

Smackdown – April 21, 2016: Miz Is Awesome

Smackdown

Date: April 21, 2016

Location: O2 Arena, London, England

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Jerry Lawler, Byron Saxton

It's the last show on the UK tour and we're in the same building we were in on Monday for Raw. These shows can range from nothing special to more interesting than usual but Smackdown tends to be just your run of the mill show. We're getting closer to Payback though and the card is looking stacked. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of AJ vs. Roman on Monday, including Luke Gallows and Karl Anderson beating Reigns down.

It's time for MizTV with Maryse handling the introduction before Miz brings out guest AJ Styles. Miz gets right to the point of asking about AJ being tight with Gallows and Anderson in New Japan, to the point that he knows them better than anyone else. Styles denies being behind the attack but he never told them NOT to attack Reigns. Miz continues being awesome at needling as AJ eventually gets annoyed at him for asking about Gallows and Anderson over and over again.

The fact of the matter is that AJ doesn't need them to beat Reigns but Miz thinks that being a better "rassler" isn't going to get it done because Roman Reigns is the guy. Miz says he can handle the truth from AJ but Maryse tells him to go Will Smith. This leads to a rather romantic moment which disgusts AJ so badly that he backfists Miz in the face.

AJ vs. Miz is set for later.

Ryback vs. Kalisto

Non-title for no apparent reason other than Kalisto loses here because the title is back to meaning nothing. Ryback runs him over in the corner

and the GOLDBERG chants begin for reasons of general annoyance. Kalisto's kicks have little effect as Ryback gorilla presses him down and sends him shoulder first into the post as we take a break. Back with Ryback doing his delayed superplex for a delayed two count.

Ryback puts him in the Tree of Woe for kicks to the ribs, only to miss a charge and go shoulder first into the post. Kalisto's kicks to the chest and corkscrew cross body stagger Ryback and the hurricanrana driver gets two. Ryback hits a quick Meathook but the Shell Shock is countered into a DDT for two more. The Salida Del Sol is countered into the Shell Shock to give Ryback the pin at 9:42.

Rating: C-. It's clear that WWE wants to put the title on Ryback and I have no idea why they just don't do it at this point. Kalisto means nothing as champion at this point as he won the belt and then did nothing with it ever since (as is so often the case) so just give it to Ryback who could be a decent monster for someone to slay later on. First though, we get a rubber match because that's how the midcard titles roll around here.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Baron Corbin

Never mind as Corbin jumps Ziggler during the entrance and beats him down on the floor as has become his custom.

The Miz vs. AJ Styles

Non-title again. Miz gets clotheslined down to start and AJ goes old school with a Muta Lock (bridging Indian deathlock with a chinlock) but Miz gets his head out and rolls to the floor. Back in and AJ gets caught with some knees to the back, only to hit a quick dropkick (Lawler: "That was a miso soup dropkick wasn't it?"). A spinwheel kick drops Miz again so he hides behind Maryse, allowing him to get in a left hand to drop AJ.

Styles gets sent into the barricade and we take a break. Back with Miz stomping away in the corner and hitting that running clothesline. We hit the chinlock (because of course) but AJ jawbreaks his way to freedom. A big boot drops Styles again (Miz can throw a nice boot) but it's a double cross body to put both of them down. AJ is up first though and gets in

the running seated forearm for two. Miz starts going after the knee before a DDT gets two more.

The Skull Crushing Finale is countered into the fireman's carry backbreaker onto the knee (which Lawler pronounces correctly for once) for another near fall but AJ dives into an atomic drop. We hit the Figure Four for a bit until AJ turns it over with Ranallo doing a great job of putting over AJ as someone who will never quit.

The Calf Crusher goes on out of nowhere but Miz is too close to the ropes. Styles hit the Pele and that's enough for Miz who tries to walk, only to run into Gallows and Anderson. Miz makes the mistake of turning around and it's a slingshot forearm to set up the Phenomenal version for the pin on Miz at 17:55.

Rating: B. I know I'm in the minority but I've been a big Miz fan for a long time now. No he's not going to get back to the main event or anything but he's more than capable of having a strong performance against someone who can walk him through a match. They're doing a really good job of setting AJ up as someone who could shock the world at Payback. That's an impressive feat, especially if they go somewhere else with this Bullet Club story after the pay per view. Oh and well done on having both midcard champions lose clean in less than an hour and a half.

We look at the end of Raw with Jericho and Owens taking out Zayn and Ambrose.

Ambrose and Zayn are ready for Owens and Jericho in tonight's main event. Spotted dick is referenced but they can't decide on a cool team name.

In what might be a dark segment that won't air on the TV show, Miz and Maryse are still in the ring after the match. Miz says he knew Gallows and Anderson were with AJ but that just showed he was right. Tonight there was an injustice and he demands an investigation on this match right here and right now. Miz doesn't care how long it takes because he wants someone to come out here.

Cue Shane McMahon to say what's up London. That's not cool with Miz because he should be a priority to everyone on any show. He pokes Shane a

bit and that's not cool with the red show boss. Miz pokes him a few more times so Shane punches him in the face and drops him with the back elbow to the jaw before clotheslining him out to the floor. Again, not likely to make the show but a cool thing for the crowd.

Post break, Gallows and Anderson say they're here to make an impact and aren't here with Styles. They'll debut on Monday against the Usos.

Paige/Natalya vs. Naomi/Tamina

Tamina and Natalya get things going but it's quickly off to Naomi for her stupid wiggling headscissors without any actual damage being done to Natalya. Seriously, the Divas era is done so stop that nonsense. Paige comes in to help with a double wishbone before it's already back to Natalya because Paige being in the ring in front of her home crowd would be a waste of time.

Naomi drops Natalya again and shouts that Natalya wants to wrestle. Well kind of yeah. We hit the chinlock from Tamina for a bit before Natalya easily gets over for the tag off to Paige. Naomi gets sent into the buckle and the Rampaige gets one with Tamina making the save. Natalya comes back in and it's a Sharpshooter to Tamina while Paige gets Naomi to tap to the PT0 at 5:33.

Rating: D+. I like that double submission ending as you let Natalya look good while Paige gets to win in front of her home country. It's really tiring to see her lose all the time but with the way the division has been realigned, maybe she has to be moved down to the lower levels. I'm still a fan of hers but she's really not up to the top level at this point.

Fandango vs. R-Truth

Goldust is guest referee and this is fallout from Goldust teaming with Fandango instead of Truth last week. They trade knockdowns and trade hip swivels. More dancing ensues with Goldust joining in until Truth lays Fandango out with the Lie Detector for the pin at 1:53. I have no idea where they're going with this but if they could get to the point already, it would be most appreciated.

Goldust and Truth dance post match with Goldust looking terrified at the thought of trying the splits.

Here are Enzo Amore and Colin Cassady for a chat about the tag team tournament final. Enzo gets through the opening spiel before the Vaudevillains cut him off. English thinks Enzo has mange so Enzo thinks the Vaudevillains are a couple of haters. Apparently the G stands for gentlemen so Enzo is going to be honest with him. That thing English said about him having rodent mange.....well Enzo really doesn't know what it means.

Gotch insults Enzo's rhyming (hater) and English says that it's going to take two real men to show what a real era should be like. After they win the tournament, Simon promises to use proper pronunciation and ask "how are you doing". Cass thinks that's SAWFT. This was a really good exchange and a much better introduction to the Vaudevillains than we've seen so far.

Greeting From Puerto Rico.

Dean Ambrose/Sami Zayn vs. Chris Jericho/Kevin Owens

Jericho and Zayn get things going with Sami doing that reverse leapfrog and armdragging Chris down into an armbar. Dean comes in and has to spin out of a Walls attempt but can't get Dirty Deeds as we head to a break. Back with Owens elbowing Ambrose in the head and slowly hammering away. Jericho can't keep Dean in the corner though and it's off to Sami for the high cross body and a near fall.

Sami loads up the corner climbing wristdrag but opts to dive onto Owens instead. Makes sense. That's fine with Owens as he pulls Sami outside and pounds away as Dean has been down WAY longer than he should have after a beating. It's back to Jericho for a chinlock followed by a Lionsault for a very calm near fall. The Blue Thunder Bomb doesn't even warrant a cover here but it's a double tag to Ambrose and Owens with the latter running into a boot in the corner.

Dean hits the suicide dive through the ropes but Owens gets in a superkick for two. The fans are having some issues getting into this one

even though it's certainly not bad. A quick Dirty Deeds and the Helluva kick have the heels in trouble but Dean goes up instead of covering, allowing Jericho to crotch him on the ropes, giving Owens a quick pin at 12:53.

Rating: C. Totally standard Smackdown main event tag match and while that's fine, it's certainly nothing you need to see. I like the idea of putting two feuds into one match but they're out of combinations to do before the pay per view, which is a common problem WWE runs into. Ambrose getting pinned via cheating is a good idea as well.

Owens is very pleased with the win to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. The wrestling was stronger tonight but my goodness some of the booking decisions made my head hurt. As usual the midcard titles mean nothing because they're just midcard titles and a way to make people look good by beating midcard champions. It's so backwards compared to the way things used to go and went for years that it makes no sense but I'm sure WWE can explain it better to you than I could. They speak crazy like that you see.

Results

Ryback b. Kalisto – Shell Shock

AJ Styles b. The Miz – Phenomenal Forearm

Paige/Natalya b. Naomi/Tamina – PTO to Naomi

R-Truth b. Fandango – Lie Detector

Kevin Owens/Chris Jericho b. Sami Zayn/Dean Ambrose – Owens pinned Ambrose after Jericho crotched him

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Wrestlemania XXXII Preview: Total Divas vs. Bad and Blonde

Yeah this is something that is happening too.

Let's get this one out of the way. Simply put, people don't care about this stuff and there's no real reason to. Most of these women either aren't any good or they aren't interesting enough to mean anything on the main roster. As is the case with any big cluster of a match like this, no one is going to get any time and it's probably going to be about getting Eva over because that's a thing that still exists.

I'll take the Total Divas to win because that's a thing that still exists as well. No one is going to get to show off much of anything here, but it's a good sign that we seem to be getting an unofficial brand split in the women's division. You have the title match with actual wrestling and then the Divas doing this nonsense. I have little desire to watch this match, though to be fair I said the same thing about the fourteen Divas mess two years ago and that turned out to be somewhat fun. Nothing to see here though and everyone knows why this is happening.

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Monday Night Raw – March 7, 2016: Going Home For The Show After The Show Before The Show

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 7, 2016

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

Now this could be interesting as the company is hardly on a creative roll at the moment and we're in one of the biggest smark havens in the world. We're also five days away from Roadblock which suddenly has the potential to change the entire Wrestlemania card with less than a month before the biggest show of the year. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Vince vowing to renounce Shane as his son after Wrestlemania. I still have no idea why this is supposed to be interesting or a major plot point as the McMahons are always arguing.

Here's Shane to get things going. Shane sucks up to the Chicago crowd and it's clear that they're excited to see him. He was watching Raw last week and heard what Undertaker was saying about his match. Shane respects Undertaker completely but he wasn't surprised by what Vince said about him

after the fact. Vince has lost touch with both his reality and his grandsons but Shane is ready to stop it all. At Wrestlemania, he stops all the backstage politics and all the authority. Shane is tired of seeing all the talent being held back with no breaks and all the breaks given to people with no talent.

