

Smackdown – April 11, 2002 (2016 Redo): It's A Start

Smackdown

Date: April 11, 2002

Location: Tucson Convention Center, Tucson, Arizona

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

This has to be better than Raw right? I'm almost convinced that it has to be just based on the law of nearly anything would be better than the mess that I sat through earlier this week. The big story continues to be the build towards Hulk Hogan vs. HHH for reasons of pure nostalgia. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Kurt Angle to get things going with his continued complaining about Hogan getting the title shot. He's beaten Russians and Iranians much tougher than Nikolai Volkoff and the Iron Sheik so how can Hogan be better than him? Then on Raw, Ric Flair made Undertaker vs. Steve Austin for the title shot after that so Kurt is out in the cold for a long time. Tonight he has a non-title match against HHH so he could prove what happened had Vince McMahon not gone mental.

The WHAT chants finally make Angle snap but here's Edge to calm things down a bit. Edge agrees that Angle's medal win was inspiring but IT WAS SIX YEARS AGO. Since Angle isn't getting a title shot soon, maybe he'd like to face Edge at Backlash. The match is accepted so Edge has one last thing: the fans need to shout YOU SUCK instead of WHAT whenever Kurt talks. And that's the rest of Angle's career. Angle freaks out as only he can and demands his music plays, only to have the fans chant to the tune.

Chris Jericho tells Angle that he'll take care of Edge tonight. So there's your heel alliance. Angle doesn't like loudmouthed Canadians with long blond hair who dress like a rock star. Angle: "Well not you of course. You're cool."

Tajiri vs. Hurricane

Hurricane has hacked off his hair. Tajiri drags Torrie Wilson out in a geisha girl outfit and you can just pencil in the big stripping scene from here. An armdrag sends Tajiri outside and Hurricane uses a rare over the top flip dive to take him down. Torrie looks miserable as Tazz says she's lucky to have someone like Tajiri. For once Cole has it right by saying it's the other way around. Hurricane gets in a hurricanrana but gets kicked in the head for the fast pin.

Rating: C+. This was a good way to set up Tajiri's rematch for the Cruiserweight Title at Backlash and treating Torrie like garbage is a classic, simple way to get him over as a heel. It's nice to have some actual characters in the Cruiserweight division instead of just giving them little time and having them do spots.

Tajiri berates Torrie until Kidman makes the save.

Stacy Keibler, in Miss Hancock attire, lays on Vince's couch until he shows up.

Albert vs. Scotty 2 Hotty

We get the debut of Albert in trunks here because we needed to see that chest hair. Albert jumps him during the entrances as Cole talks about Albert beating Scotty up last week and yelling about Scotty holding him down and making him do all the dancing. Cole: "But we still haven't heard why Albert did what he did." That's vintage Cole stupidity. Scotty stops a charge with a boot and gets two off a middle rope dropkick. The Worm is broken up by a bicycle kick and a Baldo Bomb ends Scotty in a hurry.

Albert beats him up some more after the match until Rikishi makes the save. You mean their big idea is Rikishi vs. Albert? As in the future Hall of Famer vs. future head trainer of developmental?

Vince arrives to find Stacy and says he's considering her for a position. There are a few more candidates though and he'll be interviewing them in the ring. Stacy promises to give him an offer that he can't refuse.

Rico makes fun of Maven's clothes and eyebrows. Al Snow comes in and a

tag match against Billy and Chuck is made for later.

Hogan wants to be the WWF Champion one more time. Jericho comes up and warns Hogan about the dangers of HHH. I'd pay to see a Battle of the Bands between Fozzy and the Wrestling Boot Band.

Edge vs. Chris Jericho

Jericho gets caught by an early spinwheel kick and flapjack before Edge sends him outside. There's a baseball slide over the announcers' table as it's all young Canadian so far. Jericho hides behind the referee and rakes Edge's eyes, earning himself a HAS BEEN chant. It amazes me that Jericho had been wrestling for over ten years at this point and he'd still be around over fourteen years later. That's almost as long as Austin's entire career and it's not even half of what Jericho did.

Edge fights back with some chops and avoids a charge to send Chris into the post. A rollup gets two on Jericho and you can hear the fans getting fired up off the near falls. Cue Angle but Edge spears him down, only to walk into a bulldog. The Edge-0-Matic gets two but the referee stupidly gets in the way of a catapult. You know, because referees are dumb.

The Edgecator makes Jericho tap but there's no one to see it so of course Edge lets go. You know, because wrestlers are dumb. Jericho tries to bring in a chair but gets speared for two. Angle snaps Edge's neck across the top and that's enough for a rollup with tights to give Jericho the pin.

Rating: B-. That's probably the best match since the Brand Extension, assuming you ignore the nonsense with the referee and all the interference. Unfortunately that's how big matches go at this point in the WWF because they don't want anyone to lose even remotely clean. It's fine every now and then but that's what countouts and disqualifications should be for.

Edge goes after Angle but gets beaten down until Hogan makes the save.

Here's Vince for his job interviews or whatever they're calling them this week. There's a desk in the ring and it's really not that hard to guess

what they're setting up with Stacy. First up we have a professional looking woman with horn rimmed glasses named Sylvia Johnson. She can type 95 words a minute, can speak three languages and most computer languages. Vince says no because she's not his type. "Don't let the door hit you on the....oh yeah we don't have doors on the ring."

Next up is a guy who looks like Steve from Blue's Clues. Vince tells him to get out before anyone can say a word. The third option is a decent looking woman who is a bit more Vince's type. She can type fast and takes dictation but the fans want puppies. Vince thinks he's found his personal assistant but wonders if there's one more applicant.

Cue Stacy and Vince's eyes bug out despite knowing it was coming. Ok to be fair the Hancock outfit can have that effect. Stacy throws the other woman out and dances on the desk to get the job. Vince falling out of his chair when she pulls up her skirt is great, unlike this HUGE waste of time. Yeah Stacy looked great but this was nothing other than a way for Vince to have some fun.

D-Von, now in a suit comes in to see Vince and tells him to testify. See, now he's a preacher. His mission is to save the sinners of the world but he needs a benefactor. Vince agrees, despite the fact that it's D-Von. At least this is something different though and that's what someone like D-Von needs, which is what TNA never understood.

Mark Henry holds a limo (driven by Test) back with his legs. Test cranks it up and hurts Henry's legs (which you never actually see touching the limo of course). So we're going to get Rikishi vs. Albert and Test vs. Mark Henry?

Chuck vs. Al Snow

Everyone is at ringside. I'd rather they have this match instead of giving Snow and Maven a Tag Team Title shot out of the blue. Snow kicks him into the corner to start as Tazz yells at Cole for getting a town's name wrong. A belly to belly sends Snow flying as the announcers debate weed whackers. Snow gets two off a sitout spinebuster but Rico gets in the ring. Maven chases him into the crowd, leaving Chuck to hit the Jungle Kick for two. A quick Snowplow gives Al the pin.

Rating: D. I'm fine with setting up some challengers for the titles as it's not like there are many teams on either show at the moment. Snow and Maven aren't exactly doing anything else and it can plug the second season of Tough Enough at the same time. Nothing to see here but at least the booking makes sense. Unfortunately that doesn't make it interesting but that's what you get when WE HAVE TO SPLIT UP THE TAG TEAMS BECAUSE REASONS!

HHH is getting taped up when Hogan comes in to talk about Jericho and Angle. The face alliance is offered but HHH will have nothing to do with it because they're going to fight at Backlash. Just like last week, Hogan being everybody's favorite grandpa and HHH being all serious really doesn't work. HHH holds up the title and talks about it like his secret girlfriend for when Stephanie throws him out for not respecting the lady balls enough. Finally, as is custom for HHH, I have time to drywall my house by the time he finishes his really simple point.

Kurt Angle vs. HHH

Non-title. Angle's top wristlock goes nowhere as HHH shoves him into the corner. Cole again tries to push the "HHH grew up idolizing Hogan" schtick, which only works if you ignore the fact that he was a teenager when Hogan first won the title. A sunset flip with tights gives us a two count and an Angle thong shot. We're lucky enough to have Angle not realize that they're down so HHH gives him a hard spank. Angle finally figures out what's going on and throws some German suplexes for two.

We hit the sleeper on the champ but HHH flips him over and grabs a DDT. HHH starts choking for no real apparent reason before a spinebuster gets two more with Jericho coming out to pull the referee to the floor. A Lionsault gives Angle two so Jericho decks the ref and the beatdown is on. Hogan comes out for the save and beats down Angle....to set up a Pedigree for the pin. WHAT??? Jericho pulled the referee out, hit a Lionsault and beat the referee up before Hogan came in and beat up both bad guys AND THE REFEREE DIDN'T NOTICE??? Are you kidding me?

Rating: C+. The match was what you would expect from these two but WOW that ending was ridiculous. It's not like HHH absolutely had to pin Angle

here as he was getting double teamed by two former World Champions and...oh wait it was HHH. How did I miss that when I was saying all this made no sense? Of course he had to beat Angle. It means so much after having Hogan come in for the save and all.

