

Ryan Mulligan's Smackdown TV report for November 7

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Sign of the night, "I voted for Festus."

Last weekend on "SmackDown," Chavo Guerrero was unsuccessful in his attempt to cause The Undertaker's brains to explode in mind-bending terror, Festus nearly bear-pawed a magician, and MVP did the job. This week on "SmackDown," Vladimir Kozlov attempts to push-kick his way into a WWE Championship match against HHH at "Survivor Series," while simultaneously battling mortality, as he goes one-on-one with The Dead Man, Victoria and Natalya get TWINNED~!, and MVP does the job.

Right off the bat we've got big things poppin' and little things stoppin', as it's time for another captivating installment of "The VIP Lounge." MVP says he knows he's been on a bit of a losing streak lately, but assures us that he'll soon get that one elusive win that will reward him with a generous payday. A small portion of the crowd responds to this by chanting, "MVP!" Perhaps a sympathy-fueled face turn? MVP gets rudely cut off by The Great Khali and Runjin "Epic Sideburns" Singh at this point, and they decide to bring the "haha" by informing us that it's time for another installment of "The Khali Kiss Cam." Seriously? THAT'S what you chose to open the show with? MVP decides he doesn't want to be involved, although he does stick around outside the ring to slightly improve the segment with looks of genuine disgust. Overly long story short: two overweight women from the crowd are picked, and Khali kisses them. MVP sneaks back into the ring and "attacks" Khali by punching him in the back a few times, before bailing. Soon after, he barges into Vickie's office, and she responds to his bravado by booking him in a match against Khali TONIGHT! This was one of those segments that make you not want to watch the rest of the show.

U.S. Heavyweight Champion Shelton Benjamin vs. R. Truth
Truth=over. He opens with a belly-to-back suplex, in effect letting Shelton know up front "What's Up." However, he hits the ropes and winds up getting gutbusted. Shelton follows with a ribbreaker, but fails on a Stinger Splash-attempt and gets clotheslined down. Truth picks things up with more clotheslines and the introduction of his foot to Shelton's face. Shelton stops selling after a cover and goes for a powerbomb, but, much like Kidman, you can't powerbomb Truth, and so he slips out and connects with the corkscrew flying forearm, which scores him two. Shelton gets the heck out of the ring to avoid the scissor kick, but Truth follows him out with a tope con hilo. He connects with a missile dropkick for two. Shelton winds up on the apron and drops Truth harshly onto the top rope with a gourdbuster of sorts. He then quickly scoots back in and hits the Pay Dirt out of nowhere to pick up the victory. I like the idea of building someone up with a long string of victories, but having him come up short in his first (second if you count ppv pre-show matches) crack at a title. The natural expectation from the fans would've been a title switch, but the retaining by Shelton makes not only Shelton come off strong, but adds intensity to the feud, as this was one of the rare times Truth's been defeated. The match itself had some flow-issues, with the advantage randomly shifting at points without smooth transitions, but was generally good.
Winner: Shelton Benjamin

Backstage, THE Brian Kendrick and Ezekiel Jackson run into Jimmy Wang Yang, and THE Brian Kendrick goes all biblical on our asses in his threatening of Yang, quoting from both Ezekiel 25:17 and "Pulp Fiction." THE Brian Kendrick is trying real hard to be the shepherd. Unfortunately, this segment was not followed up on later by having Ezekiel accidentally shoot someone in the face.

Ezekiel Jackson (with THE Brian Kendrick) vs. Jimmy Wang Yang Yang, ring general, begins by dropkicking the knees of Big Zek. Yang hits the ropes and gets obliterated with the shoulder-tackle of the year, which he makes even better by selling like he's Marty Jannetty taking a clothesline. Ezekiel connects with a corner clothesline and a biel, before finishing Yang off with the one armed-ura nage. THE Brian Kendrick responds to the victory by dancing and hitting Yang with THE Kendrick. The lesson learned here is that THE Brian Kendrick couldn't defeat Yang, but Ezekiel easily could, which means it's only a matter of time before Zek strikes out on his own.