The gong goes off but it's a strutting Vince instead. Vince laughs at the fans for not being happy to see him so the CM PUNK chants start up. The boss lets it die off and talks about how Stephanie is getting everything. Earlier today Vince was looking at a picture of Shane at his first wrestling show and of course we get to see it on the screen. Vince pulls the actual photo from somewhere and crushes the frame like he'll do at Wrestlemania.

After Shane loses, Vince will be able to wrap his arms around his grandsons and prove to them that their family isn't a bunch of losers because his greatest creation is going to destroy his greatest failure. Vince sends out the security but Shane actually beats them up to a HUGE ovation, most of which isn't deserved.

The segment was better than most of anything we saw last week but I'm still really not sure what the heck they're fighting about. Thankfully they've seemed to drop the whole lockbox concept which wasn't working to say the least but Shane having a proxy would work better as an idea.

Kevin Owens vs. Neville

Non-title so look for another upset. Owens drives him into the corner to start and stomps away, meaning he survives longer than he did against Neville a few weeks back. Kevin: "Come on mate!" Neville comes back with kicks to send Owens to the floor but misses a dive, allowing Kevin to send him into the steps as we take a break. Back with Neville fighting out of a chinlock, only to be flipped over with a German suplex.

The Cannonball is countered with a nice enziguri to knock Owens to the floor, setting up a great looking shooting star off the top to the outside. The fans REALLY like that one but don't care as much for the standing shooting star press for two back inside. Neville charges into a boot to the face but rolls away from a springboard moonsault. A superkick

sets up the middle rope Phoenix Splash for a very, very close two. Thankfully Neville stays on him but Owens grabs a rollup with the trunks for the pin at 10:25.

Rating: C+. Those high spots from Neville helped carry this, leading us to the more important ending of Owens winning. The cheating helps but I was worried that they would job him AGAIN here to set up something at Wrestlemania. It's also nice to see Neville getting some prominent spots instead of just in a nothing six man tag.

Post match Owens loads up the apron powerbomb but SAMI ZAYN runs in and cleans house, likely setting up a big Intercontinental Title match at Wrestlemania.

Video from the Rock saying Wrestlemania is free for new WWE Network subscribers.

Long recap of HHH and Ambrose from last week.

Dolph Ziggler and Zack Ryder (with a beard) are in the back when Stephanie comes up. Stephanie thanks Ziggler for taking down a tweet about the Authority earlier today but Dolph mentions taking down the Authority a few years back. Stephanie doesn't remember that and reminds Ziggler that she's his boss. As if we could forget as that's pretty much her whole character. Stephanie likes these flashbacks and gives Ziggler an elimination tag against three members of the League of Nations. Oh and Ziggler won't have any partners.

Brie Bella vs. Summer Rae

Total Divas match, meaning we get a clip from tomorrow's show with Nikki telling Brie how to live. Summer takes her down to start but Brie comes right back with the YES Kicks and a horrible looking BRIE MODE knee. Brie misses a middle rope cross body but here's Lana for a distraction, allowing Summer to grab a rollup for the pin at 2:05. They haven't used that finish as much lately so it's not as annoying here.

Post match Lana comes to the ring and gives Brie a Bella Buster for some of her first ever physicality.

Here's Dean Ambrose to open the second hour. He gets right to the point: this Saturday he's hijacking the car on the road to Wrestlemania by being HHH to win the title. Dean talks about all the things he's going to get to do like being on the cover of People Magazine and throwing out the first pitch at baseball games.

After Wrestlemania, HHH is going to have to buy Dean a new suit and lapel pins...which he doesn't know how to work. Actually Dean isn't going to do any of these things that come along with being WWE Champion but he loves the idea of being WWE Champion and getting to come out here and fight everyone every single night.

Cue HHH who threatens to beat Ambrose up again. Dean says he'll take another trip to the announcers' table and hold that WWE Championship up high. Dean: "When I do that, you can suck it." HHH calls Roadblock a clever name that marketing came up with because Dean is at best a speed bump or a pothole. Dean wants to fight right now but HHH fights on his own time. As for tonight, Dean gets to face Bray Wyatt. That gives him a preview of Sunday where he learns that the Authority always wins.

Dolph Ziggler vs. League of Nations

Elimination rules with Del Rio as the odd man out. Barrett gets things going with the King pounding away and getting two off the Winds of Change. The knees in the ropes (which are similar to the ones Shane threw earlier tonight) set up the ten forearms from Sheamus, even though Ziggler started to fall down in the ropes. Rusev comes in for a running splash against the ropes for two. At least he isn't talking about how much he loves Summer or Lana at the time as that feud (which wasn't as bad as people made it out to be) is best forgotten.

A surprisingly good dropkick gets two for Rusev and it's back to Barrett for some forearms to the back in the corner. Sheamus comes in and slowly stomps away, followed by the knee to the ribs. Barrett charges into the running DDT and goes shoulder first into the post, setting up a superkick for the first elimination. Sheamus takes a superkick as well but Rusev breaks it up. The Brogue Kick misses but Rusev kicks Ziggler in the head, setting up the Brogue for the pin 6:39.

Rating: C-. This could have been much worse as I can live with Ziggler getting one pin, especially since the League didn't have to make an immediate save given how the rules were set up. The League is good as the enforcers for the Authority and roles like this but I'm not sure how much longer they can survive given how they've been treated lately.

We look back at Shane and Vince from earlier.

Video on Shane McMahon's in-ring career.

Becky Lynch and Sasha Banks bicker about who would have won last week.

Naomi/Tamina vs. Becky Lynch/Sasha Banks

Can't they bring up Blue Pants and Deonna Purrazzo instead of making us watch these four again? Charlotte and Ric are at ringside because Flair needs a paycheck this badly. Cole talks about how we've seen this match before. At least they're just acknowledging that their matches are repetitive now. Becky gets thrown into the heel corner to start and a right hand puts her down again. Tamina misses a charge in the corner and it's off to Sasha as everything breaks down. The Bank Statement (Cole: "THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED TO MCGREGGOR!") puts Tamina away at 2:00.

Post match Charlotte comes in and beats down the winners.

R-Truth is delivering a pizza to Goldust (who thankfully was just right there when Truth came in) and asks to be his partner again. Goldust says a good partner would know that he was lactose intolerant and slams the pizza down. Mark Henry comes up and takes the pizza.

Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. AJ Styles/Chris Jericho

New Day is defending. Before the match, Big E. wants to talk about the matching tattoos they've gotten but apparently only he got the blue and purple unicorn. Of course Big E. was just joking until Jericho cuts him off and saves some face. Jericho and Styles now have Y2AJ shirts. Kofi gets sent to the floor to start and the challengers hit a nice double plancha to take us to an early break.

Back with Jericho in trouble but nailing a dropkick to Big E. An enziguri

drops Kingston and there's the hot tag to AJ. The moonsault reverse DDT hits as close to seamlessly as I've ever seen but AJ springboards into the Midnight Hour for two as Chris saves. The Lionsault crushes Kofi and AJ adds the springboard 450 for two with Big E. pulling Kingston to the floor. AJ drops Big E. with a slingshot forearm but misses the backfist to Kofi.

Back to Jericho who counters Trouble in Paradise into the Walls. AJ stops Woods from making the save but gets driven hard into the barricade. Big E. gets back up for the tag so Jericho tries the Walls on him, which doesn't quite work. Instead Jericho sends Big E. into the post but the Codebreaker is countered into the Big Ending for the clean pin to retain at 11:38.

Rating: B+. They had me a few times in this one and the action after the hot tag to AJ never really stopped. This was more of a showcase for AJ than anything else with the springboards looking as smooth as they have yet in WWE. Jericho getting pinned clean opens up a few doors but I'm not sure where New Day goes at Wrestlemania, unless Bullet Club gets a very fast callup. AJ and Jericho could go various places as well.

Post match AJ and Jericho get an ovation but Jericho turns heel with a Codebreaker to Styles. That might have worked better if Jericho hadn't just lost clean but at least we get a FOURTH match between these two. I mean, just a thought but maybe you shouldn't do a (potential) Wrestlemania match three times before Wrestlemania. Jericho gives him two more Codebreakers for good measure before stuffing the Y2AJ shirt in AJ's mouth.

Back from a break with Jericho complaining about the fans chanting for AJ. They can enjoy it while they can because they won't be chanting for AJ Styles anymore.

Tyler Breeze vs. Kalisto

Non-title. Breeze blasts him in the face to start as the announcers talk about Jericho. A chinlock doesn't go very far and it's the corkscrew cross body into the Salida Del Sol for the pin on Breeze at 2:17.

Big Boss Man Hall of Fame announcement. I'm so happy over this one.

Kalisto is in the back and talks about idolizing people like Rey Mysterio and Eddie Guerrero at Wrestlemania. Cue Ryback to ask why he doesn't have a Wrestlemania match yet. Kalisto might be one of the best pound for pound wrestlers in WWE today but that's not what we're talking about here. Ryback says Kalisto has a mask just like a superhero but that's not how things work in the real world. Kalisto needs to be the US Champion on his own instead of as one half of the Lucha Dragons. Watch him do this on his own tonight. No match was made here and it felt more like a way to split up the Dragons (thank goodness).

Here are the Social Outcasts to talk about how sad it is that Ryback doesn't want to be part of a team. He can't play team dodgeball (like on Heath Slater's new show Game Night on WWE.com) or be a Ghostbuster, but above all that he can't be a Social Outcast. Tonight the Axeman cometh, which means they all start making strange noises and chopping the air with their hand.

Ryback vs. Curtis Axel

This is joined in progress after a break (because reasons) with Axel getting in his jobber offense until the Thesz press allows Ryback to slam Axel head first into the mat. A CM Punk style running knee in the corner (complete with a Go To Sleep motion) sends Axel to the floor but an Outcasts distraction lets Axel get in a cheap shot for two. Just like last week, Ryback pounds him down into near unconsciousness, setting up the Shell Shock for the pin at 2:08. Again, no reason for this to go to a break before the match.

We recap the opening again.

Stephanie comes in to see Vince and asks what happens if Shane wins.

Dean Ambrose vs. Bray Wyatt

Bray still has nothing to do at Wrestlemania but he does talk about conquering the conqueror this Saturday. Tonight he'll use Dean as an example. No Family with Bray this week. Some early elbows put Bray in

trouble and Dean cranks on both legs at the same time. Dean drives in even more elbows to Bray's head in the corner until Bray runs him over with the cross body as we take a break.

Back with Bray suplexing Dean to keep control before taking him outside for a double clothesline. They get back in with Dean hammering away and trying the rebound lariat, only to have Bray take Dean's head off because he's smart enough to figure out that Dean is doing the exact same thing he always does. Dean knocks him out to the floor but the suicide dive is countered into Sister Abigail. That's countered as well so Bray Rock Bottoms him onto the barricade. Back in again and Dean scores with the rebound lariat followed by the top rope elbow, only to have the Wyatts come in for the DQ at 11:50.