Post match HHH yells at Hogan for coming out. They get in each others faces and HHH tells him to stay out of his business until Backlash. Hogan says HHH is his business until Backlash (Shouldn't that be until after Backlash?) and goes to leave but Angle hits HHH from behind, knocking him into HHH. Hulk hits the usual and holds up the title. Jericho and Angle beat the good guys down and stand...well about average height to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. Let's get this out of the way at the start: this was WAY better than any of the other single brand shows from either Raw or Smackdown to date. There was good, longer wrestling and story advancement with characters that people care about. Really lame main event feud aside (especially with the Hogan nostalgia not working as well as it was a few weeks ago, likely due to a lack of the Rock's charisma helping things), a lot of the show made more sense.

However, we still have a lot of major problems. You have Maven and Al Snow as the only challengers to the Tag Team Titles, Rikishi vs. Albert and Test vs. Mark Henry looming and the regular "Vince gets a gorgeous woman" storyline. They're starting to come around on top but the midcard and lower card are both death right now and that's going to last for a long time until we get some new characters over. It's a better show but they really need to fix some things.

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Smackdown – September 6, 2016: This One Is A Little Different

Smackdown

Date: September 6, 2016

Location: Pinnacle Bank Arena, Lincoln, Nebraska

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

I'm not sure how but we're already at the go home show for Backlash. At this point there are five announced matches (assuming you count a tournament final as an announced match) which means we're going to get a lot more stuff announced tonight or Sunday's matches are going to be very long. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Daniel Bryan is in the ring with the Smackdown Women's Title. Sunday's Six Pack Challenge will be an elimination match (there's how they fill in some time) but before we get there, we'll be having a six women tag match. First though, we're going to have a forum with all six getting some time to talk. We'll start with Becky Lynch but before she can say anything, Daniel has to plug Total Bellas.

The fans clearly aren't interested so Bryan lets Becky talk about being the #1 female Smackdown draft pick. Her journey has brought her here but Natalya cuts her off. Natalya says the Draft was the worst night of her career because Smackdown was supposed to be her kingdom but now she has to put up with Becky and the unnatural hair.

Cue Alexa Bliss to say they're both whiners and calls Bryan a Bella

trophy husband. Now it's Carmella cutting them because women in WWE can't let anyone else get more than a few words out. Everyone gets catty about nicknames and the villains accuse Becky of turning them all against each other. Naomi and Nikki run out for the save and the villains leave. This was fine for a quick build but as usual, the women almost all have characters that can be summed up in six words or less and you have to stretch to get that far. If you want the division to go anywhere, give us some development and a reason to care about them.

Dean Ambrose pours most of a bottle of sugar into his coffee.

The bosses are talking about the women's match when Miz comes in. He's not happy about having to defend the Intercontinental Title against Dolph Ziggler at Backlash and thinks it's because of what he said to Bryan a few weeks ago. Bryan says Miz can either fight Ziggler or just hand over the title right now. Miz walks away with the title intact. So much for Bryan and Miz not being on screen at the same time, which is a good thing.

The Miz vs. Apollo Crews

Non-title with Ziggler on commentary. What does it say that I knew this was going to be Crews because he's the designated midcard jobber? Crews runs him over to start and blocks a headlock with raw power. A shot to the face puts Miz on the floor and Crews moonsaults onto him as we go to a break.

Back with Miz choking in the corner as Ziggler keeps talking about how winning and losing doesn't matter as long as he tries his best. You know, two weeks after talking about how winning was all that mattered. No wait, it was winning the title and then defending it which mattered because that's the story they were going with this week. Miz's running corner clothesline has Crews in trouble but he sends Miz outside. That means it's time to get in Dolph's face and slap him in the jaw, only to have Miz shove Crews into him. A quick posting stuns Crews and the Skull Crushing Finale ends Apollo at 10:12.

Rating: D+. I have no idea what they're trying for with Miz and Ziggler at this point but it seems to be YET ANOTHER attempt to make Ziggler seem

important after years of failing to live up to expectations. I'll be very, very disappointed if they put the title on him Sunday as Miz vs. Bryan still has a lot of potential as they're trying to make Miz look like something special for a change. Ziggler would be the same nothing champion who would likely lose every non-title match but it doesn't matter because he tried his best.

Post match Ziggler chases Miz off and has the title in front of him. Ziggler invites Miz in to get the belt but he sends Maryse in instead. See, that's the kind of thing that shows character rather than "well golly I didn't win the match that I said I absolutely had to win but I sure tried and that's what matters" before saying that he has to win the big one (because winning the Intercontinental Title, a title he's held four times already, now counts as the big one).

AJ Styles is livid about video of him getting crotched last week. He yells at the production assistant who provided the video and that's about it.

American Alpha video.

The Usos say they still run this tag team division. The division has been around for about three weeks and they've already had to affirm their dominance? That's not a good sign.

Bray Wyatt talks about men having to fight to survive. They had to learn to deal with predators, who only knew how to hunt and kill. The predator didn't know how to create and one day they became a play thing. History repeats itself and Orton is no longer the predator he once was. Bray is the evolution of man and at Backlash, predator becomes prey.

Nikki Bella/Becky Lynch/Naomi vs. Alexa Bliss/Natalya/Carmella

Nikki makes her entrance before a break so we come back with.....the other five entrances. Bliss and Naomi start things off and it's time for the dancing kicks, which still look horrible. As a bonus this time, Naomi's kick to the head completely misses but it's off to Carmella (now in tights instead of the shorts in a smart move for the heel turn) vs. Becky anyway. A backslide gets two on Carmella, who didn't seem like she kicked

out in time. Nikki comes in and again the fans seem to care for reasons that I don't understand. The villains are chased to the floor and we take a break.

Back with Becky in trouble as Natalya sends her into the apron and grabs a chinlock. Bliss comes in and grabs a chinlock of her own before Natalya hits a Michinoku Driver for two. Becky finally dives over for the hot tag to Nikki and a Disaster kick gets two on Bliss. The TKO gets two on Carmella with Bliss making the save as everything breaks down. Bliss misses her moonsault knees to the ribs and Carmella's Code of Silence makes Nikki tap at 12:53.

Rating: D. This was bad and there's really no way around it. Between Naomi focusing on looking athletic without having the ability to pull it off, Carmella having all of one good looking move, Bliss not being able to take a move or hit one of her own and Nikki being in the match for two minutes because they're trying to keep her safe, there's only so much Natalya and Becky can do. This division just does not have the depth to work right now and it's showing more and more when there's so little to praise in a match with the whole division.

Tag Team Title Tournament Semifinals: Usos vs. American Alpha

We get a handshake to start but the Usos jump Alpha from behind in what feels like a heel turn. Not that it matters as Alpha comes right back and the Grand Amplitude ends Jimmy at 27 seconds.

Post match (with the replay clipping the thing) the Usos beat Alpha down by sending Jordan shoulder first into the post and superkicking Gable in the knee. Jey puts on a Tequila Sunrise and Jimmy adds a Superfly splash to Gable's other leg for a good looking beatdown. The heel turn is a really good idea for the Usos as they've been the exact same team for years now. At least this gives them a little freshening up.

Orton tells a story about a dying man killing a rabbit but getting caught by a snake who wanted the rabbit for himself. The snake didn't attack until after the man had picked up the rabbit because he knew he could have them both. At Backlash, Bray won't know what hit him.

Here's Fandango to say that Tyler Breeze is out finding fabric for their upcoming fashion line. Instead he's found a woman to tango with Fandango but she's a bit too wild for him and he throws her out. Fandango asks for anyone else so here's Kane to chokeslam him. Fans: "GO BIG RED!" (University of Nebraska football chant).

AJ breaks a guy's phone for not showing him enough respect.

Children with cancer awareness video.

Curt Hawkins video. He's here next week.

Tag Team Title Tournament Semifinals: Hype Bros vs. Heath Slater/Rhyno

The Slater Family is in the front row as Slater and Ryder start things off. Zack's middle rope dropkick gets an early two and it's off to Rawley to send Heath outside. Rawley runs Rhyno down and we take an early break. Back with Slater avoiding a splash in the corner but the fans want Rhyno. The hot tag brings in Ryder and Rhyno but Slater tags himself in and gets rolled up for two. Rhyno saves Heath from the Broski Boot and a Gore ends Ryder at 7:18.

Rating: D+. This was an interesting one as Rhyno was WAY over and the fans are already into Slater but Ryder and Rawley are popular enough that it's hard to have them be heels. Either way, Slater and Rhyno were the best possible option and could get the belts, especially given Gable's knee injury.

We look at the knee injury earlier.

Renee Young doesn't have much of an update on Gable's condition but the Usos come in to say they were letting out their bottled up aggression. They've been putting their bodies on the line for years and the fans turned on them but love American Alpha the second they saw them.

Here are Dean Ambrose and AJ Styles for a face to face meeting to end the show. Dean has a gift for AJ: a bowling trophy for participation, which is the only trophy Dean will ever give him. We see clips of AJ getting crotched last week and AJ isn't happy. Styles talks about how he beat John Cena but Dean points out that this Sunday, AJ isn't fighting Cena.

