsault misses though and Faarooq hits that always good looking spinebuster. Not that it matters as Jericho sends him into the exposed buckle for the pin.

Rating: D-. Less than two weeks ago, Chris Jericho was inside the Cell in a major match with HHH. In the last two weeks, he's had a match against Mark Henry and had to cheat against Faarooq. HHH fought Lance Storm and gets Test tonight, which isn't much better but they're almost guaranteed to be stronger matches. How does this stuff benefit anyone?

Lance Storm asks D-Von to take his confession....in the men's room. Storm's sin: being from western Canada. D-Von forgives him but isn't

pleased with Storm's small donation to the building fund.

Hogan is in the back for an interview but first let's stop to soak in some cheers. Hulk was all ready to retire last week but Vince wants to treat him like an indentured servant. Vince can stick that contract in a rather uncomfortable place and Hogan will follow it with his size fifteen. After winning the title, Hogan only has one thing left to do: fight Vince McMahon, one on one. Vince comes in for a staredown but Angle jumps Hogan from behind with a steel exercise bar. There's a big match at King of the Ring.

WWE Undisputed Title: Undertaker vs. Randy Orton

Here's a major feud three years from now. Before the match, Undertaker actually sucks up to the Calgary fans for reasons unclear. Orton accepts a handshake to start and is actually granted a clean break in the corner. Undertaker walks into an armdrag and backdrop before a clothesline puts him on the floor. A big dive follows and I'm stunned at Undertaker actually selling here.

The Oklahoma roll gets two on the champ and a surprised Undertaker clotheslines him down. We get the second exposed buckle of the night but Orton gets caught with some dropkicks. That earns him a running DDT though and it's time for Undertaker to get serious. Unfortunately serious means being sent into the exposed buckle, allowing Orton to hit the Overdrive (or whatever it's called this week) for two.

I'm not sure why but there's a major edit there as Orton grabs the near leg for the cover but a camera cut shows the far leg being held on the kickout. On top of that, Undertaker loses his bandana in between camera cuts. No idea what that's about. That's enough for Undertaker though as it's Snake Eyes and a big boot for two, followed by Orton grabbing a rollup for his own near fall. A chokeslam retains the title.

Rating: C-. Not terrible here actually as Orton actually got in a lot instead of just getting squashed. I'm not sure what was up with Undertaker being nice at the beginning (just pure cockiness maybe) or the weird camera cut in the middle. At least Orton got a rub here because that's what they need more than anything else: young guys getting to look

good. Also, it makes sense to see Orton's offense still being very basic. His big move is that Overdrive and the rest is all basic stuff. He's adding more stuff though and that's how he should be going.

Post match the rookie gets beaten up some more until HHH comes out to clean house. A challenge is issued but Undertaker is sent off by the Game's music. I can't imagine it was intentional, but you could look back at that as a sign that HHH thought something of Orton. Randy joined up with HHH in January so it's not like there's an unthinkable gap of time in there.

Hurricane/Kidman vs. Chavo Guerrero/Tajiri

Hurricane takes Tajiri to the floor to start and does the rocking horse move to send Tajiri's head into the bottom buckle over and over. Tazz: "Just like Maven and Torrie!" A superkick gets two on Tajiri and it's off to Kidman (who looks really weird in regular trunks) for the Sky High on Chavo.

Tajiri goes with the standard cheating by kicking Kidman from the apron and grabbing a Tarantula to take it a step further. That just makes him cocky though and it's time for Kidman to counter a powerbomb with the X Factor. Hurricane comes back in to clean house with the Overcast getting two.

A flip dive takes Tajiri out again, followed by Kidman busting out a shooting star from the top to the floor onto both villains. Back in and Hurricane's music hits as a message pops up on screen, saying the reveal is next week. As a bonus we see a woman's hands on Hurricane's chest, meaning this is likely going to be ANOTHER love triangle story. Tajiri kicks the distracted Hurricane for the pin.

Rating: B. This is what I'm looking for with the cruiserweights, minus the angle that is. These guys know how to fly around the ring and make the division look like a lot of fun. That shooting star from Kidman looked awesome and is the kind of thing I want out of this division. There's no need for anything beyond basic characters because the action should be the driving force around here.

HHH vs. Test

Fallout from Test attacking HHH last week and I'm having flashbacks to 1999 when this meant something. Triple H knocks him into the corner and out to the floor for a good posting. Cue Lance Storm for a distraction so Test can get in a quick legdrop as HHH gets back inside. A good looking side slam gets two and Storm gets in a better looking superkick on the floor. Back in and HHH gets the spinebuster so Storm jumps on the apron like a good evil Canadian. Storm is finally thrown at Test and eats a big boot from his buddy. Cue the Undertaker for a distraction though and Test kicks HHH in the face for the pin.

Rating: D. Here's the thing: this really doesn't do anything for Test because it was all about HHH being dragged down by the overwhelming odds. Test really could have been anyone here and that's not doing anyone any good. Orton got in offense on Undertaker on his own and looked like he had potential. HHH beat the heck out of Test anytime it was one on one. That doesn't help Test, which makes this little more than time filler until Undertaker got there.

The beatdown is on post match, including a chokeslam and a bunch of chair shots. Referees and suits finally break it up.

The cage is lowered.

Val Venis tells Edge to rip off Angle's wig. So Venis has gone from an adult star to a censorship advocate to Edge's buddy. That's quite the character evolution.

Angle swears his hair is natural and threatens pain for anyone who tries to show footage of his haircut. Violence against Edge is promised.

The Hart Family, including Stu, is in the crowd.

Kurt Angle vs. Edge

They have a lot of time for this one and it's inside a cage with pins/submissions or escape as winning options. For some reason Edge tries to take it to the mat early on before opting to send Angle flying into the cage. A spear attempt hits cage though and we hit a front facelock.

The rolling German suplexes get two on Edge and he gets thrown into the cage a few times to draw some Canadian blood.

Edge's half nelson faceplant has Angle staggered but it's time for a ref bump. You can tell this is going to get stupid now. A belly to back superplex cuts off Angle's escape attempt and Tazz is amazed that Kurt's hair is still on. Edge goes up and gets low blowed back down, setting up one heck of a super Angle Slam. It's always cool looking when someone goes flying through the air into a big crash.

Angle goes over the top and escapes but here's Hogan for revenge from earlier. Back from a break with another Angle Slam getting two. Edge hits his own Slam but gets caught in the ankle lock. Angle is sent into the cage so Edge puts on his own ankle lock (Angle LOVED that stealing finishers spot).

That's reversed as well and Angle goes over the top, only to have Edge kick the door open to crotch Angle back down. Back inside and Kurt tries to run the corner for a superplex but a top rope spear (more like a shoulder but the timing was hard to pull off) gives Edge the pin. So does that make it one fall apiece?