Winner: Ezekiel Jackson

Eve Torres runs into Divas Champion Michelle McCool backstage and asks her advice about getting started as a wrestler. Michelle responds with a hilariously clichéd lecture about her having to want it. She then gets all catty by saying that Maria, her opponent next week, is a good example of someone who's good at posing for Playboy, but not much else. Furthermore, she seems to be missing something upstairs! Maria sidles in at this point, and Michelle quickly regresses back into her friendly, babyface self. I'm still not sure whether Michelle is turning, or whether they're just trying to build intrigue for this one match and/or program, but I don't see how Michelle can be so confident when Maria has Festus on her side.

This week's "RAW Rebound" focuses on the burial of Big Dave at the hands of Chris Jericho in the steel cage match for the World Championship. I don't think I've ever seen someone look like more of a geek than Batista standing on the top turnbuckle with his bloody head. Huge embarrassing failure of a title reign.

Jeff Hardy is in Vickie's office begging her for one more chance at Triple H's title. Vickie responds by saying that Hardy doesn't have what it takes and even goes as far as to insinuate that Hardy's not even extreme anymore! She tells him to get ready for his upcoming tag team match, because that's what he does best! Um, way to bury the tag team division. Hardy gets all amped up over this and says that tonight he's going to blow her mind!

WWE Champion Triple H and Jeff Hardy vs. John Morrison and The Miz JR informs us at the beginning of the match that, "The Cerebral Assassin has a valedictorian in toughness," which leads me to guess that JR wasn't the valedictorian at his high school. HHH EXPLODES out of the corner with a clothesline on Morrison, followed by a suplex and a tag to Hardy. Hardy goes for a wildly premature Twist of Fate, and Morrison heads for the hills. Hardy baseball slides both heels down through the ropes and then connects with a running variation of the Swanton over the top rope to the floor. Awesome.

After a break, Hardy is in control of The Mizard of Oz. Morrison grabs Hardy's legs on the apron, however, and Miz is able to shoulderblock him to the floor. Jeff Hardy is YOUR Charismatic Enigma-in-peril. The heels hit the slingshot elbow over the knees for two. I love when crowds pop for kick-outs. Miz cuts off Hardy's momentum with a variation of Double J's Stroke, followed by a double gutbuster on the Rainbow-Haired Warrior. Hardy finally fights back with a mule kick and hooking clothesline on Morrison. HHH is waiting for the hot tag, but Hardy REFUSES TO TAG OUT! He tells The Game, "I don't need you!" Miz tags in, but misses his hanging clothesline in the corner. Hardy

knocks Morrison off the apron and hits the descending dropkick on Miz. The Whisper in the Wind gets two. A sit-out gourdbuster follows. He ascends for the Swanton, but Morrison crotches him on the top turnbuckle. Triple H is mad as hell and not going to take it anymore. He enters the ring and mows down both heels. At this point, Hardy re-enters the ring with a chair and damn near kills Miz and Morrison with chairshots, drawing the disqualification. The crowd seemed confused, but sure did pop when the steel connected with the heels' heads. Triple H, none too pleased with this turn of events, vents his frustrations by laying out Miz with a Pedigree. Hardy and HHH stare each other down to end the segment. Good match/better angle. I hope this is the start of Hardy being crazy reckless and building momentum for months leading to "WrestleMania" and a WWE title match. That way, they can keep him out of the main event picture for a while, while adding even more intrigue to his character.

Winners: The Miz and John Morrison

Eve is with Kozlov, who cuts a promo in Russian and then translates it into English, which gets more awesome every time he does it. He says something about looking forward to breaking Taker's body and soul tonight and that he'll then go on to decimate HHH at "Survivor Series." They should do training videos for that match like the Rock/Brock ones. Instead of lifting weights, Kozlov could just go around push-kicking people, culminating with him push-kicking the head of a line of jobbers, which proceeds to topple like dominoes. I should be booking this show.

Hardy busts into Vickie's office and demands to know if that was extreme enough for her. Vickie says that she and Kozlov have a deal, and so he's SOL. She says "close, but no cigar," which has been the story of his career! She's gonna wonder why she gets Swantonned, too.

WELL, IT'S THE BIG SHOW! Show speculates that Taker derives his powers from fear. Actually, I'm pretty sure druids are involved. He notes that he's beaten Taker twice and so isn't afraid of him at all. He says that Taker's made of flesh and blood. Don't forget electricity. He challenges Taker to a Casket Match at "Survivor Series." Why did Show sell fear over the casket last week, then? I thought they'd be going the "Buried Alive" route based on Show using that phrase last week, but perhaps they're saving that for the blow-off.