On top of that, AJ beat Cena in a wrestling match and Sunday it's going to be a fight. They don't give out trophies for second place so AJ kicks Dean low and breaks the trophy to end the show. They kept this short and that's probably best given how the feud has gone so far.

Overall Rating: C. This show was very different than usual and that's a good thing as they head into a rather weak pay per view. There are only five matches for the show and tonight focused on the matches to crown new champions. The wrestling really wasn't the focus here and it's a good idea to spend this show focusing on everything other than the main event, which has gotten a lot of time already. I really don't see a three hour pay per view based on this card but they've stretched stuff out in other ways before.

Results

The Miz b. Apollo Crews – Skull Crushing Finale

Alexa Bliss/Natalya/Carmella b. Nikki Bella/Naomi/Becky Lynch – Code of Silence to Bella

American Alpha b. Usos – Grand Amplitude to Jimmy

Heath Slater/Rhyno b. Hype Bros – Gore to Ryder

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Smackdown – August 4, 2002: Just Like Raw

Smackdown

Date: April 4, 2002

Location: Blue Cross Arena, Rochester, New York

Attendance: 8,500

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

After Monday's less than amazing debut for Raw, it's time to see if Smackdown can save the opening week of the Brand Split. This show has its share of stars including The Rock, Chris Jericho, Hulk Hogan and Kurt Angle. Those names alone should be enough to help carry this past Raw but this company has managed to disappoint me with less. Let's get to it.

Vince (dang I thought this was Smackdown) wishes us good evening. On Raw, Ric Flair picked Undertaker as #1 contender but that wasn't his right. Vince won the coin toss and the right to name the #1 contender, which he'll do tonight. It's really not a good sign that they're changing matches that fast.

Opening sequence.

Here's Kurt Angle to say he'd love to be #1 contender. That would make sense given how things have been going lately. Since the fans keep "dissing" him, he has a list of reasons why he should get the title shot.

1. He OWNS HHH.
2. He won an Olympic gold medal.
3. He is adored by children and senior citizens worldwide!

Before he can list off his other twenty six reasons, here's Chris Jericho to interrupt. Jericho's only rematch has been in a stupid triple threat

match where Stephanie lost (true) and despite what the people here think, he is NOT a has been. Jericho suggests a match for the #1 contendership and Kurt shakes his hand but the Rock comes out with something to say. There's only one man, AND THE ROCK MEANS ONE MAN who should face HHH for the title at Backlash. Rock doesn't actually say who that is because he thinks there might be someone else.

One day Rock will be WWF Champion but until then, no one deserves the shot more than Hulk Hogan. I know they're friends and all, but Rock saying Hogan should get a title shot after he beat Hogan at Wrestlemania and was drafted higher really doesn't feel right. Find another way to get Hogan in the title picture though as Rock saying it isn't working for me. After a double IT DOESN'T MATTER to Angle and Jericho and a poll from the crowd, Rock implores Vince to give Hogan the shot.

Earlier tonight, Albert confirmed that he was with Scotty for the Tag Team Title match.

Tag Team Titles: Billy and Chuck vs. Scotty 2 Hotty/Albert

Billy and Chuck are defending of course. We look at Rico talking to the announcers for some reason before Hotty takes Chuck down to start. Scotty takes things to another level by sending Chuck head first into Billy's....we'll say stomach. Chuck's offense doesn't last long as he eats a superkick and there's the hot tag to the Hip Hop Hippo (just go with it) to clean house. Albert gets distracted by Rico (never look directly at the sideburns) and the chase lets Rico sneak in and kick Scotty in the face so Billy can get the pin.

Rating: D. Nothing to see here but you can almost see the post match heel turn from heel. It's not like they have a ton of midcard acts at the moment so one less nothing tag team isn't going to hurt anything. Albert is a former Intercontinental Champion so just let him beat up goons for a bit.

Post match, as expected, Albert beats the heck out of Scotty and says he put up with the dancing for six months.

Vince grabs Hogan the title shot.

Jericho freaks out and yells at Rock for getting Hogan the title shot. He brings up the great point that Hogan couldn't even win at Wrestlemania and Jericho beat Rock over and over. Rock suggests Jericho try to beat him tonight and an exchange of fisticuffs is agreed upon.

Video on Christian's losing streak and ensuing tantrums. Diamond Dallas Page helped Christian break the streak but Christian attacked him after the match. Page then beat him at Wrestlemania and the biggest fit yet ensued.

Diamond Dallas Page vs. Christian

Page monkey flips him to start as the announcers are already talking about Backlash. Christian gets in an elbow to the face and grabs a chinlock so this is probably going to be a short match. The reverse DDT gets two and Christian throws a fit, only to sucker Page in for the Unprettier and the pin.

Rating: D+. Who would have thought a match involving Christian freaking out would have psychology? Hopefully this moves Christian on to something else as Page really doesn't have much of a future due to his age and people not really caring about him in the WWF in the first place. The match was fine but I could go for something lasting a bit longer.

Kurt Angle thinks Hillbilly Jim should be President if Hogan gets the title shot. Edge comes up and says he feels bad about their recent problems. He's found some pictures of their good old days but of course there are jokes on the back, such as "You Suck", "Yes I Do Suck" and "And I'm A Dork." It's true, though thank goodness Edge was on the right side and Angle took the pictures when he did or this could have been embarrassing for Edge.

Here's HHH for his bi-weekly chat, this time about the new #1 contender. The more I look at that Undisputed Title, the less I like it by comparison to the original two belts. If nothing else the other two were bigger, as World Titles should be. HHH doesn't care if he's fighting Hogan because he'll fight Undertaker next. Cue Hogan in the red and yellow (first time in almost ten years in the WWF) to talk about....Wrestlemania I?

Then he moves on to Wrestlemania III (now with 94,000 people there) and Wrestlemania XVIII, both of which he thought would never be topped. Nothing is bigger than the title though (not exactly, as it wasn't even the biggest match at Wrestlemania) and HHH says it would be an honor to be in the ring with Hulk Hogan (Like he is now?).

In a bit of a twist, HHH says he's looked up to Hogan his whole life. At Backlash though, he won't hesitate to hurt Hogan every way he can. Hogan thinks it's funny that everyone keeps declaring Hulkamania dead because it's going to rise up again at Backlash. A lot of posing takes us out as the serious HHH awkwardly leaves. Again: I get why they have to do something with Hogan while they can but this feels really forced.

Edge vs. Kurt Angle

I miss Never Gonna Stop. Kurt stomps him down and throws a good looking German suplex to start as the announcers talk about how amazing the previous segment was. In other words, they're probably putting it on the same level as the Rock vs. Hogan promo the previous month because in the WWF, HHH and Rock are total equals. Edge's half nelson facebuster gets him out of trouble for a bit and Angle gets tied in the ropes. Some spears (which still look lame coming from Edge) have him in even more trouble so he chairs Edge for the DQ.

Rating: D. Anytime this show wants to deliver a match that breaks four minutes, please let me know. This is a problem that the modern Brand Split is running into as well (Raw more than Smackdown): you don't have to put everything on every week. It's ok to alternate back and forth for a bit and let something get a little focus.

Edge fights Angle off.

Billy Kidman wishes luck to his ex-Torrie Wilson and her boyfriend Tajiri in their match later. Tajiri comes up and rants in Japanese. Just do the heel turn/split.

Cruiserweight Title: Kidman vs. Tajiri

Tajiri is defending. Kidman dropkicks him down to start and seems to be

going fast, likely due to another lack of time. A kick to the head puts Kidman on the floor and there's an Asai moonsault for a very weak ECW chant. Back in and the tornado DDT is countered into a sitout powerbomb (nice counter) but Kidman can't hit the shooting star. The frustrated champion grabs his title and puts it in the corner, only to have Torrie take it away. Kidman uses the distraction to roll Tajiri up for the pin and the title.

Rating: D+. This felt like an Alliance era title change with the action having no meaning other than the forced angle at the end. Kidman winning the title doesn't really change anything but it's not like the Cruiserweight Title means anything at this point. Splitting Torrie and Tajiri (pretty obvious at this point) probably won't lead anywhere and it's another story to add to the pile tonight.

Tajiri berates Torrie and leaves.

Vince is mad at Maven for costing Smackdown the Hardcore Title last week. His solution: send Hardcore Holly after him. Bob leaves and here's Stacy Keibler, ("Just call me Vince.") to offer the boss his services, which includes bending over in front of the camera. Wouldn't it make sense to bend over where Vince can see it?

Stacy loved Vince's talk about intellectual sperm and he likes the way she walks. They sit down and we go to a break, coming back with Vince fixing his clothes. Stacy is gone so here's D-Von to yell about splitting up the Dudley Boyz. He demands an explanation so Vince tells him to get out until he's ready to be a star. Did we just get three Vince segments in one? That's excessive even by his standards.

Al Snow gives Maven a pep talk by saying he would have had to get mugged to get the kind of beating Hardcore Holly is going to give him.