Rating: B+. Hogan really brings this one down as he feels so out of place. You have a match with Angle and Edge beating the heck out of each other but then you do a false finish (with Angle winning completely legally) for the sake of advancing Angle vs. Hogan. I don't see a reason why you couldn't wait until after the cage match and then start the new feud as it's not like losing to Edge is going to take away all of Angle's heat. Hogan didn't help Edge get the win at the end but he was way too big of a factor in the match, which was excellent without him but just very, very good with him.

Post match Hogan goes after Angle but can't get the wig off. Hogan's music plays to end the show because that's how things work around here.

Overall Rating: C+. The first hour or so was dreadful but once you get to the meat of the show, this turned around in a hurry with some hard work and good wrestling. The holes are still there with stuff like HHH vs. Undertaker for the title (though there isn't another main eventer ready

for the shot at the moment) and the mess that is the Tag Team Titles. The main event more than bails the show out though and is worth checking out if you have the time.

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

Smackdown

Date: October 25, 2016

Location: Resch Center, Green Bay, Wisconsin

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

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

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

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

Kane vs. Bray Wyatt

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

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

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

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

Survivor Series Qualifying Match: Ascension vs. Hype Bros

The winners are on the Survivor Series team along with Heath Slater and Rhyno, who were granted an automatic spot. Mojo, a former Green Bay Packer, is VERY popular here as he starts with Viktor. Ryder is quickly

in for a dropkick to knock Konnor off the apron, only to have Ascension take over with some double teaming. Too much trash talking allows Ryder to get in a jawbreaker but a spinebuster stops a hot tag. A middle rope elbow misses though and the hot tag brings in Rawley for his corner splashes. Viktor misses a charge and the Hype Ryder sends the Bros to Survivor Series at 3:50.

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

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

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

Survivor Series Qualifying Match: Nikki Bella vs. Natalya

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hell in a Cell preview.

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

AJ Styles vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title with Ellsworth in the corner and a win makes Dean #1 contender. Ambrose starts fast and stomps away in the corner but AJ comes right back

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

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

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

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

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

Results

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

Hype Bros b. Ascension – Hype Ryder to Viktor

Nikki Bella b. Natalya – STF

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

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

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Smackdown – May 23, 2002: Hogan, Hogan, Hogan, Hog... Never Mind

Smackdown

Date: May 23, 2002

Location: BankcorpSouth Center, Tupelo, Mississippi

Attendance: 7,450

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We might be in for a major announcement this week as new WWE World Champion the Undertaker has suggested that Hulk Hogan will be retiring tonight. I know 2002 was a different time but does anyone believe that Hogan's retirement is coming on a regular Smackdown in Mississippi? Let's

get to it.

We open with the same recap of the big pay per view matches from Raw.

Opening sequence.

Cole immediately tells us that Hogan will be retiring tonight and says this will be the resting place of Hulkamania.

HHH vs. Lance Storm

Cole thinks Vince, you know, the boss and lone authority figure on this show, had something to do with this match being made. In addition to that, the entrances are dedicated to talking about what Hogan has been telling his friends and family about tonight. Storm does his normal schtick and takes the running knee to the face for his efforts, which only hurts HHH's bad leg. A good looking dropkick puts HHH down and Storm does that weird hopping stomp of his. HHH's cut is opened up again and Storm gets two off a top rope clothesline.

Cole and Tazz get into their fifth discussion of Hogan's retirement (not an exaggeration and we're only ten minutes in) as HHH makes his comeback with right hands and a spinebuster. Storm's superkick (looks awesome as always) sets up the half crab on the bad leg for the logical submission attempt. A rope is grabbed so Storm heads up, only to have HHH shove the referee into the ropes for the crotching, followed by a Pedigree for the pin.

Rating: B-. For a five minute match to open a Smackdown, this was actually very good stuff. Storm looked like a threat to HHH (as big of a threat as he could have been at least) and the half crab made perfect sense. HHH sold well too and made Storm seem like a bigger deal, which was exactly the point of this match.

Notice the difference between Raw and Smackdown: Raw has been using pretty much the same cast of characters since the Brand Split. Smackdown has at least turned guys like Storm and Val Venis into perfectly competent jobbers to the stars who also keep things feeling fresh. It's a small difference but very helpful.

Christian is talking to Kurt Angle (head not seen) about how Kurt is going to go out there and expose his bald head. For reasons of general stupidity, Christian starts a YOU'RE BALD chant.

Stacy Keibler comes up to Test and tells him Vince has given him Randy Orton tonight. Apparently Vince is mad that Stacy thinks Orton is good looking and wants Test to take him out. Test says ok and kisses Stacy, who doesn't seem to disapprove.

Here's Angle, now with a curly brown wig and amateur wrestling headgear. Angle: "It's amazing what hair supplements can do!" We get the required reference to Hogan's retirement but here's Maven to interrupt. Maven makes bald jokes and says Mississippi wants to see the real Angle. Kurt: "Do you work here or something?" The fight starts and Angle beats Maven up because one of them is Kurt Angle and the other is Maven. Cue Edge for the save but Christian comes out before the wig can be pulled off.

Test vs. Randy Orton

Before Test comes out, Stacy is on the table in a short skirt for her weekly dance. In addition to that, you can see her challenge for the Women's Title in a bra and panties match on the debut of Velocity. The current Superstars debuted with Undertaker vs. Matt Hardy and Main Event debuted with CM Punk vs. Sheamus (World Champion vs. World Champion). I'd say that's a point in the future's favor.

Test starts fast and hammers in the corner with the big power offense. The pumphandle powerslam gets two on Orton as it's not clear who Stacy wants to win. Test misses the big boot though and crotches himself on the ropes. Again, Stacy seems to like both guys in a nice shade of gray. A few rollups get two for Orton but the Test Drive (pick whatever name you like for the rolling cutter) gives Test the win.

Rating: C. For a four minute match, this actually had a story. Test, the powerful veteran, manhandled the rookie, who could only hit and run while looking for a quick win. I liked this way more than I was expecting and when you throw in several shots of a smiling Stacy, this was one of the best things on the show.

Undertaker doesn't think anyone is ready to face him and he shrugs off a package of his match with Rob Van Dam. Interviewer Mark Lloyd says some people say he lost the title due to getting pinned with his foot on the ropes. That's like saying he got pinned despite kicking out, mainly because Lloyd isn't that bright. Anyway, Undertaker wants to see Hogan retire because that's all that matters tonight.

Rico is admiring his Tag Team Title when Billy and Chuck come in. Apparently the title doesn't matter because it doesn't go with his clothes. That's what the Tag Team Titles now mean people.