Rating: C+. I was digging this one until the ending that you kind of had to know was coming. At least they didn't have either of them doing a clean job here as I was kind of expecting them to. Bray countering the rebound lariat was a nice touch too because wrestlers being smart is always cool to see. Good main event though it's more of a storytelling device than anything else.

Post match the Wyatts destroy Dean until HHH comes out. Bray stares at HHH and even touches the title (fans: "YES!") before the Family leaves. HHH loads up the announcers' table but walks into Dirty Deeds. Dean holds up the title to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. While still not a very good show, this was WAY better than what they did last week. It's amazing how much better a show is when you have anything besides Stephanie reminding us (AGAIN) that she's the most amazing thing since that time Randy Savage woke up Hulk Hogan with a top rope elbow because Hogan only Hulked Up from finishers. The problem here though is that this Wrestlemania really isn't very strong and there's only so much they can do to build that up, especially with the lack of people actually appearing.

I can't imagine anything big happens at Roadblock but maybe they'll throw in a big (and possibly much needed) curve ball. That being said, the idea of Reigns not appearing until Wrestlemania (as Raw is in Pittsburgh,

Philadelphia and Brooklyn before then) might not be out of the question either. It really is a weird build to Wrestlemania and I'm not sure what's going to happen before we get there. In this case though, I'm not liking that feeling.

Results

Kevin Owens b. Neville – Rollup with a handful of trunks

Summer Rae b. Brie Bella – Rollup

League of Nations b. Dolph Ziggler – Brogue Kick

Becky Lynch/Sasha Banks b. Tamina/Naomi – Bank Statement to Tamina

New Day b. Chris Jericho/AJ Styles – Big Ending to Jericho

Kalisto b. Tyler Breeze – Salida Del Sol

Ryback b. Curtis Axel – Shell Shock

Dean Ambrose b. Bray Wyatt via DQ when the Wyatt Family interfered

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Smackdown – February 18, 2016: The Go Home Exit

Smackdown

Date: February 18, 2016

Location: Citizens Bank Business Arena, Ontario, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Jerry Lawler

We're three days away from Fastlane and the big story tonight is Brock Lesnar making a very rare Smackdown appearance. There's no word on what he'll be doing but you can assume it might have something to do with Dean Ambrose and Roman Reigns, who are teaming together to face the Dudley Boyz tonight. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Ambrose losing the Intercontinental Title on Monday thanks to Stephanie's influence.

Opening sequence.

No Mauro Ranallo tonight due to a bout with the flu.

League of Nations vs. Dolph Ziggler/Lucha Dragons

Kevin Owens is on commentary. Kalisto and Rusev get things going with the masked man firing off kicks to the meaty Bulgarian thighs. Alberto comes in and gets taken down with a standing Lionsault for two. An old Jack Brisco spinning sunset flip out of the corner looks to get two for Cara but he tagged Kalisto by mistake. Everything breaks down for a bit and the Dragons dive through the ropes to take down Sheamus and Del Rio, followed by Ziggler coming off the top to elbow all three of them as we take a break.

Back with Rusev holding Cara in a chinlock before it's off to Del Rio for a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker. That means it's time for another chinlock from Alberto, followed by some Irish Curses from Sheamus for two. Owens goes on a funny bit about not liking idiots but having other reasons to not like Cole.

Cara finally kicks Del Rio down and tags in Ziggler to speed things up. Dolph's superkick to Sheamus is broken up but the running DDT works a bit better. Everything breaks down and Del Rio kicks Cara in the mask, followed by throwing Kalisto hard into the barricade. Back inside, Ziggler hits a quick Fameasser for two on Sheamus, which draws Owens off commentary. The distraction lets Sheamus nail a Brogue Kick for the pin on Dolph at 11:27.

Rating: C-. So the League gets a pin on the #1 contender despite none of them having a match on Sunday's pay per view card. It wasn't anything out of the ordinary here though and that's pretty good for the most part. The wrestling was fine and they went with the formula that they've perfected on Smackdown, meaning this was acceptable but nothing I'll remember in about an hour.

Owens leaves with Ziggler's vest.

Tamina vs. Sasha Banks

Sasha gets slammed head first into the mat to start but flips out of a belly to back suplex to get away for a bit. The running knees in the corner have Tamina in trouble and Naomi gets knocked off the apron. A sitout bulldog sets up the Bank Statement to make Tamina tap at 2:22.

Sasha gets beaten down post match until Becky makes the save, only to be shoved away by her partner. This continues a simple story but it's been booked well.

Post break Becky wants to know what that was. They're coming up on Wrestlemania and it's going to take a win at Fastlane to give them momentum. If Sasha wants to let her ego get in the way of their Wrestlemania moment, Becky is done right now. They agree to fight together on Sunday.

Here's Chris Jericho to address AJ Styles' challenge to him from Monday. Jericho is ready to answer but he wants AJ to be here face to face. Instead here's the Miz to interrupt with an announcement of his own. Jericho hopes that it's Miz quitting the business because everyone has been begging for it for years. Miz says he isn't quitting but he

certainly wouldn't do it here. The announcement is that he's ready to fight Jericho here and now, which earns him a throw to the floor.

Chris Jericho vs. The Miz

Thankfully this starts after a break instead of that stupid ring the bell and go to a break thirty seconds later. A suplex puts Miz down and it's time for some right hands in the corner. Miz sends him into the post as the announcers debate what celebrity lists these two are on. The fans want AJ but get a knee to Jericho's back and a chinlock. That goes nowhere so Jericho dropkicks him and goes up, only to get punched in the face. A trip to the floor doesn't do much as Miz takes him back inside for more left hands to the face. We take a break and come back with Miz holding a chinlock.

The Reality Check gets two and it's right back to the chinlockery. Jericho fights back again with an ax handle and counters another Reality Check (like any signature move, it's only one per midcard match) into a failed Walls attempt. Miz's short DDT and big boot get two each so he starts ripping at Jericho's face in the corner. The running corner clothesline is easily countered into the Walls though and Miz taps at 12:22.

Rating: C+. As has been the case lately, Miz is on a roll and having a string of good matches. Now maybe that's due to having matches against Chris Jericho and AJ Styles but at least it's been better than the usual five minute nothings that he does every week. He's been a good cog for this feud and kept things from being the normal tropes. Good stuff here as Miz continues to be a pleasant surprise lately.

Post match Jericho calls out AJ for the big answer. AJ comes out but Jericho doesn't seem interested in wrestling him again. He respects Styles but doesn't really like him, which is why there won't be a third match. AJ blasts him in the face with his striking sequence and that's enough for Jericho to change his mind. That's rather heelish of AJ, who lost clean last week and now uses violence to get what he wants.

We look back at Heyman and Reigns' exchange on Monday.

Ambrose says he's fine after losing the title on Monday but tonight he just wants to go fight. That's fine with Reigns, but Dean better not try that Dirty Deeds stuff again. Reigns leaves and Dean runs into Heyman. Paul shakes off Ambrose's threats by saying Brock is here and he wants a piece of Dean. That's freaks Ambrose out so badly that he asks Heyman for advice before deciding to deal with Brock on his own later.

New Day says they can't wait to be on the Cutting Edge Peep Show because they're real musicians. On Sunday they're ready to get in their stretch limousine and make their way to the Hall of Fame. Edge and Christian are out of style because it's not the 1990s again. Tromboning and dancing (a LOT of dancing) take us out.

Video on Charlotte, as sponsored by Geico.

Charlotte vs. Natalya

Non-title and Natalya gets the jobber entrance. Charlotte's early headscissors attempt doesn't work so Natalya grabs a headlock and hits a quick basement dropkick to send Charlotte outside. Ric tries to give some advice and we take a break before coming back to see Charlotte spinning out of a leg lock. Charlotte bails to the floor and a Ric distraction lets her kick Natalya in the face. Back in and it's off to the bodyscissors for a bit before Natalya fights up and sends her outside with a German suplex. Charlotte pulls the ring skirt away though to tweak Natalya's knee, setting up the Figure Eight for the submission at 7:40.

Rating: C-. This was fine as Natalya continues to be fine as the veteran jobber. I mean, I still don't buy for a second that Brie is going to win the title on Sunday, even for a feel good title change to cash in on Daniel Bryan. Charlotte is getting the hang of the main roster now that she has a character but Ric needs to go as there's really no need for him.

Post match Charlotte does the YES chants to draw Brie out. The YES Kicks send Charlotte running and a YES chant starts.

This week, Goldust is Dusta Rhymes and has some bad rap. Truth likes it to start but eventually turns him down with a rap of his own. Goldust

looks sad, which makes me think they might not wind up teaming after all. At least it's different than the Booker T. formula.

We look back at the Wyatts going even crazier and the ending of Monday's show.

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose vs. Dudley Boyz

They take their sweet time on the entrances until Ambrose and D-Von get things going. Dean gets early near falls of a cross body and bulldog before it's off to Bubba. A lot of shouting is enough to bring Reigns in and the crowd...doesn't seem to care. Bubba wins a slugout and elbows Reigns in the back of the head but charges into a Samoan Drop. D-Von gets double suplexed and Bubba is sent to the floor as we take a break.

Back with Bubba cranking on Dean's neck and the reverse 3D getting two. D-Von slaps on a chinlock (despite not actually grabbing the chin) and it's back to Bubba for some stomping. The slow paced (and mostly ineffective) offense continues with another D-Von chinlock. It doesn't help that we're just waiting for Brock to come out here. Bubba tries to start a LET'S GO AMBROSE chant but it's a Reigns distraction allowing Dean to knock Bubba down on the top rope.

Thankfully a few right hands aren't enough to even things up and Bubba knocks him off, only to miss the backsplash. The hot tag brings in Reigns to clean house with the usual but he loads up the Superman Punch right before Brock's music hits. The Dudleys use the entrance for a sneak attack but Reigns blocks the 3D. Dean dives onto D-Von but Brock decks him for the DQ at 13:08.

Rating: D+. This really didn't work as most of it was the Dudleys doing slow offense until Brock came out. It wasn't even a secret as we got a BROCK LESNAR TONIGHT graphic before the match. At least they did something besides the League of Nations to put the Shield boys over for a change though, which they've been getting better at in recent weeks.

Brock cleans house post match until Reigns gets in a Superman Punch. The spear almost hits Ambrose though and Dean tries Dirty Deeds, earning himself a Samoan Drop. Brock F5's Reigns but here's HHH (how nice of him

to make an appearance as his title has been the main focus lately) to stare Brock down to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. They've been picking things up lately around here and it's been a nice change of pace. This has felt a lot more like the wrestling show that Raw just isn't and that's the best thing Smackdown can really be. If nothing else this was a good way to help set up Fastlane, which had a good build all night, even if it's for a weak pay per view.

Results

League of Nations b. Dolph Ziggler/Lucha Dragons – Brogue Kick to Ziggler

Sasha Banks b. Tamina – Bank Statement

Chris Jericho b. The Miz – Walls of Jericho

Charlotte b. Natalya – Figure Eight

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose b. Dudley Boyz via DQ when Brock Lesnar interfered

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Smackdown – February 11, 2016: Every So Often

Smackdown

Date: February 11, 2016

Location: Moda Center, Portland, Oregon

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Byron Saxton, Jerry Lawler

It's a rare occurrence but we actually have a major match for tonight with a strong build to go with it. In this case we have AJ Styles vs. Chris Jericho II after Styles won his first major match in WWE by defeating Jericho a few weeks back, which has gotten in Jericho's head. This could be high quality stuff if they're given enough time so let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Chris Jericho for a chat to get things going. Jericho gets right to the point: he doesn't think much of AJ because Styles debuted and started calling himself phenomenal. You have to earn something like that, just like Jericho earned it in this arena during his ladder match against Shawn Michaels. That means it's time for AJ to take his beating right now because the match is opening things up.