Hardcore Holly vs. Maven

Cole hypes up Rock vs. Jericho, which will have no titles on the line. Could that be because neither is a champion? Holly punches in the corner and does his kick to the "lower abdomen", only to miss a high cross body. Maven gets two off a missile dropkick but the Alabama Slam ends him in a

hurry. I'm sure there was a point to this one somewhere.

We look at Rock challenging Jericho earlier in the night.

The Rock vs. Chris Jericho

They slug it out in the aisle to start and I'll let you guess who gets the better of it. Rock gets catapulted into the post for the great looking bump and they head inside for the opening bell. Right hands and a spinwheel kick get two for Chris as the announcers say Rock was just showing Hogan respect earlier. A Walls attempt is broken up and Jericho gets crotched on top to set up a superplex for Rock's first real offense.

Some of Rock's usual stuff gets a few near falls but there goes the referee. Rock grabs the Sharpshooter but here's Angle for the interference. Not that it matters as Rock kicks out of the Angle Slam, Edge comes out to take care of Angle, and the Rock Bottom ends Jericho as a match finally breaks seven minutes.

Rating: C. The time and talent in the ring helped carry this but it felt like a way to get to the interference which likely sets up a tag match next week. Rock is in a weird place where he's so much better than anyone else that it's hard to imagine someone giving him a real challenge. That HHH feud just crippled Jericho as he feels like a glorified midcarder instead of a guy who was World Champion a month ago.

Overall Rating: D. Put very simply, there's too much here. This could have been spread out over two weeks if not more, including too many turns and splits for a single show. I really don't get why wrestling companies feel the need to do this. It's not like there's a big season finale coming up. Just let these already established characters (keep in mind that they weren't anything new but rather just exclusive to one show or the other) act as they normally would instead of changing so suddenly. It doesn't feel right and makes for an overly packed show.

On top of that, you need some more wrestling. Like I mentioned multiple times, until the main event, nothing broke three and a half minutes. There really isn't a defense for something like that happening on a show with this much talent. Just Rock vs. Jericho alone could have eaten up

twelve to fifteen minutes and you could have gut out something like Maven vs. Holly, which basically existed to say “hey, we’re here too”. Things will likely get better going forward but this was a big mess, somehow being just as bad as Raw.

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Smackdown – August 30, 2016: How To Waste A Big Moment

Smackdown

Date: August 30, 2016

Location: American Airlines Center, Dallas, Texas

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

Much like last night, this show has a lot of potential to be something big but instead of one big match, this show is built around a few individual issues. First and foremost, we’ll see the fallout from Miz’s awesome shoot promo on Daniel Bryan, which some people didn’t expect to see referenced on TV. There’s also more of the Tag Team Title tournament and Dean Ambrose vs. Baron Corbin. Let’s get to it.

We open with the full Miz vs. Daniel Bryan interview from last week's Talking Smack with Bryan calling Miz soft but Miz saying his style means he doesn't get injured and leave for six months to a year at a time. Bryan walked off and Miz went on a tirade about how the Intercontinental Title is the most important one on Smackdown because he's the one out there every night. This was GREAT and more emotion than Miz has ever shown, which makes me think his days as champion are numbered.

Shane tells Bryan that he can't do that to the talent and Bryan agrees. However, Bryan finds this ironic coming from the person having issues with Brock Lesnar.

Opening sequence.

Here's a ticked off Miz with something to say. Miz doesn't want to hear any booing because it's taken 148 days (the length of his title reign) to get the fans' attention. He's bringing prestige back to this title but people think he's soft. Yeah he wrestles a different style but it's because he's smart enough to see the big picture.

What the fans don't understand is what goes on backstage. Who do you think they call when they need someone to do a red carpet premiere or a commercial or main event Wrestlemania and then dress up as a chicken? Miz didn't spend the first twelve years of his career wrestling in front of 50 people and people booing him for that makes them cowards. Cue Dolph Ziggler and I'm done. This was getting really interesting and it's about Dolph "RESPECT ME WHEN I'M SERIOUS AND THEN LOSE EVERY BIG MATCH OVER AND OVER AGAIN" Ziggler all over again.

Dolph says no one is going to buy what Miz says because he's never proven a thing. If Miz wants to show how tough he is, fight right now with no referees or titles on the line. Just the two of them right now. As expected, Miz teases fighting but walks off. Ziggler says Bryan was right and calls him a soft, safe coward but that's not enough to get him to fight either.

I actually felt the air go out of me when Ziggler came out. This story had the potential to actually be something fresh but instead it's the same old Ziggler that we've seen for months and have no reason to believe

it's going to be anything different this time around. Ziggler is just a played out character and I wanted something fresh this time from Miz. Instead it's another Battle of Cleveland because that's what WWE thinks new and different means.

Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Hype Bros vs. Vaudevillains

The villains takes over to start and send Ryder outside for a neckbreaker on the floor. The double teaming only lasts for a few moments before the tag brings in Rawley for his splashes. A running fist in the corner sets up the Hype Ryder to pin English at 2:53. This was exactly the kind of energetic match these two needed, even though they're likely losing in the next round.

To my shock, JBL seems to love the Hype Ryders. You would expect him to hate a team like this.

Post match the Hype Bros say they're hyped enough to win the titles.

We finally see the tournament brackets and the Usos vs. American Alpha is actually a semifinal match. That makes things a lot more interesting.

AJ Styles runs into Apollo Crews and introduces himself as the face who runs this place.

Here's AJ Styles for a chat. AJ, in the Cena headband, says he's already beaten up John Cena and now he's going to win the World Title. This brings out Apollo Crews to say Daniel Bryan has granted him a match against AJ right now. I love the fact that they just got to the point here. It was clear we were getting this match the second they ran into each other so there's no reason to waste time setting it up.

AJ Styles vs. Apollo Crews

Crews leapfrogs AJ to start and sends it outside but Crews stops to brag about a right hand. Back with AJ holding a chinlock because that's how you come back from breaks in WWE. Crews sends him into the corner and backdrops AJ outside for a moonsault from the apron. Back in and AJ's high cross body is countered into a Samoan drop (that's kind of insane) for another near fall. Not that it matters as AJ stuns him across the

ropes and the Phenomenal Forearm puts Crews away at 8:15.

Rating: C+. Crews is still fun to watch but he loses a lot more often than not and really doesn't have a character to speak of. Really all I know about him is that he's an athletic freak and that's not exactly enough to carry you far. It only worked so well for Shelton Benjamin and Crews isn't that far along yet.

Earlier this week, Renee Young went to Heath Slater's trailer and met his wife for some redneck humor. As Rhino eats cheese whiz and crackers, Slater calls not being drafted an oversight. More redneck jokes ensue and Slater talks about how he's earned a contract several times now. When they win the titles, it's time to upgrade to a double wide. There's talk of the kids (outside picking up bottles and cans) but a car screeching sends the Slaters outside. Rhino just keeps calmly eating crackers. I get what they were going for here but this just isn't my kind of humor.

Here's Bray Wyatt with a message for Randy Orton. Bray isn't scared of snakes or monsters because he doesn't see Orton as anything more than a man. If Orton really hears voices, Bray hopes they're telling him to run but here's Randy in person. Randy says that a bunch of staples in his head aren't going to change anything because being damaged is what he does. Bray calls himself the new predator and promises to cut the serpent's head off at Backlash. Orton talks about Bray seeing the scars on his body but needing to worry about the scars inside. He agrees to the match and goes inside but Bray vanishes.

Natalya/Alexa Bliss vs. Becky Lynch/Naomi

Nikki Bella is on commentary to do a commercial for Total Bellas. Naomi hurricanranas Natalya to the floor and we take an early break. Back with Naomi in trouble until a jawbreaker allows the tag off to Becky. House is cleaned and everything breaks down as Carmella comes out to brawl with Nikki. In the melee, Bliss rolls Becky up and grabs the trunks for the pin at 7:21.

Rating: D+. This division really needs some promo time. I know all of their basic characters (or what they have for characters) but I really don't know much about most of them. Almost all of them need a chance to

give us a reason to care, even if it's just a quick promo during their entrances.

Video on the Headbangers. For the life of me I don't get why they were picked to come back. It's like when Greg Valentine would show up on Nitro for a one off match.

Video on Curt Hawkins.

Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Headbangers vs. Rhino/Heath Slater

Mosh and Thrasher look exactly the same as they did in 1999. Slater gets beaten down to start and the springboard clothesline puts him on the floor. Some stomping sets up a chinlock as Otunga calls the Headbangers the last two Marilyn Manson fans. The Stage Dive (powerbomb/guillotine legdrop combo) gets two as Rhino makes the save. Rhino (with what looks like some blood on the left side of his face) drags Slater over for the tag and the Gore ends Mosh at 2:53. It might be time for Thrasher to go back to training wrestlers like he did with Big Show.

A guy in a suit named Derrick Milliman has been granted a match tonight and issues an open challenge. Kane comes out for a chokeslam and leaves. Were they just running short on time or something? As Kane leaves, Baron Corbin comes out for the main event. Maybe that's what they're trying to set up?

