

Monday Night Raw – 2-21-11: Raps and Returns and Title Changes Oh My!

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 21, 2011

Location: Save Mart Center, Fresno, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, Josh Matthews

We're 41 days away from Wrestlemania and the first stop on the real Road to Wrestlemania is here in Fresno. The main event on the Raw side is Cena vs. Miz which does sound like a big match if done right. WWE has a lot of momentum right now with a good show last night, Rock's return last week and the arrival of whoever 2-21-11 is about tonight should mean this will be a big night for WWE. Let's get to it.

We open with a shot of a clock counting down to 2-21-11 which is set to end in roughly an hour.

Theme song.

Cena opens the show and says what a day and what a crowd. There's a Rocky chant as he gets ready to talk. The fans seemed to be split when he came out but cheering more for him than booing. He won the Elimination Chamber last night and is going to Wrestlemania. Last night should have been a fun night filled with wine, women and song, but this isn't your typical night.

Since last week he hasn't been hearing about the Miz or the Elimination Chamber but rather about alleged comments Rock made about him. People have been asking what Cena is going to say about the Rock, but Cena isn't sure what to do. He was planning on just letting it go because it's the Rock. We look

at the footage and Rock's face on screen gets a big old pop.

We see the clip from last week of Rock ripping Cena apart for the catchphrase and the hand gestures and the colorful shirt. Rock said he'll see Cena at Wrestlemania. Cena says that Rock was making fun of him and Cena should probably say something right? There's only one way for Cena to call someone out but he hasn't done it in a long time. However, he still has a degree in Thuganomics. If he doesn't take care of this tonight he can't focus on Wrestlemania. This is a one time only thing.

After a brief warmup he's in a Fresno State (location of the show) of mind and he gets out the chain. I won't try to put what he says here but his great line is "I was speaking the truth. You left us all hanging to play a fairy about a tooth?" Cena is like a big purple pinwheel Rock so go ahead and blow him.

There's a Witch Mountain/Brokeback Mountain joke in there as Cena is ripping into all of the movie titles of Rock. The fans are into this it seems and definitely aren't booing. To close it out he said we couldn't see Rock for seven years but Cena is here every week to show what the fans mean to him. Find this online as Cena completely owned Rock here.

Cole is going to interview King later.

Morrison vs. Punk next.

46 minutes left in the clock.

John Morrison vs. CM Punk

Morrison can barely walk and do his pose due to the knee injury last night. Punk is limping as well. This is one of the best rivalries in years in WWE. Think back to how many times they've fought over the years. Morrison hammers away in

the corner and Punk is in trouble to start. He slips to the floor though and rams Morrison's knee into the apron to take over. Punk is moving much better than Morrison here.

Punk busts out the Haas of Pain of all things. It's like a Sharpshooter but Punk is laying next to Morrison and puts his foot on the crossed legs of Morrison and bends Morrison back. Morrison gets out and fires away again. And never mind as Punk gets a kick to the knee and the GTS ends this clean at 2:57. That came out of absolutely nowhere.

Rating: C+. Considering the injuries and the psychology here this was good enough to warrant a rating. Punk looked good and it doesn't really hurt Morrison that much since you had Morrison all banged up out there. Decent match and something I'd love to see more of with these two both healthy.

Post match Punk talks to Randall Keith Orton about how Punk is right here and waiting on Orton. The New Nexus has the night off and this isn't a trap. Everything is about choices. Today these people bought a ticket to see Punk. In September of 2008, Orton made a choice to punt Punk in the head and cost him the title.

He points at the Mania sign and says that Punk isn't going there because Punk is going to hurt him. Orton needs to walk away and not be here next week or Punk will hurt him. Cue Orton through the crowd and Punk runs. New Nexus comes out but Punk shoves them away and a stand off takes us to a break.

Here's Ricardo to introduce Del Rio for his match. As Del Rio is doing his entrance, Kofi jumps Alberto. There was a bell before Del Rio came out and a referee is out there so I'm assuming this is a match. They never get into the ring though and Del Rio puts the Cross Armbreaker on the heavily bandaged arm and leaves Kofi laying. I guess this wasn't a match. Kofi gets up and Del Rio jumps him again and Kofi is in

trouble.

Miz is up next as we have 23:30 to go in the clock.

Here's the WWE Champion to talk about the Rock. He talks about remembering Rock ripping people apart time after time and was thrilled to hear what Rock had to say about him. The best Rock could do is say that Miz sucks? Really? Really? REALLY? He's heard better from kindergarteners. Let him wipe his tears in his championship gold. Miz doesn't care what the fans think of him and he's the most must see WWE Champion there is. This was a lot better than it sounds.

We get an E-Mail which says enough about the Rock as the GM will deal with Rock when the GM is ready. We get a Rock N Sock Connection reference and tonight the tag titles are on the line with Corre vs. Miz/Cena. Please....not this angle AGAIN.

Back with I kid you not George Washington vs. Abraham Lincoln. Cena does a run-in to beat up George Washington. It's for the WWE All-Stars game if that makes you feel any better.

Bella Twins vs. Eve Torres/Gail Kim

Fast paced brawl to start with Gail dominating. Nice cross body by her gets two. The other Bella pulls Gail off the apron and it looked like her head slammed into the floor. This is a very aggressive match. Eve comes in and does the standing moonsault for two as the other Bella distracts her. Rollup by Eve doesn't work as Twin Magic occurs and one Bella pins Eve at 2:30. This was nothing.

Less than three minutes and we take a break.

Back with the countdown starting at 25 seconds. We see shots of the house and the crowd counts it down as the door on the

house is opened. Yep it's Taker to almost no one's shock. Still cool though with Johnny Cash playing him to the ring. There's the gong and the place lights up. Big explosions and Taker's symbol hangs over the ring. He takes the hat off, AND IT'S TIME TO PLAY THE GAME!!!! HHH is back too!