Chris Jericho isn't in a good mood when he runs into Faarooq. Jericho: "Just the man I wanted to see." Faarooq: "Are you high? Or drunk?" Jericho wants to get out of his match but Faarooq turns down the offer of money because Jericho is facing Mark Henry.

Edge/Maven vs. Kurt Angle/Christian

Angle jumps Edge during his entrance (Canadians never pay attention.) but Edge gets in a quick sitout Edgecution. It's too early to get the wig off though and you can hear Angle's medals clanging together as he runs away. Was there ever a reason given for Angle having more than one medal when he only won one? It's a very simple heel idea to say he deserved more than one but you would think that would have been a joke once or twice.

As this is still waiting to get going, Torrie and Trish are shown watching in the back. Torrie is dating Maven and Trish is watching because.....I have no idea. WWE really had a thing for blondes around this point. Christian chops Maven in the corner but an Edge distraction lets the rookie get in a low blow. The hot tag brings in Edge to clean house and everything breaks down. The Angle Slam plants Edge but Maven gets in a missile dropkick for two on Christian. Angle and Edge fight to the floor and the Unprettier is countered into a rollup to give Maven the big upset pin.

Rating: D+. This wasn't much but again, they give someone a win for the sake of a rub. Christian giving up a fluke pin in a tag match isn't going to hurt him long term but it could do a lot of good for Maven. It's a case of throwing something against the wall and seeing if it sticks and

there's nothing wrong with that.

Rikishi vs. D-Von

D-Von now has the awesome "He's Called My Name" gospel theme. Rikishi doesn't think much of D-Von saying the thong is sinful but it's too early to sit on D-Von's chest. Cue Rico (with his title belt) as Rikishi gets in a belly to belly on D-Von. Now it's Billy and Chuck coming out to see Batista trip Rikishi to give D-Von a breather.

A DDT has no effect on the Samoan (I love stereotypes shining through) as Tazz uses this match to talk about Hogan, who feuded with Rikishi's cousin Yokozuna. That's the kind of stuff they've been doing all night and it got old an hour ago. The Stinkface is loaded up but a Batista distraction lets Rico hit Rikishi with the belt to give D-Von the pin.

Rating: D. This match ran 3:08 and had Batista, Rico, Billy and Chuck interfering, plus a belt shot and a Hogan vs. Yokozuna reference. Oh and the Tag Team Champions hate each other the same week they won the belts and somehow the division is already pining for the days of Al Snow/Maven vs. Billy and Chuck.

Chavo Guerrero is watching Eddie Guerrero attack Steve Austin on Raw when Gregory Helms comes in. Gregory wants to know if Chavo knows anything about someone stalking Hurricane. Chavo says he's going to take the Cruiserweight Title tonight and leaves. Before Helms leaves, he finds another clue: a bag of beef jerky. So wait: whoever is doing this is leaving notes and clues in someone else's locker room on the off chance that Hurricane's alter ego comes in and interviews them about who is leaving the notes?

HHH says there are no winners in the Cell but just survivors like him. Storm comes up to talk trash when Test jumps HHH from behind.

Cruiserweight Title: Hurricane vs. Chavo Guerrero Jr.

Hurricane is defending and catches Chavo with an early powerslam. With this match already going nowhere, it's time to talk about HULK HOGAN MOVIES. A dropkick knocks Hurricane off the top for two and it's off to a

discussion of great Hogan feuds, including King Kong Bundy and Kamala. An Emerald Flowsion of all things gets two on the champ but the Overcast (Blockbuster) retains the title. This was just background noise while the announcers squeezed in whatever new Hogan topic they could think of.

Vince isn't concerned about Stacy kissing Test because tonight he's getting rid of Hogan. Jericho comes in to yell about facing Henry but Vince tells him it's an opportunity.

Chris Jericho vs. Mark Henry

Henry throws him around to start and Chris' wounds are already opened up again. A Vader Bomb misses and Jericho dropkicks him in the face. Mark gets back up for a five rep gorilla press so Jericho grabs a chair. Henry has his own chair taken away so Jericho gets in a shot to the back for the pin.

Rating: D. So HHH has a match with a story of a bad leg and a leg submission hold while making Storm look good. Jericho has a match where Henry gets to do power stuff and there's a screwy ending. We'll chalk this up to a combination of Mark Henry not being very good and Jericho only being able to work a few miracles. Henry is so one dimensional that it's almost painful and even WWE seems to have given up on his push.

Here's Hogan for the big segment that they've been building to ALL NIGHT LONG. After a long HOGAN chant, Hulk gives his life history, including talking about being born Terry Bollea in Augusta, Georgia. He's had the time of his life for the last twenty years and he's sad that his father isn't here to celebrate with the Hulkamaniacs.

One night he and his father were watching wrestling and his dad told him to go wrestle again and straighten out his career in the WWF. Hogan thanks his fans for having his back all these months (all three of them since he came back). However, Hogan has to know when it's time to leave (About nine years ago?) and wants the fans to live forever. Posing ensues (with Voodoo Child making a rare appearance on the Network version) but here's Vince to interrupt.

Vince finds it amusing that Hogan is retiring in a place like Tupelo

(true) but Hulk isn't going to retire anytime soon (well duh) because Vince isn't letting 1993 happen all over again (he says ten years ago so 1993 is just an educated guess). If Hogan leaves, he'll get sued for everything he's got. Hogan isn't retiring until Vince has gotten every cent that he can out of him and that's that. Hulk punches him down but here's Undertaker, only to be dispatched in short order.

Overall Rating: D+. The wrestling was better for the most part tonight but that main event segment did this show no favors. At the end of the day, this was ALL about Hogan and after setting up something on Monday and building it up all night, Vince basically just comes out and says "eh not really" and it looks like we're setting up Undertaker vs. Hogan II. There's a little good stuff here but the bad outweighs it and that's not good. Get rid of Hogan and Vince (for the most part) and this show is much better in a hurry.

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Smackdown – October 18, 2016:

The Chin Who Got The Win(s)

Smackdown

Date: October 18, 2016

Location: Pepsi Center, Denver, Colorado

Commentators: John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga, Mauro Ranallo

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

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

Dean Ambrose gives Ellsworth a pep talk and his own shirt, which you can really buy at WWEshop.com.

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

Randy Orton vs. Luke Harper

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

The Wyatts load up the casket but Kane is inside. Orton and Kane clean

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

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

Naomi vs. Alexa Bliss

Alexa has Nightmare on Elm Street style attire. Naomi starts fast with right hands and those dancing kicks. Back up and Bliss eats a springboard clothesline, followed by a legdrop for two. Bliss gets sent into the buckle and heads outside as we go to a break. Back with Naomi scoring off a backbreaker and jawbreaker, only to be sent hard into the corner again. A quick Twisted Bliss gives Alexa the pin at 10:49.