AJ Styles vs. Chris Jericho

Scratch that actually as the Social Outcasts come out to interrupt.

AJ may be the Phenomenal One, but this is the Phenomenal Four. "Well three tonight because Bo is still in the studio." The Outcasts argue over whether the team is called Axel Rose or the Social House Cats but Jericho punches Slater in the face and the good guys clear the ring.

AJ Styles/Chris Jericho vs. Curtis Axel/Adam Rose

This is joined in progress after a break with AJ dropkicking Axel before it's back to Jericho for a suplex. Jericho doesn't seem happy with having to tag AJ back in so Styles can't show off as much. A delayed suplex

drops Axel and Jericho still doesn't want to bring AJ in again. Axel continues to get beaten around the ring with the good guys dropping him off a double chop.

Rose finally gets in a knee to AJ's back from the apron so Curtis can slap on a chinlock. One might think he would tag but who am I to question him? A Pele Kick drops Axel and AJ punches Rose in the face, allowing the tag off to Jericho. Chris cleans house and dropkicks Slater off the apron, followed by the Lionsault on Rose. AJ tags himself in though and the springboard forearm puts Adam away at 5:16 shown.

Rating: C. This was much more of a story than a match and there's nothing wrong with that. I'm not sure I needed a quick match to set up a match that was already set up but at least they didn't linger on this too long and it did help things a bit. AJ really does look like an equal with Jericho, which is more important than anything else.

Jericho gives AJ a Codebreaker post match.

We look at some of the reactions to Bryan's retirement.

Long recap of Lesnar/Ambrose/Reigns from Raw. Lesnar is promised for Smackdown next week, but wasn't he promised for this week too?

Here are the freshly heel Dudley Boyz with something to say. Bubba, now looking more like Bully Ray, talks about how everyone is talking about Daniel Bryan when people should be talking about them. D-Von thinks people are forgetting that they're the baddest team of all time. That's what the Usos forgot and that's what the Dudley Boyz had to remind them on Monday.

There are a lot of tables around ringside and it's the last time you're going to see them around here. Bubba orders the stagehands to get rid of these tables because the tables didn't win all those titles. Instead of wanting tables, the fans should be chanting for Bubba and D-Von. There's one table left in the ring but Bubba only gets as far as "D-Von, GET THE" before dropping the mic and carrying out the last table.

Sasha Banks vs. Naomi

Becky is on commentary. Banks quickly takes it to the mat and hammers on Naomi's face. Becky talks about wanting to win on her own but still respecting Sasha as Naomi gets in some shots to the ribs to take over. The fans are behind Banks as she trips Naomi up for the double knees to the ribs for two. Back with Naomi missing a good looking jumping kick to the head, allowing Sasha to get in a crucifix for two.

Sasha throws her to the floor and out onto Tamina as Lawler eggs Becky on about Sasha jumping her at the Rumble. That causes a bit too much smirking though and Naomi drives her back first into the apron with a Russian legsweep to take over. Back in and Naomi goes nuts with some rapid fire kicks (almost looking like she was dancing), capped off by an enziguri to knock Sasha silly.

We hit a chinlock for a bit before Sasha snaps off a headscissors to put both women down. Some clotheslines and another headscissors drop Naomi and a pair of knees in the corner get two. Tamina trips Sasha up to change control again, drawing Becky out of her chair. Naomi misses the split legged moonsault but Sasha goes outside to kick Tamina in the face. Back in and Naomi grabs a rollup, only to have Sasha reverse it into the Bank Statement for the tap out at 12:34.

Rating: B-. Becky and Sasha can't get more than five minutes but Naomi gets close to thirteen? Such is life in WWE of course. Either way, at least we got a good match out of it with a nice build towards the tag match at Fastlane. I could go for something else besides this quick stop before they head on to Wrestlemania where the title gets involved but at least we got a good TV match in the meantime.

AJ agrees that he's a redneck (and proud of it) but he's certainly not a rookie. Tonight he's showing Chris Jericho why he's known as the Phenomenal One.

Here are the Wyatts with something to say. Bray talks about sending people forward, only to have the bodies sent back in an urn. In Greek mythology, the titans fought the new gods but were conquered by Zeus. Today, their mythology is now our reality. Bray is now the king of the gods and these men are his army. You have seen what they have done to

Kane, Big Show and Ryback but they have their sights set on ridding WWE of its titans.

Harper says that the largest titans can be turned to mere mortals. Rowan thinks there's no point in resisting so bow your heads and accept your fate. Finally Strowman (who makes me think Harper needs a mask as it's strange to see just two of the guys wearing them) says the seas will boil because everything is changing. Bray is the angel of the dirt and the eater of worlds. This war has only just begun so follow the buzzards.

Neville/Lucha Dragons vs. Stardust/Ascension

I've been wondering where Neville was. The heels jump the heroes from behind to start and it's Stardust kicking Neville very close to low as we get going. Ascension takes turns slowly stomping in the corner before Viktor slaps on a chinlock. The Dragons are chased off the apron, allowing Neville to snap off an enziguri. The hot tag brings in Kalisto to speed things way up. Cara launches Kalisto into a dropkick on Viktor and it's a Salida Del Sol into a Swanton into the Red Arrow to put Konnor away at 2:59. That was a lot of fun for a short match and they didn't do anything we've been stuck watching for months now. Well done.

We see more Tweets on Bryan with Stephanie's getting the most focus. Were you expecting anything else?

We get a long, very well done recap on Bryan's retirement, including clips of his mainstream coverage, the retirement speech and his career, set to a song called Streets of Gold.

Chris Jericho vs. AJ Styles

Take two. Or is it three? AJ drives him into the corner to start and the fans think Styles is awesome. The drop down into the dropkick staggers Jericho but he trips AJ to the mat. That's fine with Styles as he nips up into a hurricanrana to drop Jericho again. A big chop puts AJ down though and the springboard dropkick knocks him to the floor as we take a break.

Back with AJ fighting out of a chinlock (what a coincidence as we're just coming back from a break) and sending Jericho into the corner to break up

a bulldog attempt. It's time to get creative as AJ hits the running forearm to a seated Jericho, only to have Chris blast him in the face to take over again.

Jericho tries to go up but gets caught with a Pele to put him back on the mat. A butterfly backbreaker and an enziguri get two for Jericho but he gets dropkicked out of the air. Lawler thinks that young whippersnapper AJ's undoing will be his long hair getting in his face and causing him to miss something. Chris grabs the rope to block a dropkick and the Lionsault gets two more.

Back up and AJ grabs a fireman's carry into a backbreaker but Chris slips out of the Clash and gets the Walls. The hold has to be dragged back to the middle though and AJ counters into the Calf Crusher. After some very close near taps, Jericho makes the ropes for the break. Chris heads outside so AJ takes him down with a slingshot dive. Back in and Jericho breaks up another springboard, setting up the Codebreaker for the pin at 15:57.

Rating: B+. This was more what I was expecting from the match on Raw as both guys got to show off. Styles is almost already turning that forearm into a signature spot that he can hit from anywhere, which is more than a lot of wrestlers can say. Jericho can still go and I'm almost sure this is going to set up the big blowoff match, maybe a 2/3 falls match at Fastlane.

Overall Rating: A-. Every so often this show just does a bunch of good wrestling matches and you get an entertaining night because of it. The main event was good and actually helped set up something going forward with the pay per view match between Jericho and Styles, while also giving us some good action throughout. If this is what Smackdown can become, I'd be more than happy every week.

Results

Chris Jericho/AJ Styles b. Adam Rose/Curtis Axel – Springboard forearm to Rose

Sasha Banks b. Naomi – Bank Statement

Neville/Lucha Dragons b. Stardust/Ascension – Red Arrow to Konnor

Chris Jericho b. AJ Styles – Codebreaker

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Monday Night Raw – February 1, 2016: It Takes Talent To Be This Shortsighted

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 1, 2016

Location: Legacy Arena, Birmingham, Alabama

Commentators: Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield, Michael Cole

We have a main event set for Fastlane and Brock Lesnar is back tonight to give us all three in the same building tonight. Other than that you can see most of the card from here, but the important questions are what happens between now and Wrestlemania and whether or not new stories will start after the February pay per view. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

We open with Brock and Heyman with the former in a new red Suplex City

shirt. Heyman immediately talks about the Wyatts, whose plot to get rid of Brock from the Royal Rumble worked, but it isn't keeping him out of the main event of Wrestlemania. Now Lesnar is in a triple threat at Fastlane and that means it's time for Roman Reigns and Dean Ambrose to go to Suplex City. After that, Lesnar will conquer the billion dollar trophy husband to become the new WWE World Heavyweight Champion. Heyman goes back to the triple threat so here's Ambrose to interrupt.

Dean gets right in Brock's face and asks Heyman (or Porky) who he's calling a nutjob. Ambrose isn't stupid, crazy or scared right now because he respects Lesnar. That's why he wants to stand in front of Brock and tell him how much he wants the title. He's willing to fight his brother and Lesnar at the same time, even though he knows the beating that's coming for him at Fastlane. It better be the best beating Lesnar has ever given though because Dean is going to do whatever it takes to go to Fastlane and take the title from HHH. Dean actually leaves with no violence and Lesnar smiles.

Kalisto vs. Rusev

Non-title and Alberto Del Rio is on commentary because he gets another title shot at Fastlane. Rusev (with Lana in his corner) shoves him around to start but Kalisto starts firing off the kicks that almost every small guy uses against a bigger opponent. A hurricanrana is blocked though, only to have Kalisto stay with it and take Rusev out to the floor. The champ's dive is countered by a kick to the head though and we take a break.

Back with Kalisto charging into a shot in the corner as some of the fans in the front rows are doing the Lucha Dragons dance. A tornado DDT sends Rusev down but he plants Kalisto with a release Rock Bottom for two of his own. As you might expect, Kalisto pops right back up with a dropkick to the knee and the hurricanrana driver.

Rusev obeys the referee's command to kick out but gets kicked to the floor. Kalisto's dive is caught but he escapes what looks like a fall away slam and dropkicks Rusev into the steps. Another hurricanrana sends Rusev into the barricade and Kalisto dives back in for the countout win

at 10:11. That was one of the slowest ten counts I've ever seen.

Rating: D+. Yeah yeah we get the idea: Kalisto goes through the League before getting to face Del Rio again. This would be so much easier to watch if we didn't have to see five matches between the two of them in about two months. I'm just tired of seeing the two of them fight, even though the matches are watchable enough.

Stephanie and Reigns are in the back with the new HHH World Title belt when Ambrose comes in. Both guys are willing to do whatever it takes to get that title at Wrestlemania but Stephanie implies that they might turn on each other. She even says Ambrose is Reigns' sidekick but Dean thinks it's the other way around. That earns them a match against New Day in the main event. Nothing we haven't seen on Smackdown a half dozen times, but WWE doesn't care about Smackdown either.