Baron Corbin vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title and AJ is on commentary. Ambrose knocks Baron to the floor to start and hits a running clothesline from the apron. Back in and Dean's bulldog is broken up and Baron pounds away with right hands. We come back from a break with Corbin holding a chinlock and getting two off a choke legsweep. Dean fights up and gets two off his clothesline before hitting the suicide dive on the floor. Back in and the Deep Six plants Dean but AJ gets in Baron's face and tells him to stay on it. Dean knocks Baron into Styles so AJ kicks Baron in the face for the DQ at 12:12.

Rating: C. Odd ending aside, this was a nice showcase for Corbin and it's a good sign to not have him get pinned here. It would be nice if they

gave Corbin something to do other than torture Kalisto (Did that go anywhere yet?). It's not like they're overflowing with options at the moment and building up a big man isn't going to hurt anything.

Post match the main eventers fight until Dean hits Corbin with Dirty Deeds. AJ gets crotched and Dean seems to sympathize before bouncing the ropes up and down. Dean takes his belt and leaves AJ sitting on the top rope to end the show. I really don't like having AJ look silly like that, especially after he did something good earlier tonight.

Overall Rating: B-. This felt like an older episode of Smackdown but thankfully it was one where they actually got some stuff done. Nothing major was set up (save for making Bray vs. Orton official) but they did a good job of advancing a few angles and building towards the matches later on. That's the kind of show they needed with less than two weeks before Backlash, but I'm still not sold on this being a full on three hour pay per view.

Results

Hype Bros b. Vaudevillains – Hype Ryder to English

AJ Styles b. Apollo Crews – Phenomenal Forearm

Alexa Bliss/Natalya b. Naomi/Becky Lynch – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Rhino/Heath Slater b. Headbangers – Gore to Mosh

Baron Corbin b. Dean Ambrose via DQ when AJ Styles interfered

Smackdown – March 28, 2002:

It's Important!

Smackdown

Date: March 28, 2002

Location: First Union Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 13,600

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

With the Draft out of the way, this is the final regular episode of Smackdown with the full roster before things split up next week. That means it's also the last chance for the wrestlers to make one last good impression against their interpromotional rivals. In other words it's a lame duck show that they're trying to pass off as something important. Let's get to it.

Booker T. vs. Diamond Dallas Page

Of course this show starts with two guys from WCW. Fallout from Monday's tag match. Booker stomps him into the corner to start so Page chops away. The Draft picks start running along the bottom as Page hits a helicopter bomb for two. Not that it matters as Brock Lesnar comes in to take out Page for the DQ.

Here's Kurt Angle with something to say but we have to wait on the YOU SUCK WHAT chants because that's how wrestling fans like their comedy. Angle thinks the people are pathetic, but not as pathetic as what happened to Stephanie on Raw. Kurt would like a special moment of silence and you can imagine his reaction when he's booed out of the building. This brings out Vince to insult the fans and talk about HHH being the kind of model citizen that seduced and then humiliated his daughter. Then on Monday he beat her up!

Vince promises to take care of HHH and here's the champ so Vince can make threats to his face. HHH promises to make Vince's life miserable if Vince screws with him but decides Kurt is right: we should honor Stephanie, perhaps by looking at the end of Raw. That's enough to make Kurt want a match against HHH tonight but Vince has a better idea: the two of them against HHH. This brings out Ric Flair to make it a tag match.

D-Von gives Bubba some exposition about the team splitting up if they don't win the titles tonight.

Tag Team Titles: Dudley Boyz vs. Billy and Chuck

Billy and Chuck are defending and if the Dudleys lose they're split up. On the other hand, if Billy and Chuck lose then they stay together, in theory at least. The questions I'll never have answered. Bubba and Chuck start things off with Chuck being sent into the corner for some loud chops to the chest. D-Von comes in for some shoulders to Billy and it's back to Bubba for some house cleaning. The Bubba Bomb gets two on Chuck and Rico offers a quick distraction, only to have the Doomsday Device plant Chuck. Rico's second distraction works though and leaves Bubba to hit a Fameasser to retain the titles.

Rating: D+. So that's it for the Dudleys in one of the most questionable moves I've seen in a long time. I get the idea of splitting up Edge and Christian and maybe the Hardys but who thought Bubba and D-Von could survive on their own? For the life of me I still don't get the thinking behind that one and it's yet another casualty of the Draft.

Bubba and D-Von destroy the champs with all the usual stuff one more time. There has to be a joke about Billy taking What's Up. I don't know if he had it coming in but Bubba's eye (as in the eyeball itself) is full of blood. That's quite the scary look.

The APA is splitting up and aren't happy about it. Since it's their last night together, they're going to have a farewell bash. Tajiri is in charge of telling everyone and Torrie Wilson is in charge of playing strip poker.

Matt and Lita (interviewed by Lillian Garcia, who actually looked much better in her 40s) are so happy that they're on the same show. Chris Jericho comes up and says no one should be happy since he can't be champion again. Matt calls him a has been and gets jumped, likely setting up something for later tonight.

The Rock and Hogan call each other brother before talking about whether or not they can trust Kane in their six man tag tonight. Rock imitates

King Kong Bundy and Kamala in a way to say yes. Dang it I was hoping for some more of those as there are multiple other Hogan monsters he could have done.

Anyway, Kane comes in and says it doesn't matter if Rock is ready. In the most bizarre thing I've ever seen from Kane (and that's covering A LOT), he does an amazing Hogan-style promo, saying it doesn't matter if it's 20,000 Hulkamaniacs, 20,000 of the millions or 20,000 screaming Kaneannites (Rock: "Kaneannites?") because the three of them are going to run wild on the NWO. He even does the posing and the hand to his ear with the fans absolutely losing their minds over this. This was HILARIOUS with Rock looking somewhere between amazed, terrified and stunned.

Hulk Hogan/The Rock/Kane vs. NWO

Apparently Flair drafted the NWO so he could "keep an eye on the poison." Wouldn't it be smarter to get rid of the poison? Rock and X-Pac get things going with X-Pac in early trouble before it's off to Hall. The bad guys (as in the team with the Bad Guy) take over with Nash hitting the knees in the corner but Rock shrugs them off and tags in Hogan. I know he's considered lazy but he can do a hot tag like almost no one ever.

Nash gets in a side slam (no hair flip yet) and Hogan gets beaten down. Wait so Kane is getting the house cleaning spot? That's an odd choice but I'm willing to go with it due to that pre-match promo alone. A belly to back suplex breaks up Hall's sleeper and the real hot tag brings in Kane. The Fake Diesel hits the real Diesel as everything breaks down. Well most of it does at least as Hogan is just standing on the apron while his partners fight 3-2. It turns out fine though as Kane chokeslams X-Pac for the pin.

Rating: C+. This would have been a good house show main event and there's nothing wrong with that. Hogan was looking energetic here (believe that one if you want to) and X-Pac was the only one with any kind of fire on his team. I know he gets a lot of flack for good reason but when X-Pac had his head on straight, he was one of the better workers on the roster. Did the NWO ever actually win a major match? They debuted at No Way Out, won a few TV matches and then lost both Wrestlemania matches. What a

great stable.

Matt Hardy vs. Chris Jericho

They start fast, likely due to a lack of time. Matt sends him into the corner to start but gets crotched on top to slow him down again. Cue Lita for a top rope hurricanrana, setting up the Twist of Fate for two. Lita gets knocked off the apron and a low blow sets up the Walls to make Matt tap. Nothing match.

Jericho puts Lita in the Walls on the floor.

The APA party is going on and Torrie takes off a belly chain for her stripping. Christian freaks out over losing and destroys stuff.

Intercontinental Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Test

Van Dam is defending and gets dropped throat first across the top rope to start. A full nelson slam gets two on Van Dam as Lawler tries to figure out which brand has better looking women. Test grabs the ropes to avoid a sunset flip but we get the referee kicking his arms spot to give Rob a near fall. That earns Earl Hebner a good talking to so he does a fast count on Van Dam's sunset flip to retain the title. Ok then.

Raven doesn't care who he's wrestling for because he's destroying the things he loves.

Hardcore Title: Raven vs. Maven

Maven is defending and I forgot how much I liked his theme. Raven starts fast with the alternating trashcan lid shots to the head. Maven loses his balance on the ropes but gets two off a missile dropkick anyway. Here's Tommy Dreamer to try to win the title but the distraction lets Raven grab the Raven Effect for the pin and the title, which now moves to Raw.

Angle tells Vince that he'll help get Austin to Smackdown.

We look over the Draft lottery results, almost none of which are worth mentioning.

William Regal crashes the party to say the APA is out of business. A

fight breaks out because it wouldn't be right otherwise. Bradshaw puts up the "sorry, we're closed" sign and they go their separate ways to what sounds like a standing ovation.

HHH/Ric Flair vs. Kurt Angle/Vince McMahon

Flair is in business pants. Vince and HHH start things off and I won't even bother explaining why Angle and Flair come in a few seconds later. Kurt takes him into the corner to start and gets a thumb in the eye before it's off to HHH. A quick belly to belly sends the champ flying but Flair comes back in with a sleeper. Kurt starts working on the knee and of course Vince is willing to get involved. Cole tries to explain the reason behind the Brand Split and it's really getting worse with every word he says.