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

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

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

Curt Hawkins vs. Apollo Crews

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

Here's Carmella for a talk about Nikki Bella. Two months ago she was basking in the glow of her first pay per view match but heard Nikki Bella's music. Before she can get much further though, here's a ticked

off Nikki. Carmella says she's stealing the spotlight again but that's not surprising since Nikki's boyfriend is John Cena. Nikki doesn't think that's much of a surprise since the relationship is featured on two TV shows and all over the internet. She's right actually.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jack Swagger vs. Baron Corbin

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

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

Smackdown World Title: AJ Styles vs. James Ellsworth

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

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

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

better than seeing AJ and Dean with tag partners for a one off match.

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

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

Results

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

Alexa Bliss b. Naomi – Twisted Bliss

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

Baron Corbin b. Jack Swagger – End of Days

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

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Wrestling Wars Podcast

Episode 49

TNA gets the courts involved, No Mercy, Raw, Smackdown, NXT and Mailbag time!

<http://mightynorcal.podbean.com/e/wwp-49-the-loltna-saga-continues-no-mercy-review-raw-smackdown-plus-mailbag/>

Smackdown – October 11, 2016: How To Lose A Seven Foot Superstar

Smackdown

Date: October 11, 2016

Location: SAP Center, San Jose, California

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

It's the show after No Mercy and that means it's time to start getting ready for Survivor Series. There isn't another Smackdown only pay per view until later in the year so we'll get to see some stuff with both brands interacting. Other than that we'll need a new #1 contender for AJ Styles. Let's get to it.

We open with a pay per view recap, focusing as the Smackdown World and Intercontinental Title matches.

Here's Dolph Ziggler to get things going. The fans tell Ziggler that he

did it and Ziggler says WE DID IT. Ziggler didn't know how things were going to go until Sunday and check your cable guide if you don't believe him. (My cable guide for this show says "and a look at Dolph Ziggler's exit from WWE." Well done if that was a fake out.) He didn't know if Sunday was going to be his last time but he pulled it off one more time.

Cue Miz and Maryse with Miz going on a rant about how this is just the second act of the story. This is the Empire Strikes Back before he beats Ziggler once and for all. Miz gets in a great line about how people like him get the girl and the gold and he's already got the girl. Ziggler shows us a clip of Miz crying on Sunday but Miz says he isn't done with Ziggler...and neither are there. Cue the Spirit Squad and it's time for a handicap match.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Spirit Squad

Non-title with Ziggler clearing the ring in about thirty seconds before we go to a quick break. For a bonus, we can actually see what's going on during the breaks via a split screen. Back with the Squad in control and Kenny putting on a chinlock. Mikey gets caught in a sleeper before a double DDT plants both cheerleaders. A superkick knocks Kenny silly (Mauro: "OH MY GOD! HE KILLED KENNY!") for the pin at 6:43.

Rating: D. So Ziggler has the big moment on Sunday and tonight he's fighting two over the hill male cheerleaders. Ziggler seemingly can't help but get away from the low level comedy which so often drags his character down. It's bad enough that his name is Dolph Ziggler but he has to fight goons like these two? Hopefully this is a one off moment because it's already taken away a bit of the momentum.

Post match Miz goes after Ziggler but Heath Slater and Rhyno of all people make the save.

We see a WW2K17 version of Miz vs. Ziggler from Sunday. Ignore Ziggler's tights being the wrong colors.

Shane McMahon and Daniel Bryan have a special announcement for Survivor Series: a five on five Raw vs. Smackdown Survivor Series match, a five on five Raw vs. Smackdown tag team Survivor Series match and a five on five

Raw vs. Smackdown women's Survivor Series match. I'd much rather them beef up a big pay per view than make it into its own show again.

Naomi vs. Carmella

Carmella jumps her before the bell and we take a break. We come back joined in progress with Carmella holding Naomi in a chinlock and talking trash as Alexa Bliss is shown watching backstage. Naomi's dancing kicks have Carmella reeling but she pulls Naomi off the middle rope to take over. Cue Nikki Bella (who Carmella attacked earlier today) for a distraction though and Naomi rolls Carmella up for the pin at 2:57 shown. That's becoming way too common of a finish again.

Alexa says she can beat Naomi any day of the week and twice on Sunday. Bryan comes in and says she can prove that next Tuesday.

Jimmy Uso vs. Chad Gable

Gable takes him to the mat and works on an armbar but gets superkicked in the ribs. The Samoan drop keeps Jimmy in his comfort zone and we hit a chinlock. Gable pops right back up and hits a spinning top rope clothesline to show off a bit. A cross armbreaker over the ropes has Jimmy in trouble but Jimmy grabs a rollup with Jey holding him in place for the pin at 2:50.

The Hype Bros talk about picking up women and Ghostbusters when the Ascension interrupt. Evil staring ensues and a tag match is probably set up for later.

Here's AJ Styles to brag about his win on Sunday. He beat Dean Ambrose and John Cena in a single match and that's simply phenomenal. The fans are a bunch of losers for wanting to cheer Cena when he's off trying to be Kelly Ripa's co-host or for cheering someone as weird as Ambrose. Most champions would take a year off after a win like he had at No Mercy but AJ isn't even taking a night off. Instead he's giving someone a chance tonight so bring out his opponent. Cue Ambrose but that's not who AJ meant. Ambrose accuses Dean of ducking him but AJ has a newcomer in mind.

AJ Styles vs. James Ellsworth

It's chin guy! Non-title of course. Dean kind of wants to see this because Ellsworth 3:16 says if you've got two hands, you've got a fighting chance. AJ wants Dean gone but here's Bryan to say hang on a second. The match will take place and Ambrose will be the guest referee. Dean steals the referee's shirt and makes AJ hold everything in his pockets, including a flask and Tic-Tacs.

The bell rings and we get a weapons check before going to a break. Back with barely any contact having taken place, which makes me wonder why bothered ringing the bell before the break. Dean won't let him use a closed fish but AJ argues that everyone uses it in WWE. James throws a right hand and AJ is so incensed that he chases James around the ring. Back in and Dean trips AJ so Ellsworth can get a rollup for two.

The Calf Crusher makes Ellsworth tap but Dean stops to take a phone call. JBL: "HE CAN'T HEAR THAT BEHIND HIM???" JBL annoys me as much as anyone but he's hilarious when he snaps like that. Ellsworth is thrown outside but Dean throws him back in, only to stop to flirt with a good looking woman. Back in and the Styles Clash gives AJ two as Dean stops to stare at him before three. Dirty Deeds lays AJ out and Ellsworth gets a very close two. Dean heads outside to steal a soda before giving AJ another Dirty Deeds. A fast count gives Ellsworth the pin at 10:34.