We look at Nikki Bella's neck surgery.

Brie Bella says her sister is in bed watching the WWE Network. Cue Charlotte and Ric to brag about beating Nikki for the Divas Title. Charlotte would be concerned about Nikki's injuries if she had any reason to. Brie is left looking sad and good night they're actually wanting to make me care about BRIE BELLA feeling bad? That's the point we've reached?

Usos vs. Curtis Axel/Adam Rose

The Usos are announced as the Grammy Award winning Tag Team of the Year. They even re-air it after the break to make fun of Lillian's flub. There's no Bo Dallas due to his dad being in the hospital, so Slater says he's in the studio after his battle with Flo Rida last week. Axel kicks Jey in the ribs to start and it's off to Rose, who comes in with a top rope knee to the chest. The announcers go on about Stephanie suggesting that absolute power corrupts absolutely because they exist to push her stupid lines.

Axel's chinlock keeps things slow and Rose's makes it even worse until Jimmy Enziguris him down. Jey comes in with a bunch of superkicks (including one where Axel telegraphed it worse than anything I've seen in

years). At least four superkicks in a row set up a double superkick and the Superfly Splash for the pin on Rose at 5:11.

Rating: 0. For obnoxious. Yeah Lillian screwed up a line so let's spend the whole match going on and on because NO ONE IN WWE HAS EVER SCREWED UP A LINE BECAUSE THEY'RE TOTALLY PERFECT AND THE GREATEST THING EVER. It's stuff like that which makes the whole company seem so stuck up that it drives me insane. Get over yourselves already and call the match instead of making fun of Garcia (a woman that people like Kevin Dunn, who I would almost bet was behind that whole thing, could never get) or talking about how insightful Stephanie's stuff was. The match sucked by the way.

Back from a break with WWE bragging about being on American Airlines in-flight magazine. Yeah that gets ten seconds but Lillian's flub gets a full match.

It's time for MizTV with special guest AJ Styles. Miz gets right to the point by cutting off AJ before he can say a word to every question. He lists off AJ's accomplishments such as being the smallest guy on the football team and coming from rural Georgia. AJ has gone all over the world and finally got to the WWE where he lasted nearly half an hour in the Royal Rumble. Then he defeated Chris Jericho in his debut match, which is a big reason why Miz sees a lot of Daniel Bryan in AJ.

Miz goes on another rant about how he fathered the YES Movement before telling the fans to be quiet. The fans think AJ (who hasn't said a word yet) can make it in the WWE without Miz's guidance but there's no chance of that happening. That's enough for AJ as he goes off on Miz in the corner and chases him off for the big hero moment. I get the idea here, but Miz actually gave AJ quite the introduction, which was probably the other intended purpose.

Brie Bella vs. Charlotte

Non-title, mainly because Brie never wins anything and therefore probably shouldn't be in this story. Brie starts fast but the BRIE MODE knee is countered with Charlotte sending her to the floor. The figure four neck lock keeps Brie in trouble but she makes the required clothesline comeback. Now the BRIE MODE knee (minus the shouting of BRIE MODE)

connects and it's off to a sleeper, only to have Ric get up on the apron. Amazingly enough the powers of Alicia Fox aren't enough to do anything, allowing Charlotte to use something like a Stunner to escape. Charlotte slaps on the Figure Four but gets rolled up for the pin at 4:45.

Rating: F. GAH THIS STUPID FREAKING COMPANY!!! So we already have the triple threat set up at Fastlane with the three NXT women but now we get the addition of BRIE BELLA so the spirit of Nikki can be upon us. I'm sure Brie will be fighting for her sister's honor or some nonsense like that because Brie and Nikki are now faces after being heels for like ever because of reasons that aren't important enough to explain. Didn't they learn anything in the Divas Revolution when Brie was dragging down every freaking match she was in with the NXT women? And it was a clean pin. On the champion. Live on Raw. Just so much dumb.

We look back at Big Show saving Reigns and Ambrose from the Wyatts on Smackdown.

Erick Rowan vs. Big Show

Show grabs the stairs to hold off Strowman and the announcers somehow don't bring up the stairs match these two had a few years back. Rowan can't suplex Show (because he's a big bad show tonight) and after spearing Strowman off the apron, the chokeslam puts Rowan away at 1:20.

Post match the Wyatts (minus Bray who is in Florida with his dad as well) beat Show down and slam him onto the steps.

Titus O'Neil vs. Tyler Breeze

At least Breeze has his full entrance back. Titus throws him into the corner to start but Breeze is smart enough to take out the knee, which is quickly wrapped around the post. We hit the half crab on Titus before he throws Tyler across the ring all the way from his back. A HUGE clothesline drops Breeze and the Clash of the Titus is good for the pin at 2:49.

HHH comes in to see Brock and asks why Dean was allowed to live. Brock says he'll see HHH at Wrestlemania.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Kevin Owens

Owens won last week and that's got me very worried here. It's a brawl to start with Owens naturally getting the better of it. Ziggler gets thrown over the top and into the timekeeper's area as we take a break. Back with Ziggler jawbreaking his way out of a chinlock but getting crushed by the Cannonball for two. A hard elbow drops Ziggler again but he avoids a charge in the corner and hits three straight Stinger Splashes.

Thankfully Kevin will have none of that and clotheslines Dolph's head off, only to get dumped out to the floor. Back in and Owens superkicks Dolph's head off for two but takes too long going up. Ziggler's superplex is blocked though, allowing Owens to get him into the Tree of Woe. Another Cannonball connects (that looked great) and now the Pop Up Powerbomb is...countered into the Zig Zag for the pin at 10:35.

Rating: D+. That's mostly for the ending because WWE is going out of their way to screw themselves over. Kevin Owens has the potential to be something fun and fresh as a heel but we need the 50/50 booking with DOLPH ZIGGLER. Owens could be a World Champion (and if there has EVER been a time when they need someone to step up and be a big deal, it might be before Wrestlemania with Rollins and Cena both hurt) by the end of the year but he's losing here because of whatever stupid philosophy they have. This actually made me mad and what makes it even worse is that you knew it was coming the whole way.

Video on Mark Henry for Black History Month.

Here's Sasha Banks for a match but first she has something to say. Sasha says she's on her own and no one is going to stop her from winning the title. This brings out Naomi and Tamina because the world was waiting for the Team BAD blowoff. Naomi says she knew this was coming but Sasha wants them to still be friends. They do the UNITY pose and everything seems cool. Of course.

Becky Lynch vs. Sasha Banks

They trade rollups to start with Sasha getting the better of it and hitting the double knees in the corner. Becky gets knocked to the floor

but Sasha doesn't want Tamina and Naomi to help. She says she doesn't need the help so Tamina and Naomi pull her to the floor for the DQ 3:40.

Rating: D+. No time of course because the NXT women never get a chance to do anything. I'd like to repeat though: no one cares about Tamina and Naomi and they're clearly just doing this (possibly a tag feud for Fastlane) so we can get BRIE BELLA as a title contender. Yeah it's a fill in challenger, but why not spend the extra time setting up your big Wrestlemania match instead of wasting your time on a nothing feud with no drama?

Post match Becky saves Sasha from the beatdown.

We get a clip of JBL interviewing Ron Simmons on the Network.

Chris Jericho says everyone has been talking about AJ Styles...except for him. Everything about their match last week was tremendous except for the outcome. AJ showed that he's a tenacious pitbull and Jericho is going to be watching AJ's match with Miz on Smackdown.

R-Truth goes into the bathroom and finds Goldust crouching on the toilet. Goldust still won't take no for an answer on the team but Truth thinks Goldust is a weirdo. That means it's time to bring up Little Jimmy, which seems to get to Truth a bit. Remember like eight days ago when Truth was still crazy and not the straight man in these vignettes?

New Day vs. Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose

Non-title because the champions need to lose again and Heyman is on commentary. Before the match, Woods talks about how the comments from Rock have Francesca so upset that she can't sleep at night. Rocky needs to think of the children, like the one they point at in the front row doing the New Day dance. Tonight they're taking care of Rock's cousin and they'll throw in Dean too.

Reigns and Kofi get things going with Kingston having to get out of a Samoan Drop, earning himself a right hand to the head. It's off to Dean for a basement clothesline as Heyman is already frustrated with Cole's talk about Ambrose staring Lesnar down earlier. The threat of the

Superman Punch causes Woods and Big E. to pull Kofi to the floor as we take a break.

Back with Big E. missing the Apron Splash but Ambrose is kept in trouble with a whip into the steps. Kofi kicks him in the head for two as Woods jumps in on commentary to yell about how awesome they are. Ambrose stays in trouble and Big E. gets two off a splash. Heyman is trying to get in on this but there's only so much you can do with Woods blasting that trombone.

We hit the abdominal stretch (Woods: "Stretch the abs!") but Dean doesn't like the spanking and bites Big E.'s nose. A suplex allows the hot tag to Reigns and it's time for some corner clotheslines. The other hot tag brings in Ambrose as everything breaks down. The Superman Punch sets up Dirty Deeds on Big E. for the pin at 17:22.

Rating: D+. Hey look: champions lose again clean. This is how things work in WWE this time of year and they really don't care how obvious they make it coming in. The match was fine but they made it clear that New Day was losing here for the sake of pushing Reigns and Ambrose. Pushing the two of them is fine, but it's really sad that they had no one else to lose to Reigns and Ambrose. Can you imagine sitting through another League "showdown"?

Post match Brock comes out for the showdown but New Day attacks Reigns, allowing Brock to F5 Ambrose to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. Oh man this one was rough. This was a show where they made it clear that they don't care what's going on until the night after Fastlane, which makes me wonder why I'm going to watch until then. We're getting stuff like Brie Bella fighting for the spirit of her sister, whose goal in life is to get John Cena to marry and impregnate her. That's my hero in the Divas division.

On top of that, there's the nonsense with the 50/50 booking. Again: the roster is so depleted right now and tonight we saw Dolph Ziggler, the definition of career midcarder, is beating Kevin Owens clean. Why? Just because Owens won last week and we need to set up something at Fastlane. Instead of having Owens look like a killer and setting up something big

at Wrestlemania, we need to see this nothing feud and story that is only taking place to fill in time before we get to Wrestlemania.

Then why have Fastlane? Why not just give us a ten week build to Wrestlemania? That's where WWE loses me. It's clear that they're just having a filler show at Fastlane, so why should I bother paying attention for the next three weeks? They're resetting again after the show and we've got a month before the biggest show of all time. Well done on making it feel special WWE. Really, it takes talent to be this shortsighted.

Results

Kalisto b. Rusev via countout

Usos b. Curtis Axel/Adam Rose – Superfly Splash to Rose

Brie Bella b. Charlotte – Small package

Big Show b. Erick Rowan – Chokeslam

Titus O'Neil b. Tyler Breeze – Clash of the Titus

Dolph Ziggler b. Kevin Owens – Zig Zag

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose b. New Day – Dirty Deeds to Big E.

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Smackdown – November 5, 2015: The Calm Before The Tournament

Smackdown

Date: November 5, 2015

Location: World Arena, Colorado Springs, Colorado

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Rich Brennan, Booker T.