A few wraps around the post have the leg in trouble but there's no way he's going to get Flair in a Figure Four. I mean, he's not Shawn or anything. Flair kicks Kurt low but the Figure Four is reversed into an ankle lock. Now Vince can get in the Figure Four, only to have Ric turn it over in a hurry. Angle is smart enough to make a very fast save before it's off to the guys under 50. A spinebuster gets two on Kurt, only to have Vince hit HHH in the face with a belt for two. Flair actually hits the top rope shot to Vince's head and goes for the real Figure Four but here's Undertaker to lay Ric out and give Vince the pin.

Rating: D. Much like almost anything else HHH did around this time, this was slow, not very good, and could have been done better in less time. Vince pinning Flair doesn't mean much and it's not like Undertaker is going after anyone other than Ric, so this was pretty much the definition of "well, here's a main event".

Overall Rating: D. Hulk Hogan just had the runaway match of the night in 2002. This was a big commercial for the Brand Split as none of this matters (including a new Hardcore Champion) heading into the new WWF. Since there are almost no storylines here, everything other than Kane vs. the NWO and everything in the main event was filler. That's not the way to make an interesting show but at least a lot of the matches were short.

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The Miz/Daniel Bryan Promo

Indeed it was awesome and indeed it did feel a little shootish. Unfortunately I have no reason to believe it's going to lead anywhere because this kind of thing has happened before and is never mentioned on TV. If that happens it could be interesting, but I hope it doesn't lead to Bryan getting back in the ring. I just don't need to see it again and risk even more injuries.

I've been singing Miz's praises for years and hopefully this makes more people realize how awesome he is.

Smackdown – August 23, 2016:

Good, But Not Gold

Smackdown

Date: August 23, 2016

Location: Mohegan Sun Arena, Uncasville, Connecticut

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

It's an interesting time for Smackdown as we're past Summerslam and the brand is really starting to come into its own. Tonight we'll see the unveiling of the new Smackdown Women's and Tag Team Titles but possibly more importantly we should get an update on Brock Lesnar attacking Shane McMahon to end Summerslam. Let's get to it.

Various people are in the back when AJ Styles comes in to brag about how awesome he is. AJ puts Cena's armband around his head and talks down to Dolph Ziggler a lot, triggering a brawl.

Opening sequence.

The tag and women's divisions are in the ring around the new titles (The Women's Title is the same as the Raw version but with a blue background. The Tag Team Titles look similar to the Raw versions but with silver instead of bronze.) when the bosses come out. We'll start with the women, all of whom have potential to be the champion.

At Backlash, there will be a Six Pack Challenge to determine the first champion. The Tag Team Titles will be decided at Smackdown as well with the finals of a tournament. Cue Heath Slater to say he should be Michael Phelps and get to compete for some gold. Ignoring that THE BELTS ARE SILVER, Daniel says Heath isn't equipped to fight for the Women's Title.

Heath meant the tag belts so Bryan gives him an offer: if Slater can find a partner by the end of the night, the bosses will find another team and make it an eight team tournament. However, Slater only gets a contract if he and his partner win the whole thing. That's fine with Slater but here's AJ to interrupt. He's tired of hearing about the Tag Team Titles and the Women's Ti...."No I won't be your partner Slater." This brings out Ziggler to jump him from behind and the bosses send the tag teams out to

break it up as we go to a break.

Becky Lynch vs. Alexa Bliss

Naomi and Natalya are on commentary. Becky takes it down to the mat in an armbar but gets kicked in the head for her efforts. We hit an armbar on Becky until some clotheslines have Bliss reeling. Bliss gets two off a nice looking spinning sunset flip out of the corner but a quick Disarm-Her makes her tap at 4:00.

Rating: C. Bliss has improved by leaps and bounds in recent months but sweet goodness Naomi and Natalya have no personalities. Naomi sounded bored and Natalya spoke in the exact same tone that she's had since the day she debuted with the company. At least Becky has some charisma to her, though her recent wardrobe choices are a bit odd.

Heath tries to get Miz on board as his partner and Miz agrees but it turns out he's on the phone.

Smackdown Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Usos vs. Ascension

Jey gets beaten down to start with Konnor adding a middle rope shoulder for two. We hit a nerve hold for a bit until an enziguri allows the double tag. Everything breaks down and the Usos start with their superkicks, including one to set up the Superfly Splash for the pin on Viktor at 3:47.

Rating: D+. This was exactly what it should have been and hopefully we just get to Usos vs. Alpha for the belts as it's fairly obvious we're heading towards. I'm also glad that Ascension, who has only won a handful of matches in over a year, was dispatched in less than four minutes here. That doesn't do much for their spot in a tag division but at least they're a pair of warm bodies.

Here's AJ to discuss his win on Sunday. With the NEVER GIVE UP armband around his own arm, AJ says he beat up John Cena and then beat him at Summerslam. All these Cena fans can be his new fans because he should be #1 contender to the WWE World Title. Ziggler fights his way to the ring but here's Bryan to make a match for tonight. AJ already has a shot at

Backlash but if Ziggler wins, it's a triple threat.

Nikki Bella vs. Carmella

Renee Young tries to interview Nikki before the match but Carmella jumps Nikki from behind to start. Carmella gives her a bad looking Downward Spiral and a Bella Buster for a heel turn, which makes a lot of sense for her actually. Nikki starts holding her neck and OH NO IT'S JUST SO SCARY AND TRAGIC BECAUSE SHE'S SO AMAZING. No match.

Video on the Summerslam main event.

Here's Orton for a chat. He was in a heck of a fight on Sunday night and had ten staples put in his head to close the gash. Randy didn't want the match to end the way it did, including Shane McMahon coming out for a save. He and Lesnar will cross paths again but here's Bray Wyatt to interrupt. Bray: "How's your head Randy?" Wyatt goes on about how great a person Randy is but says he's something a little higher. Randy will find out all about that in time so Randy says bring it. The lights go out again and Bray is gone.

Shane is asked about Brock and doesn't think Stephanie is going to take it seriously. She's already fined Brock \$500 and that means it's far from over between Brock and himself.

Slater tries to get Arn Anderson to be his partner but Arn says he's not Ric Flair. Rhino comes up and says he'll do it.

Smackdown Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Breezango vs. American Alpha

Fandango dances at Gable to start and is of course taken down with ease. It's off to Jordan vs. Breeze with Jason cranking on an armbars to the tunes of a USA chant. Breezango finally cheats by drawing Jordan in so Fandango can get in a clothesline to take over on Gable. Back from a break with Gable making a hot tag and handing it off to Jordan to clean house. A bridging German suplex gets two on Breeze and he hurricanranas Jordan for the same. Gable has to make a save off a superkick but Jordan hits the belly to belly on Tyler. The Grand Amplitude sends American

Alpha on at 10:28.

Rating: B-. That was way better than I was expecting as Breezango continues to be a great surprise and far better than they have any right to be. It's good to give Alpha some tougher matches like this before the finals as there's only so much they're going to prove after facing teams like the Vaudevillains or the Ascension.

Dean Ambrose, in a big hat, says he was up in the casino playing roulette. He doesn't care who is fighting tonight because he'll be ready for anyone. Dean gets a shot and coffee but leaves the waitress some casino chips. I guess he was supposed to be drunk?

Dolph Ziggler vs. AJ Styles

Dean is on commentary. Ziggler has a fact file that says he's a supporter of the Wrestlemania Reading "Charllenge." They go right at it with Ziggler dropkicking him to the floor for a break in less than a minute. Back with AJ sending Ziggler chest first into the buckle and working on the other side with a backbreaker. Ziggler can't get a comeback started yet so AJ stomps him down in the corner before kicking at the leg. A few knee lifts send Ziggler outside and we take another break.

Back again with Ziggler fighting out of an armbar and hitting a great looking dropkick. The big elbow drop gets two and AJ goes shoulder first into the post. The Fameasser is good for another two count and AJ's fireman's carry backbreaker gets the same. Styles misses the springboard 450 and gets caught in the running DDT for yet another near fall.

Dolph avoids a charge into the ropes and a Zig Zag gets a VERY close two count. They almost had me on that one, even though I have a really hard time believing that they would put Ziggler over here. A superkick misses though and AJ kicks him low, setting up a Styles Clash for the pin and the title shot at 21:40.

Rating: B+. So at the end of the day, after a pay per view title match and this big match, Ziggler is right back where he was coming into the Draft: an upper midcard jobber to the stars who isn't likely to win anything important and while he can have some good matches like this, I

still have no reason to care about him. AJ winning was the only way to go here and there's nothing wrong with that.

Dean and AJ have a staredown to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. This was the best show they've had since the brand split and that's a good sign. I really don't like having the new titles for divisions this weak but at least the Tag Team Titles (which should be GOLD) look cool. They need more people for those divisions in a bad way so pairing up Rhyno and Slater works well enough. The rest of the show was fine as we wait for AJ to take his place as the king of Smackdown in a few weeks.