Rating: B. This was a lot of fun and I had a blast with it. They were trying for goofy here and went with something over the top instead of the same tropes they always use in these things. It's also nice to see a heel get this treatment instead of a face for once. That being said, they might have been better served to do this on a different night than right after AJ wins such a huge match.

Randy Orton asks Kane if he wants to go on the ride through his nightmares. Kane agrees, but says Orton has issues.

Royal Rumble By the Numbers video.

AJ yells at the bosses so he'll take issues into his own hands. Daniel says he has an idea for Ellsworth for next week.

Wyatt Family vs. Kane/Randy Orton

Before the match, the Wyatts say the world being crazy has brought them back together. Tonight Randy and his monster can join them in the abyss. Bray hammers on Kane to start so Kane throws him into the corner for right hands of his own. A big boot looks to set up the chokeslam but Bray bails to the floor and we take a break.

Back with Orton superplexing Harper and making the tag to Kane. That goes bad for the masked one though as he gets double teamed in the corner with the Wyatts starting in on his ankle. Kane easily fights them off and brings Orton back in to clean house. The elevated DDT plants Wyatt but Orton gets distracted by the big guys fighting outside.

The referee yells at Kane, allowing Harper to superkick Orton down. Wyatt misses the backsplash though...and there go the lights again. They come back on to have Harper in Kane's place on the apron, allowing Wyatt to hit Sister Abigail for the pin on Orton at 10:49. Kane is nowhere to be seen. JBL: "You don't just lose a 7ft tall superstar!"

Rating: C+. The ending was fine for Wyatt Family standards and I'm glad Bray pinned Orton again. If nothing else it means that we're not likely to be seeing Orton getting the World Title shot for the time being so at least it's not time to get annoyed. It's not the best ending in the world but it came after two hours instead of three so I can live with it a bit better.

Overall Rating: C. Totally watchable show with a good set of matches announced for Survivor Series and a really fun AJ match. The wrestling wasn't the point here as they were much more about bringing things down from No Mercy and making it clear that we're coming up on a bunch of rematches. I actually liked No Mercy so that's not the worst thing in the world.

Also, I really can't emphasize enough how much the missing hour helps this show. You can have stuff like a vanishing Kane, Zigler fighting cheerleaders and a screwy referee but no matter what happens there's never more than two hours left, as is so often the case on Raw. It's an easy show to sit through and they do entertaining stuff to boot. Good stuff here, as usual.

Results

Dolph Ziggler b. Spirit Squad – Superkick to Kenny

Naomi b. Carmella – Rollup

Jimmy Uso b. Chad Gable – Rollup with assistance from Jey Uso

James Ellsworth b. AJ Styles – Pin after Dirty Deeds from Dean Ambrose

Wyatt Family b. Randy Orton/Kane – Sister Abigail to Orton

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No Mercy 2016: The Same Old Surprises

No Mercy 2016

Date: October 9, 2016

Location: Golden 1 Center, Sacramento, California

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

It's the second Smackdown exclusive show and things have already been shaken up a bit. As announced by WWE.com, the Smackdown World Title match

will open the show, presumably to avoid direct competition with the second US Presidential Debate. Why someone couldn't watch both at once isn't clear. Let's get to it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AJ is defending and the fans do not like Cena in northern California. For a change of pace, we get a recap video after all three guys have their entrances. Short version: AJ has beaten them both and we're having a

triple threat because TRIPLE THREATS RULE! It's a big jawing session to start before all three fail at their finishers in the first minute. Ambrose takes over with some of his brawling and takes AJ outside for a few rams into the announcers' table.

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

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

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

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

Rating: B+. The match was great but can someone explain the false finish to me? Somehow Ambrose is the only one here who didn't lose but AJ is the one leaving with the title. AJ winning is the only logical winner here as Ambrose had his one title reign and is much more interesting chasing the

belt anyway. Cena can win the big one at Wrestlemania and that's all that matters in the long run.

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

Carmella vs. Nikki Bella

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

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

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

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

Tag Team Titles: Heath Slater/Rhyno vs. Usos

Usos are challenging. Jimmy pops Slater in the face to start so the fans remind Jimmy that SLATER HAS KIDS. Jey comes in and lets us know that he has kids too. An early chinlock doesn't last long and it's off to Rhyno

for a running shoulder to the ribs. The running Umaga attack puts Rhyno down for two as the fans aren't exactly thrilled with this so far. Rhyno fights out of a chinlock but gets dragged into the Uso corner to keep him in trouble. The twins keep taking turns on Rhyno until Jimmy runs into an elbow in the corner.

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

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

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

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

Baron Corbin vs. Jack Swagger

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

7:27.

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

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

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Dolph Ziggler

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

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

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

Miz rips Ziggler's boot off and walks into a superkick but Ziggler's injured leg delays the cover. Cue the Spirit Squad for a distraction so Ziggler superkicks Mikey down. The Skull Crushing Finale gets one of the closest near falls I've seen in a long time and Miz is ticked. The

referee finally ejects everyone from ringside and it's a superkick from Ziggler for the pin and the title at 19:33.

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

Randy Orton's reflection distorts in a mirror.

Pre-Show recap.

Alexa Bliss vs. Naomi

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

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

Hell in a Cell ad.

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

Randy Orton vs. Bray Wyatt

Bray laughs throughout Orton's entrance. An early lockup sends Bray outside for a bit before it's time to slug it out. The threat of Sister Abigail sends the fight outside again with Orton being thrown over the announcers' table. Bray sends him into the steps and does the Orton pose before taking him back in for the running backslash.

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

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

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

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

Results

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

Nikki Bella b. Carmella – Rack Attack 2.0

Heath Slater/Rhyno b. Usos – Gore to Jey

Baron Corbin b. Jack Swagger – End of Days

Dolph Ziggler b. The Miz – Superkick

Naomi b. Alexa Bliss – Rollup

Bray Wyatt b. Randy Orton – Sister Abigail

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No Mercy 2016 Preview

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

Pre-Show: Jack Swagger vs. Baron Corbin

We'll start with this rematch from earlier in the week on "Smackdown

Live” where Swagger won via submission. However, it’s not quite that simple as it sounds. In the first match, Corbin claimed to be reaching for the ropes instead of tapping out so there’s a much more logical reason for a rematch. It’s much better than having a rematch for the sake of having a rematch after one of the people wins completely clean.

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

Curt Hawkins vs. ???