As inconsequential as Smackdown is most of the time, this show is even moreso than usual. Last night at a house show in Ireland, Seth Rollins ripped his knee to shreds and is out until next summer. The title has been vacated for a tournament at Survivor Series but this show was already taped in advance so most of this isn't going to matter. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

There's another Survivor Series match tonight with the Prime Time Players and Lucha Dragons vs. the Wyatt Family. So yeah, they've built up the Dragons and now they're feeding them to the Wyatts three days later.

Here's MexAmerica to open things up. Colter talks about how there will be no hatred in MexAmerica. We don't need borders in our lives because we will all be one great nation. There are black hearts out there who lie about hating at least one person in the world and they don't belong. Viva MexAmerica.

Alberto Del Rio vs. Neville

Non-title. Del Rio starts with the kicks in the corner and another to the back for an early two. A quick headscissors takes Alberto down and Neville gets two of his own off a standing shooting star, only to have a

Backstabber send him to the floor. Back from a break with Del Rio in control until Neville sends him outside for a moonsault to the floor. Neville slams him on the top of his head with a hurricanrana (intentionally, called a spike rana by Brennan). He tries a few too many flips though, allowing Del Rio to kick him off the top and into the Tree of Woe, setting up the double stomp for the pin at 9:46.

Rating: C+. Fun back and forth match here and I'm very glad that Del Rio isn't using the superkick as often as he's done before. It's kind of odd that they would have that move get him the big win against Cena and then he goes with something else for most of his matches. Maybe the superkick is supposed to be his big finisher that he only uses for major matches?

Post match Del Rio hits the low superkick. So much for any rhyme or reason. Neville gets put in the cross armbreaker but Jack Swagger makes the save.

Usos vs. Ascension

Again the booking makes little sense. You can throw Ascension out here to job but you can't put them out against the Dragons on Monday and sacrifice Barrett and Sheamus instead? Jimmy and Viktor start and after ducking Viktor's leapfrog, it's time to dance. Viktor doesn't like dancing (there's a Footloose joke in there somewhere) and sends Jimmy to the floor, followed by a catapult into Konnor's spinebuster.

Booker talks about training the Usos in an interesting bit as we hit the chinlock. An enziguri gets Jimmy out of trouble and it's the double tag as everything breaks down. Here's the finishing sequence: superkick, double superkick, double superkick, Superfly Splash to Viktor for the pin at 4:14.

Rating: C-. I am so, so sick of superkicks. There are now at least ten people on the active roster that uses them in one form or another. I mean.....do something else! The Usos looked good here and should be a nice set of challengers for the New Day. They've been out long enough that they feel fresh again and can certainly back it up in the ring.

We look at Bray's speech and fireworks display on Monday.

Wyatt Family vs. Prime Time Players/Lucha Dragons

Survivor Series rules but they still don't know if 4 on 4 or 5 on 5 is the traditional format. Rowan throws Young around to start and it's off to Harper vs. Titus. We get the traditional reference to Lawler's mini Kings as Bray comes in to destroy Young. With the situation well in hand, it's back to Harper for a catapult into the bottom rope. The announcers bring up the idea that the Wyatts injured Orton's shoulder for a nice surprise.

Bray hits Darren in the face to stop a comeback and it's off to Strowman who has really cooled off in the last few weeks. Strowman chokes Young off on the apron but drops him at five, giving us a countout elimination at 5:13. Back from a break with Titus as the next designated victim. Harper takes him into the corner where Titus tries a comeback, only to get dragged to the bad corner again.

O'Neil finally escapes and makes the tag off to Cara as things speed way up. A suicide dive takes out Rowan and a hurricanrana gets two on Harper. Rowan breaks up another cover but Kalisto knocks him to the floor. The discus lariat knocks Cara out cold for the elimination at 12:54. Kalisto comes in for his kicks but walks into a half nelson suplex. It's back to Rowan for his fist head vice for a bit before Kalisto manages to low bridge him to the floor.

Strowman pulls Titus off the apron, leaving Kalisto to kick Harper down. A handspring into an enziguri staggers Bray but Rowan gets in a full nelson slam to put Kalisto out at 16:01, leaving Titus alone 4-1. Rowan starts so Titus fires off right hands and a clothesline. The Clash of the Titans puts Harper down but Bray and Erick make the save. Strowman chokes him out and Sister Abigail FINALLY ends this at 19:59.

Rating: D-. What the heck was the point of this? This is supposed to make me want to watch Survivor Series? A twenty minute squash where you knew what the lone high spots were Kalisto and Sin Cara doing their stuff before getting squashed as you knew they were going to be? Bad idea here in a match that should have taken half as long.

Ambrose talks about waking up this morning at 11am for a chat with the

spirit of John Denver, who gave him a new song and told him that he would have a match tonight. Owens comes in to say Dean is annoying Renee and remind him of what he has to do tonight to be a champion. Tonight won't be like the ten man circus on Monday. Dean: "John Denver warned me about that guy."

King Barrett vs. Ryback

They're on the floor in a hurry with Barrett posting him a few times in a row. A big boot gets two for the King and a Boss Man Slam gets the same. We hit the chinlock for a bit and Barrett even jumps onto his back, only to be moved over into the Shell Shock for the pin at 2:20. Raise your hand if you believed Barrett's latest push was going to make it a month before falling apart.

Recap of Team Bad beating Natalya down last week.

Team Bad laughs at Natalya for getting annoyed at the attack last week. Natalya has gone nuclear and gone to FACEBOOK to challenge Team Bad's leader. Sasha seems to think that's her so I guess that's our match.

Natalya vs. Tamina

This is decided after a brief argument between the other two. Tamina runs Natalya over to start and drops a knee. Booker: "When you need a job done, you call Tamina." There's a lot of truth in that. Fans: "WE WANT SASHA!" Tamina: "YOU CAN'T HAVE HER!" You know what they can have though? A superkick! Off to a chinlock for a bit before Natalya hits a quick discus lariat. Sasha's distraction breaks up the Sharpshooter though and it's a Samoan drop to put Natalya down again. The Superfly Splash hits knees though and Natalya grabs a rollup for the pin at 3:49.

Rating: D. Well she certainly did the job. I'm hoping this leads to the end of Team Bad and the teams in general as there's has been no reason for them to exist for the last several months. Keep in mind that they've only been around for about three months now and I think you get the idea.

Recap of the Survivor Series match from Monday.

We get an inserted announcement of Rollins' injury and the tournament.

Dean Ambrose vs. Kevin Owens

Non-title because of course it is. This is another thing I don't understand: assuming Ambrose doesn't pin him here, why not make this a title match? Dean pinned him on Monday so why not do it here and potentially build to a rematch at the pay per view? Either that or don't do this match here. Lawler: "Owens has been in the hospital several time for narcissism treatment. He keeps checking himself out." Dang it why did that make me chuckle? They trade headlocks to start (Kevin: "My headlock is better than yours!") and Dean armdrags him to the floor.

Back from a break with Dean cranking on an armbar before clotheslining Owens over the top. Kevin sends him hard into the barricade to take over though, followed by the backplash inside. Owens takes too much time yelling at Lawler though, allowing Dean to get in a superplex. The standing elbow drop gets two and a missile dropkick puts Kevin down again. Owens superkicks him into the ropes for the rebound lariat (thankfully not called the Lunatic Lariat) but Owens claims a low blow off a kick and that's a DQ at 13:47.

Rating: C+. I could see these two having a really good feud if they're allowed to go off the rails a little bit with the promos and build. Then again it's hard to say if the match is going to happen as these two are strong candidates for the upcoming tournament. Good enough here though and I liked the twist on the ending instead of Owens just walking out.

The replay shows that the kick was way above the waist. Dean goes after him but Owens bails into the crowd to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. That Survivor Series match really brought this show down as the rest of it was pretty good. As I said though, it's really hard to know where Survivor Series is going as a lot of the show is going to be dedicated to the tournament, but there's not much else they can do. Good enough show here though as Smackdown has been doing a bit better lately.

Results

Alberto Del Rio b. Neville – Top rope double stomp

Usos b. Ascension – Superfly Splash to Viktor

Wyatt Family b. Prime Time Players/Lucha Dragons last eliminating Titus O'Neil

Ryback b. King Barrett – Shell Shock

Natalya b. Tamina – Rollup

Kevin Owens b. Dean Ambrose via DQ when Ambrose kicked him low

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Smackdown – September 3, 2015: I Approve Of These Developments

Smackdown

Date: September 3, 2015

Location: American Airlines Arena, Miami, Florida

Commentators: Rich Brennan, Jerry Lawler, Jimmy Uso

This seems like it's going to be another midcard heavy episode as the

main event players, save for the champion, who is arguably the lowest of the three people involved in the story, who is known to slum it here on Smackdown. The only major event announced is Lana and Dolph Ziggler appearing on MizTV. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's New Day to continue their SAVE THE TABLES campaign. Woods: "A table is a terrible thing to waste." Kofi calls tables the backbone of human achievement and thinks we wouldn't be here without hard working tables. The pilgrims and Indians had the first Thanksgiving at a table. The Declaration of Independence was written on a table. Walter Cronkite announced the moon landing while sitting at a table. Above all that though: New Day signed their WWE contracts at a table. Kofi: "I remember that!"

The Dudleyz don't respect tables but we can all change that. A Save-The-Tables clap starts up but here are the Dudleyz to interrupt. We see a clip of Woods going through a table and Bubba says history is going to repeat itself. This brings out the Prime Time Players who say the Dudleyz have to earn their keep. You mean like by beating the champs a few days ago? Bubba says they're here to put people through tables and win championships. Titus has two tickets to send them back to Dudleyville and it's time for a match.

Dudley Boyz vs. Prime Time Players

New Day is on commentary and Woods wants to know why Titus wants to send the Dudleyz back to where they live. That's not a great gift. D-Von slams Young down and hits that twisting elbow to the jaw of his. A lot of trash is talked and it's time for a break. Back with Big E. doing his reporter voice as it's off to Bubba vs. Young. Woods only sees half of Bubba due to all the camouflage and calls the Dudleyz table poachers. Soon New Day will have heavy heads because they'll be wearing the crown that makes them the greatest of all time.

The reverse 3D gets two on Young but he enziguris Bubba for a breather. New Day starts a SAVE THE TABLES dance as Titus comes in off the hot tag. Titus cleans house as Woods describes him as a German Sheppard that ate

too many stale potato chips. Bubba elbows O'Neil in the jaw and it's 3D for the pin at 9:07.

Rating: C. New Day continues to be one of the most entertaining things WWE has come up with in years. The key thing to their comedy: it's clearly not scripted. It's obviously the three of them just riffing on what they're seeing and having fun with it, which makes the whole thing that much funnier. The match itself was fine too as the story is simple yet effective. That's often better than something in depth where things get too bogged down by ideas.

Kofi slaps D-Von in the back of the head as New Day leaves.

Post break it's time for a New Day trombone dance party, but Renee Young tells them they're facing Roman Reigns and Dean Ambrose tonight. Woods immediately plays a sad note on the trombone.