Results

Becky Lynch b. Alexa Bliss – Disarm-Her

Usos b. Ascension – Superfly Splash to Viktor

American Alpha b. Breezango – Grand Amplitude to Breeze

AJ Styles b. Dolph Ziggler – Styles Clash

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Eva Marie Suspended For Wellness Violation

<http://411mania.com/wrestling/eva-marie-suspended-by-wwe-for-wellness-policy-violation/>

Just.....wow. I mean WOW.

Bayley as a main roster replacement in the six woman tag?

Smackdown – August 16, 2016: What Does That Make Dean?

Smackdown

Date: August 16, 2016

Location: Frank Erwin Center, Austin, Texas

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, David Otunga, John Bradshaw Layfield

It's the final show before Summerslam and it's time to see what the blue show has to offer. Odds are we'll be seeing a big build towards AJ Styles vs. John Cena II to go along with Smackdown World Champion Dean Ambrose and Dolph Ziggler as guests on MizTV. We'll also have another chance to see Eva Marie's in ring debut. Let's get to it.

Randy Orton signs his contract vs. Brock Lesnar but warns the bosses that the match might be short because it only takes one RK0. Heath Slater brings in a fruit basket but Bryan sees the card: "To Bob, my condolences." Slater can't believe that he's not being offered a contract so Orton eats an apple and says he has an idea. A secret alliance with Carlito?

Opening sequence.

We open with MizTV but Dean cuts off Miz's intro. Ziggler cuts off Dean's opening statement though and they go nose to nose. Miz talks about how this is a huge fight for the title at Summerslam and even he thought Ziggler was a write off. He was a flop like WWE's version of the Ghostbuster's reboot. Again, I'd like to point out: a two time World Champion and a four time Intercontinental Champion should never be considered a flop. All Dolph cares about is winning the title on Sunday.

Miz gets cut off again as Ziggler says all he wants to do is kick Ambrose's head off (of his face that is but I think I get what Dolph meant). Ziggler wants to hear Dean say he was the final push Dolph needed to get over the top. That earns a chuckle from Dean, who says the title isn't the goal. Winning the belt is just the start because that's the day the pressure really starts. Everyone knows Dolph can't handle pressure which is why he's never grabbed the ball and scored a touchdown. HE'S A TWO TIME WORLD CHAMPION AND HE WON IT THE SAME WAY DEAN DID!

Ziggler gets serious and says Dean is going to have to give everything he has but it's not going to be enough to put Dolph away. As Dean is reaching down deep and looking for one last move BAM! Dolph lays him out with a superkick in mid sentence and says this Sunday, Dean will realize that he's that good. Ziggler's stuff was much better but this idea that Ziggler has never won the big one is ridiculous, especially coming from Ambrose. Or are they just burying the legacy of the World Heavyweight Championship and saying it doesn't mean a thing anymore?

During the break, Miz insulted Apollo Crews by calling him Apollo Creed, only to have Crews come out and beat Miz down. I had almost forgotten about that match so it's nice to get a quick something.

American Alpha/Usos/Hype Bros vs. Ascension/Vaudevillains/Breezango

Viktor and Gable start things off but Mojo tags himself in for a three point tackle. Konnor saves his partner from the Hype Rider and everything breaks down to take us to a break. Back with Ryder and Konnor reaching for tags as it's off to Jimmy vs. English. Jordan starts throwing suplexes and it's time for the parade of finishers, including a ridiculous four superkicks. Jimmy dives on most of his opponents, leaving

English to take Grand Amplitude for the pin at 6:50.

Rating: D+. Well that accomplished a grand total of nothing. Wow the Usos can throw superkicks and hit dives and American Alpha is awesome. I feel so much more confident about this new division than I did coming in when I thought the division had no depth and was basically American Alpha and a bunch of nothing teams. That's really not enough to warrant a title but I'm sure WWE would disagree.

Naomi vs. Eva Marie

Naomi's full outfit now lights up, including her hair, and she has a backpack full of glow in the dark material to throw to the crowd. It's certainly eye catching if nothing else. And Eva isn't here due to traffic issues so no match again. This is becoming the highlight of the show.

AJ Styles can't wait to see Alberto Del Rio beat up John Cena tonight but Del Rio tells him to stop living in the past.

Curt Hawkins is coming. Uh...yay.

Heath Slater vs. Randy Orton

So I guess just facing Lesnar last night doesn't count for some reason. Slater can barely walk so Orton easily takes over by hitting him in almost every body part. Orton keeps hammering away in the corner...and that's a DQ at 1:00.

Orton destroys him post match and doesn't seem to notice that he lost. The elevated DDT onto the floor sets up some German suplexes and Brock's pose. An RK0 leaves Slater out cold.

The Wyatts are here.

The bosses give Slater a contract so Heath brags about how he showed no mercy. Bryan thinks that's a great name for a pay per view but Slater thinks Bryan is Mick Foley and a bigger star than Roman Reigns. Oh and Shane is Stephanie. That's enough for the boss and Shane takes the contract away but Slater keeps reading the bed he's laying on. No signing.

Erick Rowan vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title and the Wyatts came out during the break. Of note: Bray and Randy had a staredown as Orton was leaving. Dean tries Dirty Deeds thirty seconds in but settles with a dropkick to send Rowan outside for a suicide dive. Back in and Rowan takes over with a powerslam before sending Dean into the steps. Rowan slowly stomps and pounds in the corner, only to have Dean suplex him back down.

Mauro: "WWE Champion Dean Ambrose willing to put it all on the line!" Other than the title in this match that is. Erick kicks him in the face as JBL talks about opponents not expecting Dean to drop an elbow while they're standing up. You don't expect him to do something he does in almost every match? Speaking of which, Dean hits Dirty Deeds for the pin at 4:58.

Rating: D+. That's the match you would expect from these two as Erick showed off his power but Dean did his normal stuff while JBL said stuff that doesn't make sense. I like the idea of having Dean fight midcarders though as it allows him to look good and the person he beats doesn't look bad because they lost to the champ. Everything works fine.

Post match Bray looks at Rowan's mask and walks away. Good.

Becky Lynch/Carmella vs. Alexa Bliss/Natalya

Carmella and Natalya start things off with a headscissors sending Natalya flying. We hear about Daniel Bryan making a new Women's Title despite there being a total of five female wrestlers on the roster (I'm waiting on Eva to actually wrestle to count her and get it all the way up to six.). Natalya takes Carmella down and the heels take over until a diving tag brings in Becky. Everything breaks down and Natalya collides with Becky....as Eva Marie comes out to her full entrance. This brings out Naomi for a chase to distract Natalya, setting up the Disarm-Her for the tap out at 4:15.

Rating: D. I probably shouldn't have rated it due to how long the match spent on Eva's entrance but it lets me talk about how stupid it is to have a title for this division. The entire division was involved in one

match and you have a total of one former title holder in the whole thing. Becky has never won anything, Carmella and Alexa are rookies, Natalya is the same thing she was the day she debuted, Naomi is flashy but nothing great in the ring and Eva is a comedy act.

That gives you Becky, Natalya and Naomi to do the lifting until Bayley can come and make it four women of worth in the division, at least until Alexa and Carmella are more ready. Remember when all the women were in the ring the night after Wrestlemania and it looked like something might come of it? Yeah forget all that because having enough for one great division means it's time to split it into two weak divisions.

Baron Corbin attacks Kalisto again. What did Kalisto do to deserve this kind of demotion?

Long video on Orton vs. Lesnar, which we saw a few weeks ago.

Alberto Del Rio vs. John Cena

AJ is on commentary. Feeling out process to start until a hiptoss sends Del Rio outside and he takes a breather in the crowd. Back from an early break with Del Rio hitting a shot off the top but missing a charge to crash out onto the floor. Del Rio kicks him in the face (kind of) and avoids a charge to send Cena into the buckle.

AJ and Otunga keep arguing over respect with Styles calling him a rookie. Since this is a Del Rio match and you can guess what he's doing, I have the chance to flash back to Otunga being Styles' replacement at an autograph booth at this year's Axxess. I've never seen a line clear out so fast in my life. Alberto hits a DDT for two and we take another break.

Back with Del Rio diving into a dropkick as Cena starts his comeback. The Backstabber cuts him off and gives Alberto two, followed by the corner enziguri for the same. Cena reverses the cross armbreaker into the STF but Del Rio is too close to the ropes. The low superkick sets up the cross armbreaker but Cena escapes with a powerbomb. A quick AA gives Cena the pin at 16:56.

Rating: C+. Really if you've seen these two fight once, you've seen

almost every one of their matches. Del Rio isn't going to beat Cena in a regular match (certainly not at this point in his career) and it gets a little more boring every time these two fight. Del Rio is just so dull like this and it's so boring watching him clearly not care.