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

Tag Team Titles: Heath Slater/Rhyno vs. Usos

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

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

Nikki Bella vs. Carmella

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

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

Women's Title: Becky Lynch vs. Alexa Bliss

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

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

Bray Wyatt vs. Randy Orton

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

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

Intercontinental Title: The Miz vs. Dolph Ziggler

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

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

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

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

Overall "No Mercy 2016" is just there, though I have some optimism for the show. I'm not wild on the idea of having another pay per view this soon but at least the card looks solid. If nothing else they have eight

matches this time around and “Smackdown Live” has shown the ability to set up an entertaining show. My guess is this will be a perfectly acceptable use of three hours (Repeat: THREE HOURS. Not three hours and another fifteen minutes. Three hours AT MOST.). The wrestling will be fine and they’ll use the Smackdown style of setting up simple stories but paying them off well.

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Smackdown – May 9, 2002: The Rookies Unleashed

Smackdown

Date: May 9, 2002

Location: Harbor Yard Arena, Bridgeport, Connecticut

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

As horrible as Raw has been in recent weeks, Smackdown is really starting to find a groove. They’ve hit that perfect balance of wrestling, storyline and entertainment to make two hours go by very quickly. The shows aren’t great but they’re easy to sit through and you actually get

some good wrestling. Let's get to it.

Get the F Out gardening video.

Here's Stacy Keibler looking GREAT in a black dress. After a bit of dancing, she brings out Vince to kill most of the buzz. Vince gets right to the point: HHH is a bad employee who may not have physically interfered last week, but he certainly knew what he was doing. Therefore HHH needs to get out here right now and apologize like a model employee or things are going to get bad in a hurry.

HHH comes out and immediately defies Vince's orders to stay at least ten feet away. The gears quickly shift to HHH suggesting that Vince can't keep her satisfied all night long, though HHH certainly could because he's HHH and therefore all manly and such. More size jokes are made and HHH says Stacy is like Anna Nicole Smith, waiting on Vince to die so she can collect the cash. Uh, Trips, she's just an employee sleeping with the boss. Pull it back a bit.

Vince teases fighting but here are Christian/Lance Storm/D-Von/Hardcore Holly/Test to go after HHH in shifts because wrestling villains don't get the idea of attacking at the same time. With HHH finally taken down, Chris Jericho comes out for a few chair shots to bust him open.

The second HOGAN chant goes nowhere as Jericho puts on the Walls, with HHH actually tapping. Vince gets in HHH's face and announces Jericho vs. HHH in the Cell. It's a cool idea but I'm not sure this match warrants such a big feud. Especially not when there's no doubt who wins the thing. It's not like HHH is going to lay down for Jericho in a big match setting.

Cruiserweight Title: Tajiri vs. Hurricane

Tajiri is defending and starts fast with the kicks to the face as Cole is already on his second explanation for how badly Tajiri treats Torrie. I know he's bad about it today but back then it was excruciating to listen to him hammer in plot points. Hurricane comes back with a DDT and neckbreaker for two but gets caught by the handspring elbow (which Cole refers to as a big spot).

Hurricane knocks him outside and Torrie's help is shoved away. That's fine with Hurricane who hits a running flip dive, only to get kicked down again. Torrie FINALLY has enough and gets on the announcers' table to strip off the geisha outfit and reveal some blue lingerie. The distraction is enough to get Tajiri counted out.

Rating: C-. Not much to the match but the angle advancement was the important thing here. Also, unless Tajiri is holding the title for a lot longer, I don't get why you wouldn't change the title here. It's not a stretch to have him get humiliated and walk into a chokeslam for the title but at least they finally did the split with Torrie.

Hurricane chokeslams Tajiri to make it even worse.

Jericho is with Vince and Stacy to brag about what happened earlier. Vince wants to give HHH a match tonight but doesn't know who he could face. Cue D-Von and HHH has an opponent. Vince specially asks if he's here and D-Von says he's always here.

Hurricane and Al Snow discuss Spider-Man in what has to be a paid advertisement. Hurricane wants to ask Spider-Man what's with that so Snow suggests medication. Someone has left Hurricane a note, saying they know who he is. Hurricane flies off and Snow says he thought it was weird talking to a head. Somehow, these two both appeared on TNA TV fourteen years after this.

Test vs. Mark Henry

Please let this be the blowoff. The challenge of a test of strength gets Henry in trouble and Test hits some running clotheslines in the corner. Henry comes back with clotheslines of his own (oh this isn't going to be easy) before a powerslam gets two. Test gets gorilla pressed (with a nice assist by shoving off Henry's shoulders but a bad ending as Henry doesn't get him all the way up) for two more but he shoves Henry off the top. A flying elbow (one of the few things Test could make look good) gives Test another two but he has to low blow his way out of a full nelson. The big boot ends Henry a few seconds later.

Rating: D-. And so much for Henry going anywhere. See, if you have his

whole character be based around power, it might help to have him actually win the matches. I've always liked Test but there's only so much you can do with a guy whose main appeal is....somebody help me out here. Why is Test getting this push again?

Christian brags about beating HHH to Kurt Angle but Kurt gives Jericho the credit. Angle promises to make Edge bald tonight.

We recap Billy and Chuck losing their trunks and Rico getting a Stinkface. Rico says he's coming out in style, meaning he's wrestling tonight.

HHH vs. Reverend D-Von

The big moment here (other than HHH slumming it like this) is the debut of D-Von's new lackey: Deacon BATISTA. D-Von introduces him to the crowd and tells him to watch the ring while he beats the sin out of HHH. It might be easier to beat the blood out of him since HHH has a big bandage on his head. A backdrop and spinebuster give HHH an early two but D-Von sends him into the buckle to take over. At least D-Von is smart enough to take the bandage off and go after the cut.

Batista sends HHH into the steps and hits a big clothesline. Who in the world would guess that would be Wrestlemania XXI? Back in and D-Von gets two off a middle rope forearm to the head, only to miss the headbutt. For some reason HHH goes to grab a chair but gets decked by Batista again. Batista misses a charge into the post though, meaning he looks great and has power but he isn't that bright. It's Pedigree time but Jericho runs in and hits HHH with the metal money box to give D-Von the big upset.

Rating: D+. It's a big win for D-Von though I can't imagine this is going to wind up meaning anything for him. In other words it's part of a HHH story instead of anything else, though I don't think anyone thought Reverend D-Von was going to go anywhere. At least we now have Batista as the Class of 2002 continues to grow.

Here's Kurt Angle to explain the concept of a hair vs. hair match. Angle makes it even more clear by showing us a shot of Edge with no hair. Kurt: "MR. CLEAN LIVES!" He's got a second picture but this time it's Angle

with no hair. Angle demands it's taken away but it's replaced by a YOU SUCK graphic. Edge's presence is demanded but here's Hulk Hogan instead because someone has to stand up for the bald guys. Seriously.