He does the corner pose and Taker stares him down. HHH looks over his shoulder and the music ends. BIG HHH chant starts up. They get nose to nose and HHH looks at the Mania sign. Then Taker looks at the Mania sign. Taker...smirks at HHH and puts the hat back on. Deadman turns his back on the Game as the sign hangs over both of them. Taker turns to face the Game and gives him a throat slash. Not a word has been said this whole time. HHH holds up his arms and does the crotch chop. They stare down again and we go to a break. Cool segment.

Sheamus vs. Mark Henry

They brawl to start and Henry grabs a bearhug and throws him to the floor with ease. Very slow and lumbering match here as we're back in the ring. Slingshot shoulder block gets two for the king. Henry rams Sheamus into the corner to take over. A splash misses and Sheamus kicks him in the chest. Sheamus pulls the turnbuckle off and Henry rams him into the exposed buckle. World's Strongest Slam ends this at 3:50.

Rating: D-. It was slow, it was stupid, it was lumbering and this gets us...where? Nothing special here at all and granted it didn't help to have to go on after the double return like that. Yeah I've got nothing else to say here.

Miss USA is going to be on Tough Enough. I give up.

Daniel Bryan and Gail are in the back but Sheamus comes up to get in his face.

The latest inductee into the WWE Hall of Fame is Hacksaw Jim Duggan! This works fine for me.

Cole is here to talk to Jerry Lawler. They can't fight or they're both fired. Oh and Cole reminds us again that he's a journalist. The interview is next.

Here's Lawler and Cole's first question is what was it like knowing that last night was his big night. Jerry says nothing. How did it feel when he realized his dreams were going to be shattered and he was going to lose to the awesome Miz? Did that mean maybe Cole was right and that it was time to retire? Jerry says nothing.

What was it like when you were laying on your back and you realized that your deceased mother, no disrespect, had the best seat in the house and that your Wrestlemania dreams were over, how did you feel when you realized you let your mother down? Jerry grabs Cole by the coat and says if Cole ever mentions his mother again it'll be the last thing Cole ever says. He's had enough of listening to Cole.

Jerry says he's going to Wrestlemania and he's issuing an open challenge: Lawler vs. Cole. Cole calls Lawler senile and runs back to the announce desk. Lawler says be a man and show us what you've got. Jerry asks if Cole is a coward and Cole takes his jacket off and throws his drink in Jerry's face. Cole runs into the crowd and Jerry is ticked.

Tag title match next.

Tag Titles: The Miz/John Cena vs. Heath Slater/Justin Gabriel

According to Josh this is unprecedented for some reason. Miz vs. Slater to start us off. All Miz so far as he beats on both Corre members. Cena responds with a golf clap and is tagged in to a good pop. Back off to Miz as the champions

have had nothing for the most part. There's the Skull Crushing Finale and it's over in 3:12. What the heck? Uh...ok then. No rating due to the length as it's 10 minutes til 11:00 so there's a lot more to come here.

Barrett says hold it as the Corre is invoking their rematch clause right now. An E-Mail says ring the bell. The match starts post break.

Tag Titles: The Miz/John Cena vs. Heath Slater/Justin Gabriel

Back with the match already in progress and Miz holding a wristlock on Gabriel. Cena comes in as does Slater. Cross body by Cena gets two and it's back off to Miz. The WWE Champion is knocked to the floor and Corre holds Riley back so Miz can be beaten down by Gabriel. Slater gets two on Miz. Off to a chinlock by Slater which gets him nowhere. It's weird seeing Miz as the defacto face. Neckbreaker by Slater gets two.

Gabriel is in now but Miz fights him off and hits that knee to the back/neckbreaker combo. He can't make the tag though as Slater is tagged in for the save. Miz still can't make a tag and Gabriel throws on a headlock. The crowd is WAY into this too which is making things a lot better.

Gabriel is sent to the apron and tries to come in off the top. He jumps into a big boot though and Cena wants a tag. Ask and ye shall receive as it's Cena vs. Slater now. Cena initiates his ending sequence and there's the 5 Knuckle Shuffle and FU. Actually it isn't as Miz shoves Cena over with something like the Skull Crushing Finale and Slater gets the pin to regain the titles at 12:00!

Rating: C+. Better formula match here and it worked pretty well. I had a feeling they were going to do the switch right back and I'm glad they did. This worked rather well and it

sets up more of the world title feud between the two. Good stuff here and the whole segment worked rather well. Also very good that they didn't go with the predictable ending.

Overall Rating: A-. First and foremost, those people complaining about the lack of wrestling here need to shut their mouths. They're completely missing the point of this and don't even bother trying to compare it to Impact last week. This was about building to Mania and it did that in spades. The point was completely different and if you didn't like what was done tonight that's fine. However, it wasn't the same as what they did there and this is an instance where the lack of wrestling can be excused to a degree.

As for the show itself, this was a drama/storyline building show and it worked very well in that regard. Cena responded to the Rock, we set up Cole vs. Lawler, Miz vs. Cena got development, two major stars returned to set up their big match at Mania and we might have a midcard feud developing with Sheamus vs. Bryan. That all happened in two hours plus more stuff. I disagree with what they had go on last, but this was a huge show and it came off like a huge show. Well done indeed.

Results

CM Punk b. John Morrison – GTS

Bella Twins b. Eve Torres/Gail Kim – Small Package to Eve

Mark Henry b. Sheamus – World's Strongest Slam

The Miz/John Cena b. Heath Slater/Justin Gabriel – Skull Crushing Finale to Gabriel

Justin Gabriel/Heath Slater b. John Cena/The Miz – Slater pinned Cena after a Skull Crushing Finale