MVP vs. The Great Khali (with Runjin Singh)

MVP's got his tunnel back this week. Small favors. He begins the match working the legs of Khali with swift kicks, but eventually runs into a forearm or something. Sometimes you can't tell with Khali. He hits the short-arm clothesline on MVP. That's the set-up for the DDT. He misses something in the corner, and MVP starts firing away with punches. He runs at Khali with the Driveby Kick, but Khali cuts him off with the HEAD CHOP OF IMMENSE PERIL AND CERTAIN DOOM~! The Tree Slam soon after ends this one. Nothing match. Helms pops up to insult MVP afterwards. The only way I can see this gimmick working is if Helms actually stops during matches, gets on the mic, makes a joke and then finishes with "I'm just sayin'…" before continuing his assault. I'm tired of MVP losing, by the way.

Winner: The Great Khali

Brie Bella vs. Victoria (with Natalya)

Victoria opens with a headlock takeover, but Brie impressively stands out of a side headlock. She takes Victoria over with a weird, slow-motion headscissor. Victoria connects with her fireman's carry sideslam for two. She goes for the standing moonsault, but lands on Brie's knees. Brie hits a hilarious "Whoo!" monkey flip. She stopped while in mid-air just to say "Whoo!" I love it. Victoria catches her in mid-air and hits a powerslam of sorts, but Brie gets in an inside cradle out of nowhere to pick up the victory. Who jobs to a Bella

without the aid of twinnage? The heels attack Brie after the match, so of course she tries to scoot under the ring. However, Natalya grabs her legs and prevents that. Suddenly, Victoria looks under the ring on the nearside and starts pulling out the top of Brie's body, so it looks like she's incredibly elastic. Before JR's head can explode, we get THE BIG REVEAL~! as both Brie and her twin are pulled out from under the ring. They shoot each other awesome looks, and the crowd pops. Back inside, they unleash stereo flying mares and stereo facebusters! The Bella Twins then start dancing in the ring. Possibly the best thing I've ever seen. Or at least since Festus and the mariachis. Backstage, the Colons watch on a monitor and proclaim that this is indeed cool.

Winner: Brie Bella

The Undertaker vs. Vladimir Kozlov

Big-fight feel. Kozlov gets some good heel heat coming out. We start off with the "successive shoulderblocks from each man " spot. Kozlov then runs face-first into Taker's boot and gets clotheslined over the top to the floor. Taker hits the legdrop over the apron. However, back inside, Kozlov turns the tables and fires away with shoulderblocks and punches in the corner. Taker is able to bust out of the corner with a clothesline, however, which Kozlov sells pretty damn well. Taker tries to fire him off the ropes, but Kozlov reverses and hits a belly-to-belly suplex. A slugfest erupts. Kozlov traps Taker's arms and hits the headbutts to the chest. The PUSH-KICK gets two. Taker regains the momentum with an avalanche, followed by Snake Eyes, but Kozlov counters the big boot with a powerslam for two. Awesome. Suddenly, Taker hooks in the Gogoplata, but Kozlov makes the ropes. Even more suddenly, Jeff Hardy hits the ring and hits Kozlov with several chairshots, drawing the disqualification and earning Kozlov his title shot at "Survivor Series." He then lays out Taker with a chairshot to the head! Taker sits up, and Hardy bails. Taker is not happy. He chokeslams Kozlov. Got his heat back. Hardy again runs into Vickie's office, and he says that next week he wants Taker in an Extreme Rules Match! The show ends with Taker posing in the ring. I understand the need to progress the Hardy angle, and the match next week should certainly rule, but I'm not sure about Kozlov earning his title shot with such a cheap victory. The match was dead-even before Hardy showed up, and Kozlov was looking as strong as ever, but him not winning decisively makes him appear less strong than he could have. The match was intense, but I would've enjoyed at least five more minutes of it.

Winner: Vladimir Kozlov

Good show this week. They managed to cut down the whackiness to just the god-awful opening segment, and everything else on the show (except the match that resulted from that whackiness) ranged from good to awesome. I'm fine with silliness on a show geared towards children, but it has to be limited like it was tonight, so it doesn't become overly annoying. The two top feuds on the show have been handled nearly perfectly (see above), and the insertion of crazy Jeff Hardy into the mix should only add to the intrigue. Normally I'd trash this show on the basis of no Festus, but I'm feeling generous tonight.