Hogan mentions names like Billy Graham, Steve Austin and of course himself, which pretty much ends the list of great bald champions. Angle promises to take the title from Hogan if Undertaker doesn't because he's the only REAL American around here. A big boot knocks Angle to the floor because Hogan is a secret Communist spy. Kurt bails but walks into a spear from Edge with very little reaction from the announcers.

Post break Angle storms into Vince's office and is put into a tag match against Edge and Hogan with Jericho as his partner.

Billy and Chuck/Rico vs. Rikishi/Al Snow/Maven

What happened to Albert vs. Rikishi? If you're going to set that stuff up, at least pay it off. Chuck and Snow start things off and Cole ignores the dull action to talk about upcoming house shows. Snow's trapping headbutts have Chuck in trouble and it's off to Rikishi for the fat man offense.

A quick poke to the eye cuts that off though and we get the first in ring appearance of Rico. Billy has to make a very quick save so Rikishi knocks him down as well. For some reason Maven gets a loud reaction off the tag but Rico kicks him from behind to give the bad guys control. Rico's kicks have Maven in more trouble but Chuck comes back in and eats a DDT.

Snow comes in off the ice cold tag (because this story needed to end a long time ago) and everything breaks down. A Samoan drop to Chuck is completely no sold but a superkick that missed by a few inches knocks him outside. Go figure. Rico is knocked into position for a Stinkface but Chuck makes another save, allowing Billy to get in a Fameasser for the pin on Snow.

Rating: D. This show hasn't been kind with the wrestling but can you blame them with this group of people? There's no reason for Snow/Maven to keep going after the Tag Team Titles at this point, aside from a lack of anyone else to do it. Did they really split up the Dudley Boyz for the

sake of these lame singles runs? Again: it would be nice if they thought this stuff through.

Randy Orton isn't worried about his issues with Hardcore Holly but Lance Storm interrupts. Storm isn't pleased with being relegated to taking bets on Mark Henry's displays of strength so tonight he'll show his skills against Orton.

We look back at Hogan destroying Undertaker's motorcycle on Raw. The edited version takes it up from one of the worst segments of all time to just one of the worst of the year.

GET THE F OUT!

Lance Storm vs. Randy Orton

There's no referee but as luck would have it, Hardcore Holly strolls out wearing a referee shirt. Cole: "I bet Mr. McMahon had something to do with this." Thankfully Tazz is all over him for saying something that stupid. Storm starts fast with forearms to the back and a spinwheel kick before taking Orton down with a cravate. Randy comes back with exactly what you would expect but Holly won't count a cover. A powerslam gets a very slow two and Orton hits the high crossbody for an equally slow two. Surrounded by unfairness, Orton gets pulled into the half crab with Holly pushing the ropes away to force the tap.

Rating: D+. Very basic match here but I'm glad it's giving Storm something to do. He might not be the most entertaining wrestler in the world but there's value in someone with that level of technical skills. Orton needs to get out of this Holly feud but at least he hasn't lost to him yet.

Storm and Holly put the boots to Orton until Val Venis makes the save to get even with Storm for screwing him over last week. I can always go for logical week to week booking.

Edge goes into Hogan's locker room and puts on his gear for the Hogan required Hulk impression until the real thing shows up to give his partner a pep talk. Edge: "He called me brother!"

Edge/Hulk Hogan vs. Kurt Angle/Chris Jericho

Hogan and Angle start things off and Kurt's right hands have no effect. A quick forearm gets two for Hulk, which is actually a rare sight. How often do you see Hogan cover off anything but a finisher? Edge comes in and gets thrown with a belly to belly before Jericho offers his hard chops. The half nelson facebuster drops Jericho and Edge cleans house while Hogan stays on the apron. I think that's best for everyone involved.

Chris snaps the throat across the top to take over and it's time to choke with some tape. We hit the chinlock on Edge for a bit before they both hit cross bodies. The hot tag brings in Hogan to clean house (exactly what he should be used for) and the usual looks to finish Jericho until Angle pulls the referee. Jericho grabs the Walls on Hogan but here's HHH with the sledgehammer for the DQ.

Rating: C-. This was the best Hogan match since Wrestlemania and it's not even close. Hogan still has value as long as he doesn't overstay his welcome in any given match. Here he started things off, threw some punches, stood on the apron to play cheerleader while Edge got beaten down and then came in for the house cleaning.

The fans are going to love that stuff because it's what Hogan does best. What isn't going to work is having Hogan out there for fifteen minutes, which he rarely did in his prime. Let the young guys go out there and do the hard work and let non-champion Hogan come in and do his thing. That could last for months if not a year or two.

Vince comes out and offers to let HHH hit him with the hammer, though it's going to cost him his career. HHH swings but Vince drops to the floor, allowing Jericho to get in a chair shot to end the show. This is really feeling like a modern Cell match as I can barely remember why HHH is mad at Vince in the first place. None of that matters though as HHH and Jericho are going into the Cell and that's all that matters.

Overall Rating: D+. The wrestling was really weak here but the storytelling makes up for some of that. They clearly have plans week to week here and it makes the shows so much easier to sit through. Couple

that with a lack of anything horrible like the NWO or the motorcycle segment from Raw and it's no surprise that Smackdown is miles ahead of Raw at the moment. Fix up the wrestling and the show would be a highlight instead of just better than the horrible one.

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Smackdown – October 4, 2016: Where It Gets Real In A Hurry

Smackdown

Date: October 4, 2016

Location: Valley View Casino Center, San Diego, California

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

It's the go home show for No Mercy because this is the new WWE where there's a go home show every two weeks. Tonight is going to focus on Dean Ambrose vs. John Cena vs. AJ Styles for Styles' Smackdown World Title in Sunday's triple threat. Other than that we're likely getting more in the Randy Orton vs. Bray Wyatt feud. Let's get to it.

The opening video promises Styles, Cena and Ambrose face to face to face tonight.

Bray Wyatt vs. Kane

They take turns hitting each other in the face to start until Bray gets Kane down for a chinlock. A side slam and running DDT have Bray in trouble but the chokeslam is countered into a Rock Bottom. Bray does the spider walk but an upside down Randy Orton appears on the screen. This takes WAY longer than it should and the distraction lets Kane get up. Bray blocks a chokeslam but takes the countout loss at 4:15.

Rating: D. So let me get this straight: we're five days away from Wyatt's big match against Orton and Bray is taking a countout loss to Kane instead of, you know, squashing him like a bug? It's not a good sign when the best thing you can say about a match is Kane didn't win off the chokeslam.

Baron Corbin doesn't know why Jack Swagger was signed but if Jack wants to fight, Baron will drop him where he stands. Swagger comes up and a match is set up.