Stardust vs. Neville

No match as the Ascension of all people jump Neville during his entrance. Stardust says Neville is flying too close to the sun and the Ascension are the new conniving cohorts. The Fall of Man leaves Neville laying. Welcome to the Cosmic Wasteland. I heartily approve of this development.

Cesaro is talking about his match with Sheamus tonight when Sheamus interrupts. Tonight, Cesaro will be good but not good enough, just like always as he disappoints the Cesaro section one more time. Cesaro's big comeback: Sheamus does look stupid up close.

Sheamus vs. Cesaro

Cesaro has taped up ribs from going into the announcers' table on Monday. Sheamus bails to the floor to start and tells the fans that he doesn't look stupid. It's quickly back inside with Cesaro clotheslining him down and MESSING WITH THE MOHAWK. A suplex drops Sheamus with the ribs having no sign of injury whatsoever. Sheamus sends him hard into the corner though and the ribs are suddenly in agony as we go to a break. Back with Sheamus cranking on a chinlock with a knee in Cesaro's back.

They slug it out from their knees and Cesaro takes over with European

uppercuts. A dropkick knocks Sheamus off the top and out to the floor as Lawler isn't sure how the ribs are holding up. Cesaro's big running European uppercut knocks Sheamus into the barricade and Cesaro gets two off a high cross body. So much for the selling. The Irish Curse sets up the Cloverleaf but Cesaro is out before it can go on full. The Crossface is countered by elbows to the ribs and it's a Brogue Kick to give Sheamus the pin at 10:36.

Rating: C+. This was a hard one to grade as they beat each other up for a long time but the ribs weren't used for most of the match. The injury played into the ending though and that's a plus, but Cesaro casually hitting a high cross body for two and then just putting a hand on the ribs isn't enough for me. That being said, Sheamus is right: Cesaro comes up short again and it's been old for a long time.

It's time for MizTV. This past Monday, Raw turned into Days of Our Lives with everything happening between Ziggler, Lana and Summer Rae. Oh and Rusev is in there too somewhere. We get a long recap package, meaning we see almost the entire thing. Miz's first guest tonight is Summer Rae, complete with her CALL TO ME CALL TO ME song. That's going to be stuck in my head all day now.

Summer calls Monday unfortunate but admits that there's more to the story. Monday night, Dolph kissed her. Miz: "HE KISSED YOU???" It quickly turned from passion to guilt because she already has the most amazing man in the world. This brings out Dolph and Lana with Ziggler making fun of Miz despite things being kind of serious.

Summer accuses Dolph of having something going on with her for months now and we see a clip of Summer kissing Dolph in June 2014, though it seemed to be more to tick off Fandango. Yeah remember Fandango? WWE doesn't either. Summer says they've been together at hotels as recently as last week and Lana goes after her. Lana storms off and Summer shouts that she can't handle the truth.

Bo Dallas vs. R-Truth

Dallas takes him into the corner and slams Truth down before driving knees into the head. Off to some chinlockery but Truth fights up and gets

two off a side kick. That goes nowhere as Dallas drapes Truth's feet over the top rope and twist him down with a suplex spinning neckbreaker for the pin at 2:37.

Bo gives him another one post match and takes a victory lap.

We look back at Monday's Beat the Clock Challenge with Charlotte getting the Divas Title shot at Night of Champions.

Charlotte praises her teammates when the Bellas come up so Nikki can brag about the record. If there isn't at least a title defense before that night, this is going to reach an even lower level of stupid. Thankfully Charlotte says she's petitioned the Authority to have their match before the record is broken. If that is approved, the whole record comes crashing down. Tick tock Nikki.

Tamina vs. Charlotte

Tamina shoves Charlotte down to start but gets W00ed for her efforts. A test of strength goes nowhere so Tamina takes her head off with a clothesline for two. Charlotte comes back by kicking her in the face and a spear, followed by Natural Selection for the pin at 3:18.

Rating: D+. The match was just there to give Charlotte more momentum, but the idea of the title match taking place before the record could be the most interesting thing to happen to this division in a long time. That is, assuming they take the title off Nikki. Of course it would also make the first month of the Divas Revolution a total waste of time because the title was never mentioned, but did I mention how awesome Stephanie's introduction of it was? That makes up for the whole thing.

Team Bella comes out to pose.

Long recap of the Cena/Rollins/Sting issues from Monday.

Kevin Owens brags about beating Cesaro twice in a row to silence the Cesaro Section. That brings him to the next people he wants to be quiet: the people who are critical of his weight. He isn't going to change his diet though. Instead, feed him more. That's about as good of an idea as there is for him right now.

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose vs. New Day

Big E. and Kofi here and this is non-title. Ambrose and Kingston get things going with Kofi actually punching him into the New Day corner. Woods wants us to pay attention to the educated fists of one Big E. Reigns comes in for half of a double suplex on Big E. for two but gets sent down into the corner as well. It's time for some trombone playing, followed by a quickly broken chinlock. E. splashes him in the corner but eats a big clothesline, allowing the tag off to Ambrose.

Dean cleans house and feeds Kofi in to Reigns for a clothesline. New Day is knocked outside and Dean dives onto all three as we take a break. Back with Kofi kicking Dean in the chest and slapping on another chinlock. Woods: "I HAVE A TROMBONE!" The Big E. splash gets two but Dean avoids a charge in the corner. He blocks Big E.'s belly to belly superplex and hits a nice missile dropkick. The nip up doesn't work so well though in an unintentionally funny moment.

Reigns comes in to clean house and Jimmy is way too excited. Woods' distraction lets Kofi grab a rollup for two, earning him a big powerbomb for the same. Dean sends E. into the barricade as Kofi springboards into the Superman Punch, drawing in Xavier for the DQ at 12:07.

Rating: C+. This was fine and the ending is a lot better than having the Dudleyz beat them clean on Monday. New Day gets to hold up the titles and swear that Kofi was going to kick out while everyone knows they're lying. It's a simple formula, but unfortunately WWE doesn't know how to keep that formula from getting repetitive. I really like New Day moving up the ladder like this though as they're definitely more than just another tag team. I mean, can you imagine the Prime Time Players in this role? It only works with the right kind of act, like New Day.

New Day gets their clocks cleaned (you never want a dirty clock) but Dean wants more. He wants another shot at Strowman and the Wyatt Family RIGHT NOW. Bray pops up on screen and says let's do this at Night of Champions. Can you hear the footsteps of the apocalypse walking among them in the form of a black sheep? Run.

Overall Rating: C. Totally acceptable show here with the wrestling being

fine, but above all else we actually got some storyline development for a change. Now granted it would be better if we had some major matches here instead of just the announcement of such matches, but I'll take what I can get where I can get it. Not a bad show here and that's more than you can say about Smackdown most of the time.

Results

Dudley Boyz b. Prime Time Players – 3D to O'Neil

Sheamus b. Cesaro – Brogue Kick

Bo Dallas b. R-Truth – Draping suplex neckbreaker

Charlotte b. Tamina – Natural Selection

Roman Reigns/Dean Ambrose b. New Day when Xavier Woods interfered

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**Monday Night Raw – August 10,
2015: Wet Hot American**

Summerslam Build

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 10, 2015

Location: Xfinity Arena, Everett, Washington

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

We have less than two weeks before Summerslam and the question at the moment is whether or not John Cena is going to be able to defend his US Title in the main event against World Champion Seth Rollins due to his recently broken nose. The majority of the card is set already so the next few shows are just going to be about firming up the existing programs. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Rollins to open the show, complete with another video of the knee to the nose. Rollins is still wondering where Cena is, as he issued his challenge for Summerslam last week but there hasn't been a reply yet. Where has Cena been? Jamming on the new Dr. Dre album and contemplating reigniting his rap "career?" Cena is straight out of action, not straight out of Compton.

Rollins doesn't understand why he hasn't heard from Cena as John is scheduled for Tough Enough tomorrow. If he can be on that show, it makes Seth think that Cena is cowering from the champ. Rollins gets word that Cena is here but it's via satellite. We get a picture of Cena with only his mouth moving out of a late night talk show sketch.

"Cena", in Rollins' voice, says Yabba Dabba Doo and says he's going to Tough Enough to apply for a new job. It's gone from Hustle, Loyalty and Respect to surgery, recovery and rehab. Cena is giving up because his nose was so destroyed and there's no way he can beat Rollins and because he looks like he got a nose job from Picasso.

Seth talks about last week's WWE World Title Open Challenge but here's Cesaro to interrupt. Cesaro doesn't like hearing Rollins going on and on and on and on, but he does like hearing about another Open Challenge.

Rollins says not so fast because Cesaro hasn't earned it, but here's Kevin Owens to interrupt as well.

Kevin says Cesaro believes in himself because of a bunch of CESARO SECTION signs, but why should either of these two have any say when neither of them can beat John Cena? Cena beat Rollins a few weeks back but Owens pinned Cena, so he should get the shot. Now it's Rollins coming out to make fun of Owens' gut and Cesaro's glasses but Rollins says Tom Brady has a better chance of getting a free meal in Seattle than any of them do of getting a title shot tonight, so they can all get out of here.

This brings out HHH, who didn't like Rollins saying he doesn't care what the Authority thinks. The doctors have told him that Cena is 50/50 for Summerslam, so Rollins might need a backup opponent. Therefore, tonight there's going to be a triple threat match with Cesaro vs. Orton vs. Owens, and the winner gets a title shot against Rollins TONIGHT. There were some funny lines in here, which makes me think the WWE writers had nothing to do with it. This also ran too long, which isn't surprising as they could have cut this WAY down.

Team BAD vs. Team Bella

PCB (their new name after an adult site had already taken Submission Sorority. You can't make that stuff up) is on commentary. In an inset interview, Team BAD debuts the term Belladashians and I want to reach for a gun. Naomi elbows Fox in the face to start but it's off to Nikki for two off a back elbow. BAD takes over on the champ though with Naomi doing her corner wiggle, earning her a spinebuster from Nikki for two. Nikki's spinning kick out of the corner drops Naomi again and we take a break.

Back with Sasha getting two on Nikki as PCB laughs at the idea of the Bellas starting the Divas Revolution. Nikki finally gets free and makes the hot tag to Brie, who is as over as she's ever been since it's her husband's home territory. Brie cleans house as everything breaks down but Tamina gets in a few good shots. The superkick is loaded up but Brie gets a HORRIBLE looking rollup for the pin on Tamina at 9:00. Come on, it's a ROLLUP. How can you not do that properly?

Rating: C. This was fine for the most part but the ending sequence was a

letdown. I like the idea of putting Brie in there where she's going to be popular, but I'm getting really tired of the Bellas not knowing if they're faces or heels from one week to another. You can't have their personalities on Total Divas and then expect people to cheer for them on Raw. Well at least you can't if you have the slightest bit of intelligence about you.

Everyone brawls post match and the Bellas and Fox are knocked to the floor, leaving everyone else to have a staredown. So much for winning meaning anything.

Stephen Amell is here.

New Day vs. Los Matadores

Kofi's grin as he skips to the ring is greatness. New Day takes over early on and we hit the rotating stomps on Diego in the corner as Woods plays cheerleader on the floor. Big E. slams Diego down for two but he misses a charge into the post. The tag brings in Fernando to speed things up with some weird shouting and a springboard flip dive to take Kofi down. Woods gets Kofi out of the way of a charge but Torito takes him over with a hurricanrana. The Midnight Hour is enough to put Fernando away at 4:01.