AJ runs in for a Phenomenal Forearm. Styles says he's tired of hearing that the future goes through Cena and he's going to be the new face that runs this place. He goes to leave but comes back for more, allowing Cena to hit the AA. Cena isn't done though and hits a big AA through the table to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. This show had some moments but it never took off and a lot of that is due to a lack of a really compelling feud. AJ vs. Cena feels like the World Title feud while Ambrose and Ziggler are continuing to fight over who is the best wrestler from Ohio. I still can't buy into the idea that Ziggler has never won a big match when he did the exact same thing Ambrose did. If so, what does that make Dean? Throw in the tag and women's divisions that can fit into a single match and it's hard to find a reason to get excited about this show.

Results

American Alpha/Usos/Hype Bros b. Ascension/Vaudevillains/Breezango – Grand Amplitude to English

Heath Slater b. Randy Orton via DQ when Orton kept attacking in the corner

Dean Ambrose b. Erick Rowan – Dirty Deeds

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

John Cena b. Alberto Del Rio – Attitude Adjustment

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Smackdown – August 9, 2016: False Hope

Smackdown

Date: August 9, 2016

Location: Rabobank Arena, Bakersfield, California

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga

Summerslam is coming up but tonight is going to be another light show as a bunch of the roster is off on a tour of Australia. Tonight is again going to be focused on Dean Ambrose vs. Dolph Ziggler and their upcoming WWE World Title match, though there's the chance that the Wyatts will be involved as well. Let's get to it.

Randy Orton is ready to kill Brock Lesnar's legend because all it takes is one RKO to get to Viperville. Alberto Del Rio comes up and says that sounds like Disneyland so Orton offers to give him a VIP tour.

Opening sequence.

Here are Bray Wyatt and Erick Rowan to open the show. Last week Bray did NOT fall to Dolph Ziggler because he was a victim. Ziggler was desperate and in that desperation came a ram into the turnbuckle because it was the only way. You can't defeat Bray Wyatt because he is everywhere. There is no red or blue because this is him against the world.

Cue Dean Ambrose to say this is a new era because Bray is talking about how he's a victim. That sounds like a baby instead of an eater of worlds.

Bray invites him into the ring but Dean is smarter than that. This brings out Ziggler who charges into the ring on his own with Dean coming in a few seconds later. Rowan is sent outside but Dolph superkicks Dean by accident, only to eat Sister Abigail.

Post break, Ambrose yells at Ziggler until the bosses come up and make the tag match. As usual I can only wonder why we need both Bryan and Shane for this segment. One of them accomplishes the same as two but we get both of them anyway.

American Alpha vs. Mike Vega/Mikey O'Shea

Before the match, Ascension, the Vaudevillains and the Hype Bros come out to watch. Alpha starts on Vega's leg, followed by the double dropkick and the Grand Amplitude for the pin at 1:11.

All four teams brawl post match with Alpha cleaning house. As they brawl, the announcers talk about the upcoming Smackdown Tag Team Titles.

Miz and Maryse are at Renee Young's interview desk and nearly crawl over her as she sends us to a video package on Miz's #1 contender Apollo Crews. Back with Miz and Maryse laying on the table with Miz calling his wife a modern day Aphrodite. That's enough for Renee as she throws it back to the arena.

Becky Lynch vs. Eva Marie

Eva gets her big over the top entrance and breaks her top on the way off the turnbuckle so again no match.

Post match Becky vents some frustration and issues an open challenge.

Becky Lynch vs. Alexa Bliss

Joined in progress with Bliss in control for a bit until Becky makes a comeback with a clothesline and the Bexploder. Now here's Eva Marie with the big voiceover doing the full entrance again, allowing Bliss to hit a choke shove and Twisted Bliss for the pin at 2:32. Bliss was fine here but I'm not wild on the Divas being more sexualized again. They did just fine and got better than ever without it but now we seem to be seeing it

again.

Post match Eva calls this a shame but she'll make her debut next week.

Randy Orton vs. Alberto Del Rio

The fans chant RK0 to start and Orton takes over with some right hands in the corner. Del Rio comes back with a knee to the ribs and then stands there for a second, allowing Orton to snap him back first across the ropes. Back from a break with Orton going shoulder first into the steps and Del Rio working on an armbar.

Alberto gets the armbreaker across the top rope for a few seconds but gets crotched on top for taking too long. That means the superplex but Orton has to escape an armbreaker attempt. The elevated DDT doesn't set up the RK0 as Orton takes it outside and loads up the announcers' table instead. That takes too long as well though and Del Rio hits him in the arm with a chair for the DQ at 12:20.

Rating: C-. Would anyone notice if Del Rio was traded for a red wagon and a box of Ding Dongs? His entire character can be summed up as "Mexican heel who attacks arms" and that's not enough to carry my interest. I'm also not sure why they didn't have Orton get the clean pin here as it's not like Del Rio needs protecting. Then again they'll probably have a rematch next week because it would be asking a lot to have them come up with a new idea so soon.

Post match Orton hits the RK0 to prevent another chair shot.

Heath Slater asks Rhyno to lay down for him. Rhyno says no because he needs to impress his constituents in his Michigan State Senate district (where he really is up for election). Slater suddenly can't remember how many kids he has so Rhyno says no.

Miz arrived earlier today and met Scooby-Doo, demanding that all of his new DVDs are immediately recalled. Scooby shoves him in a van and steals Miz's car.

Heath Slater vs. Rhyno

Rhyno beats him up to start and shrugs off everything Slater can throw at him. A belly to belly gets two on Heath but he avoids a charge to send Rhyno into the buckle. That's only good for two though as Slater is caught with his feet on the ropes, setting up the Gore to give Rhyno the pin at 3:03.

Rating: D. This was all it needed to be though I'm hoping Slater gets to keep going with this run he's on as it's quite entertaining. Rhyno is fine in the role as well as he can go out there, hit people really hard and then get pinned while keeping most of his credibility. He's a fine role player and that's all it needs to be.

We go to the Wyatts with Rowan talking about wolves being led by a sheep. Bray says Rowan has always been a good soldier (Good?) but tonight he wants Erick to be ready to give his life for the cause.

After a break the bosses are considering giving Heath a job for his fighting spirit until Slater comes in to yell at them for embarrassing him in front of his seven kids. Heath says Smackdown doesn't deserve him and storms off. They change their mind on the contract.

Carmella vs. Natalya

Natalya jumps her during the entrance and sends her throat first into the ropes. A stomping in the corner makes the orange Carmella scream and we're off to a bow and arrow. It's off to the abdominal stretch with Natalya lifting Carmella's leg to make it even worse. Nattie By Nature connects but Carmella kicks off the Sharpshooter and puts on her headscissors crossface for the tap at 4:12.

Rating: D+. Not much to this one but it's a good way to introduce Carmella. Unfortunately I really don't think she's ready for the main roster in ring level. Keeping it short here like they did with Bliss earlier makes sense though as they both need ring time. I'm still amazed that they think they have enough talent for a division when you have to count Eva and Maryse as members of the roster though. Maybe in a few months when Carmella and Alexa have developed but this is too soon.

Long video on AJ Styles vs. John Cena.

Baron Corbin attacks Kalisto for costing him the triple threat last week.

Erick Rowan/Bray Wyatt vs. Dolph Ziggler/Dean Ambrose

The Wyatts run the good guys over to start and Rowan hits a clothesline to send Dolph outside as we take a break less than ninety seconds in. Back with Dean getting the hot tag to clean house, only to spend too much time on the floor with Rowan so Bray can take him down with a big clothesline. Bray sends Dean outside again for the release Rock Bottom on the apron, only to have to escape Dirty Deeds.

Instead Dean hits a swinging neckbreaker and makes the real hot tag to Ziggler. Everything breaks down and Rowan's spinning kick to the face gets two on Dolph. The Zig Zag gets the same with Bray making the save but Dean breaks up Sister Abigail. Dean's suicide dive gets tangled up in the ropes and he crashes down to the floor, leaving Rowan to eat the superkick for the pin at 10:40.

Rating: C+. It was false hope at best to imagine Bray being added to the title match and I'm ok with that. Ziggler vs. Ambrose will be a fine match. Not thrilling mind you but definitely entertaining enough for a middle of the shot spot. Rowan taking the fall here was the only way to go as Bray can come back later, hopefully against the winner of the title match and no one is any worse off.

Dean gives him Dirty Deeds as a receipt for earlier in the night. A BIG YES chant ends the show.

Overall Rating: C. This was a bit better than last night's show but a lot of the improvement is due to the show being an hour shorter. It's so much better to have this show wrap up at ten instead of eleven as the show doesn't drain you nearly as much. That being said, it was still little more than a bunch of short matches with so many people off on the overseas tour. The show was completely in the middle though as an easy two hour sit but nothing that you needed to see. Things should pick up with the full roster back next week though.

Results

American Alpha b. Mike Vega/Mikey O'Shea – Grand Amplitude to Vega

Alexa Bliss b. Becky Lynch – Twisted Bliss

Randy Orton b. Alberto Del Rio via DQ when Del Rio used a chair

Rhyno b. Heath Slater – Gore

Carmella b. Natalya – Headscissors Crossface

Dean Ambrose/Dolph Ziggler b. Erick Rowan/Bray Wyatt – Superkick to Rowan

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