Post break, Bray is looking for Orton.

Alexa Bliss vs. Nikki Bella

Carmella is on commentary as Nikki gets two off a facebuster that didn't come close to making contact. Nikki takes it outside and throws Bliss into Carmella, drawing her into the ring for the DQ at 1:52.

Post match here's Becky Lynch for the save and we might as well keep the referee out here for the obvious tag match.

Becky Lynch/Nikki Bella vs. Carmella/Alexa Bliss

Joined in progress with Alexa hammering on Nikki before it's off to Carmella for some shots to the face of her own. Carmella misses a Bronco Buster though and the hot tag brings in Becky. Everything breaks down with Nikki spearing Carmella to the floor, leaving Alexa to hit Twisted Bliss for the pin on Becky at 3:14.

Rating: C. Basic, simple ideas to set up basic, simple matches. That's the kind of wrestling that's always going to work and you can tell

they're putting WAY more thought into these things than the messes over on Raw. Becky getting pinned in a tag match is fine and gives Alexa credibility heading into Sunday. Nikki and Carmella's feud is advanced at the same time and everything is accomplished. When this stuff works, it works to near perfection.

Bray goes to look for Orton again and finds the rocking chair. Orton jumps him from behind and shuts a metal door, locking Bray in what looks like a small storage unit. Of course there's a camera inside with Bray freaking out over being locked inside.

Daniel Bryan brings out some breast cancer survivors for the Susan G. Komen presentation ala Enzo and Big Cass on Raw.

Vaudevillains vs. Hype Bros

There's still something weird about JBL being a Mojo Rawley fan. Mojo slams Gotch to start and it's Hammer Time! Cue Ascension, now with face paint, to the stage for a distraction but Ryder dropkicks English off the apron anyway. Ryder gets kned in the back but Gotch's chinlock goes as far as a chinlock is going to take him. The hot tag brings in Mojo a few seconds later and a Hype Ryder ends English at 3:48.

Rating: C-. Not much to the match but just like the women's division and everything else around here: keep it simple but do it well. I know I harp on that a lot but Smackdown is so refreshing when you have so many wrestling shows all over the place that can't get the most basic storylines right.

The Ascension point at the Hype Bros.

It's time for MizTV with a special Dolphumentary. Ziggler comes out and the documentary is of course a career lowlight reel with stuff like Ziggler as Kerwin White's caddy and the Spirit Squad and various out of context statements from wrestlers. This Sunday, it's the feature film the Success of a Failure. Ziggler doesn't take kindly to this and says that he loves it when a Make-A-Wish kid says he's their hero but Ziggler gets to tell them that they're his hero. That's the kind of thing that makes Ziggler know he can't walk away.

Miz laughs this off and brings out two members of the Spirit Squad (Kenny and Mikey). We get a cheer with Miz saying Ziggler can join them at their \$5 autograph signing. Ziggler goes after Miz but gets jumped from behind. Dolph easily fights them off and Miz bails from the threat of a superkick. This feud is really, really growing on me despite it being Dolph Ziggler. They're nailing every single thing about this and I want to see the match, albeit with Miz winning to finally get rid of Ziggler.

Bray is still in the storage unit and says he finally sees it.

Hispanic Heritage Month video on Roberto Clemente.

Jey Uso vs. Jason Jordan

Jey snaps Jordan's neck across the ropes to start and hammers away but a very quick rollup puts Uso away at 1:18.

The Usos send Gable into the steps and chop block Jordan for a bonus. Rhyno and Heath Slater come out to save Jordan's knee.

Bray is now singing but stops to say he missed Abigail. She's going to take him home.

Back from a break and Orton opens the door, only to find an empty chair. There wasn't a lock on the door so this isn't exactly supernatural.

Clip of John Cena on Talking Smack last week, talking about how the Draft is a fresh opportunity for him as well. Cena's big line: "Dean Ambrose doesn't like John Cena. John Cena doesn't care about Dean Ambrose."

Curt Hawkins vignette. He's debuting at No Mercy.

Jack Swagger vs. Baron Corbin

Corbin shoulder blocks him down to start and rains down right hands to the head, sending us to an early break. Back with Swagger favoring his knee and getting caught in a chinlock. Jack fights up and elbows Corbin in the face, followed by the Patriot Lock. Corbin dives for the ropes over and over, which the referee calls a tap out at 8:25. Replays show that Corbin was reaching for the ropes as his hand is up and it's his

wrist hitting the mat when he can't reach the ropes.

Rating: C-. I'm not interested in the match but that's a clever way to keep the feud going as it was close enough that you could say it was a tap and call it a mistake. It's much better than having one guy win clean and then do a bunch of rematches just because. I don't really need to see them fight again but it's nice to have a feud continue logically instead of having it forced.

Here's AJ for the big closing segment. He talks about how he'll prove himself to be the best in the world on Sunday but Ambrose comes out to cut him off. Dean is serious this week and says he had the title won last week until Cena had to get involved. Cue Cena but AJ cuts him off and begs Cena to shut up for once in his life. AJ is incensed at the thought of Cena comparing himself to Flair (here we go) and begs Cena to give one of his rah-rah speeches.

Cena is ready to do just that when Ambrose cuts him off again, saying Cena is a part timer who is dying to get out of here on a private jet and go be with his people in New York. Dean is the man who works harder around here and has wrestled more matches than anyone else in the company the last two years because he never takes days off. He'll be over here in the corner being Dean Ambrose while Cena gets to play John Cena on TV.

That's enough for Cena and the fight is on with Cena hitting an AA on Ambrose and throwing Styles outside. John holds up the title but AJ runs in and escapes an AA attempt. The Phenomenal Forearm drops Cena but Dean gives AJ Dirty Deeds onto the ramp and holds up the title to end the show. REALLY good stuff here with Dean standing up to Cena in a way no one has done since Rock. That's the kind of thing that makes him feel like a main event star, not wearing funny hats.

Overall Rating: B. The wrestling wasn't great here but that's not the point most of the time. The point here is a very well done structure as you move from story to start for most of the show with only Bray and Orton running throughout and never getting too much time at once. You can tell someone has actually put effort into setting this up and it makes the show fly by instead of making me wonder how we can only be an hour

into it. No Mercy may not be the best show ever but it's been built up as well as it can be and that's what this show needed to do.

Results

Kane b. Bray Wyatt via countout

Nikki Bella b. Alexa Bliss via DQ when Carmella interfered

Alexa Bliss/Carmella b. Nikki Bella/Becky Lynch – Twisted Bliss to Lynch

Hype Bros b. Vaudevillains – Hype Ryder to English

Jason Jordan b. Jey Uso – Rollup

Jack Swagger b. Baron Corbin – Patriot Lock

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