Rating: D+. It's just a squash but it's nice to get the Matadores out of the running for the title shot. I don't think anyone would have bought them in there and it never would have worked. I'm really hoping we aren't stuck with New Day vs. Prime Time Players again but adding another team or two would spruce things right up.

Post break New Day is dancing and singing in the back when Renee Young comes in and says it's New Day vs. the Prime Time Players vs. Los Matadores vs. Lucha Dragons. New Day thinks we should just add Doom, Men on a Mission and Harlem Heat but then decide that a four way is fine. Renee even joins in on the clapping. I'm very glad WWE has basically said Los Matadores losing there meant nothing as they're instantly in the title match anyway. Why do we watch these TV matches again?

HHH gives Rollins a pep talk. It's a wonder that Rollins isn't sitting on

his daddy's knee for this one.

We recap Reigns issuing a challenge on Smackdown for himself/Ambrose vs. Wyatt/Harper at Summerslam, which was accepted at the end of the show. Take note, as this is one of the only times all year that something actually happens on Summerslam.

Cesaro vs. Randy Orton vs. Kevin Owens

No one gets an entrance as they're all in the ring when we come back from a break. Owens gets double teamed to start so he bails to the floor, leaving Orton to roll Cesaro up for a fast two. Cesaro can't swing Owens so he gets two off a double stomp instead. Orton pops back up for a pair of t-bone suplexes but Owens is able to post Cesaro and snap Orton's throat across the top rope.

A backslash gets two on Randy as this is very fast paced so far. The fans are behind Kevin as he hammers Orton down in the corner. Cesaro comes back in and Orton is sent to the floor. That's fine with Owens who knocks Cesaro outside with him, only to have Orton drop Cesaro back first onto the barricade. Owens drops Cesaro onto the barricade as well but Orton sends Kevin into it so he won't feel left out.

All three get back in with Owens busting out a string of European uppercuts, only to walk into Orton's backbreaker. Cesaro high cross bodies Orton for two more but he has to counter the RKO into a Crossface. Randy grabs a rope but it doesn't count in a triple threat because it's No DQ, so Orton crawls to the floor for the break. Owens knocks Cesaro to the floor and hits a flip dive to take both guys out as we take a break, with Cesaro holding his knee.

Back with Cesaro on his feet in the corner but getting sent into the buckle for the Cannonball to give Owens another near fall. Owens goes up top but has to fight off a superplex. That's fine for one person, but Orton and Cesaro are easily able to double superplex him down in a cool looking visual. It's Cesaro covering for two but Orton will have none of that.

They slug it out instead and Randy gets swung, setting up the

Sharpshooter. Cesaro lets go because of Owens, but the Swing is kicked away, sending Cesaro into Orton. Randy is fine enough to powerslam Owens though, sending both guys to the apron for a double Orton DDT.

Cesaro breaks up the RKO and hits a nice dive to take Owens out, followed by a springboard twisting European uppercut for two. That was one heck of a sequence. Cesaro takes Owens up to but gets shoved down, only to put his knees up to block the Swanton. A superkick takes Cesaro's head off but it's an RKO to block the Pop Up Powerbomb. Cesaro eats an RKO as well, giving Orton the pin and the title shot at 18:15.

Rating: B+. Yeah Orton won, but if Cesaro won here and lost to Rollins tonight, people would have complained about Cesaro getting pinned. On the other hand, if Owens won here and lost to Rollins tonight, people would have complained about Owens getting pinned. Now on the third hand (find a friend who will lend you a hand), Orton can win and then lose to Rollins and people will only complain about it being Orton in the main event slot again, as it was pretty clear he would be when he came out for the opening segment. Really good match of course, as you would expect with those three in there.

Ambrose said he didn't have a friend growing up, but it's nice to have one now so he can get bailed out of jail in Laredo. Reigns thinks Wyatt wouldn't do anything for Harper because they're not family. Ambrose knows how Reigns likes his coffee, water and beer, which is proof that they're brothers. Believe that.

We get quick thoughts from various legends and wrestlers about the history of Undertaker and how amazing the Streak really was. Heyman wants to hear about the myth of Brock Lesnar, which leads to a variety of people talking about how unique Brock's skills really are and how you can only hope to survive instead of defeating him.

We see some clips of the Streak ending and people talk about what a shock it was. Heyman's look of astonishment when the pin actually happened was perfect. Then fifteen months later Undertaker interrupted Brock squashing Rollins at Battleground and a huge brawl ensued the next night on Raw. The talking heads are split on their pick for Summerslam. This was every

“they’re both so awesome” segment you’ve ever seen.

Undertaker and Lesnar will both be here next week, in Brock’s hometown of Minneapolis.

Dean Ambrose vs. Luke Harper

Reigns and Wyatt are at ringside. Ambrose slugs away at Harper to start as I think we get a SEA-HAWKS chant early on. A big side slam plants Dean for two but he low bridges Harper to the floor for a running standing elbow from the apron as we take an early break. Back with Harper Gator Rollins Harper and putting on a chinlock. Wyatt has taken Byron’s chair so Byron is left standing. Fans: “SIT DOWN BYRON!”

Ambrose fights out of a chinlock and scores with a tornado DDT but Dirty Deeds is countered. The fight spills outside with Dean blasting Wyatt over the table and heading back inside for the rebound clothesline on Harper. Reigns intercepts Bray before he can interfere but eats a superkick from Harper. That earns Harper a suicide dive from Ambrose but Dean gets crotched back inside. The discus clothesline puts Dean away at 9:35.

Rating: C. I liked this more than I would have expected to given how many times we’ve seen them fight. The tag match at Summerslam should be fun, but it doesn’t quite feel like a huge match. It’s still not really clear why Wyatt hates Reigns, but at least there’s enough of a backstory there to warrant another match.

It’s time for MizTV, but first of all Miz has to rip on Amell, saying that once Stardust runs through him, call Miz up for some rebranding and acting lessons. Tonight’s guest is Daniel Bryan and it take a bit for the chants to wear down. Miz asks for quiet so the chants get even louder. Bryan, in a funny timid voice: “Miz wants you to shut up so you better be quiet!”

Bryan finally gets a chance to speak and says he isn’t just here to be on MizTV. Of course he wasn’t going to miss Raw in Washington and it’s time for that SEA-HAWKS chant again. Miz reminds the people that he’s a Cleveland Browns fan (that explains so much) before bringing up mentoring

Bryan on the first season of NXT. Bryan mocks Miz's Hollywood career and wardrobe, but thinks that his own accomplishments are due to hard work and all the fans around the world. Miz asks about Bryan's medical status, which is still not great. That brings Bryan to his new book, which is a New York Times bestseller, and Tough Enough.

Miz goes on to Ryback and the Intercontinental Title, which should be awarded to Miz after all this waiting. Cue Big Show to call Miz a cross dressing Jedi manure spreader. The fans tell Big Show to retire but he says find someone to retire him. This brings out the returning Ryback so Miz bails, but Bryan throws him back inside to meet the monsters. Ryback cleans house and poses with Bryan to end things.

Video on Charlotte.

It's a three team Divas elimination tag at Summerslam.

Mark Henry vs. Rusev

Lana is on commentary and confirms that Dolph will be back after Summerslam. Summer quickly gets on the apron for a distraction but Lana pulls her down. That's fine with Rusev who superkicks Henry down, only to have both girls come in for the no contest at 1:07.

Summer puts Lana in the Accolade and a Rusev flag falls.

We recap Neville vs. Stardust over the last week.

Neville vs. King Barrett

Neville starts fast, kicks Barrett in the head and scores with the Red Arrow for the pin at 1:20. Total and complete squash because that's what Barrett does.

Stardust comes in to lay Neville out but stops for a staredown with Amell. He knocks Amell's hat off and Stephen jumps the railing, jumps to the apron and jumps over the top rope to tackle Stardust in a pretty impressive athletic display. Security quickly breaks it up.

After a break HHH yells at Amell, but Stephen wants a tag match at

Summerslam. HHH laughs the idea off, but Amell shouts him down and offers to sign any waivers he has to sign. Ever the genius, HHH agrees to a tag match between Wade Barrett (yes Wade)/Stardust vs. Amell/Neville at Summerslam. HHH: "Don't bring a stunt man."

Sheamus doesn't care if Rollins or Orton wins tonight because he might just cash in on either of them.

WWE World Title: Randy Orton vs. Seth Rollins

Rollins is defending and stalls on the floor early on. The champ comes in and the threat of an RK0 sends him bailing to the floor as we go to the final commercial. Back with Rollins holding a chinlock before Orton makes a comeback with clotheslines and the powerslam for two. That's enough for Seth as he goes outside to get the belt, only to eat another clothesline from Orton. He drops Rollins on the announcers' table before they head back inside where Seth nails the low superkick.

The champ gets crotched on top and superplexed down for two. Orton can't follow up but is able to counter the Pedigree, only to have his DDT countered. Rollins his one of his own and teases the RK0 but settles for another failed Pedigree attempt. Orton backdrops him to the apron for the springboard knee but Seth dives into the RK0 (in one of those spots where he was clearly just diving that way so he could dive into the move), drawing in Sheamus for the DQ at 13:38.

Rating: C+. Yeah fine. I think we all knew this was the ending and there was nothing wrong with that as they weren't going to change the title just two weeks before Summerslam. Good enough match though as these two have chemistry, but they need to get off this Sheamus vs. Orton stuff already because it's really not interesting.

Post match Sheamus Brogue Kicks Rollins and goes to cash in but eats the RK0 to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. Not a great show this week but they moved things forward going into Summerslam and that's all that mattered. I'm digging the idea of the title being defended on TV as even though it's highly unlikely that we'd see a title change, the mere chance that it could

happen makes the match feel better. I liked this show a lot better than the recent weeks and while it's still not excellent, at least it's a step in the right direction and the kind of show they needed to have tonight.

Results

Team Bella b. Team BAD – Rollup to Tamina

New Day b. Los Matadores – Midnight Hour to Fernando

Randy Orton b. Cesaro and Kevin Owens – RK0 to Cesaro

Luke Harper b. Dean Ambrose – Discus lariat

Rusev vs. Mark Henry went to a no contest when Lana and Summer Rae interfered

Neville b. King Barrett – Red Arrow

Randy Orton b. Seth Rollins via DQ when Sheamus interfered

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So This Paige vs. Bellas

Storyline...

Makes me think of some more fantasy booking. And again, this isn't anything revolutionary and isn't meant to be.

So the story is that the Divas on the main roster aren't willing to help Paige out against the Bellas. Therefore, Paige is in need of someone to help her out. Maybe she goes back to her roots. Back to where she started. Back down to NXT. Not for a fresh start or anything, but for reinforcements. Like.....Sasha Banks, Bayley, Charlotte and Becky Lynch.

I know you hear about these invasion storylines all the time, but in this case I dig the idea. Why not use this opportunity to bring some of them up and breathe some much needed life into that division? Is anyone going to miss Layla or Tamina or Eva Marie or even Natalya? Bring in some fresh blood and cut some of these girls that never do anything.

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