

Monday Night Raw – February 25, 2013: Perhaps The Best TV Match I Have Ever Seen

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 25, 2013

Location: American Airlines Center, Dallas, Texas

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole

Tonight is a big show as we have two major matches: Punk vs. Cena for Cena's title shot and Vince having a fight with Paul Heyman. Other than that, Undertaker returned at a house show on Saturday and there's a chance that he could be back tonight. There's also the possibility of Lesnar being in the house, but most importantly of all: WE GET TO MAKE FUN OF GLENN BECK! Odds are we get a midget sighting. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Brock attacking Vince a few weeks back as well as the scene from last week with Cena challenging Punk.

Here's Vince on crutches to open the show. He says we need something big on Raw every week until Wrestlemania so why not start with a fight. Vince should be able to do this one one leg or no legs, so let's bring out the Ultimate Fighter, Paul Heyman. Cue Heyman himself in what I guess you would call fighting clothes. He's in workout pants and what looks to be a workout sweatshirt.

Heyman insults the Dallas Cowboys before talking about how he's seen Vince take on every promoter as well as the US Government. He offers Vince a chance to make an executive decision, but as he's talking Paul spears down Vince and takes out the knee. A crutch shot to the leg keeps Vince down but Vince blocks the other crutch shot. He hits Heyman in the back with it but here's Lesnar.

Heyman has rolled to the floor so it's just Brock and Vince alone in the ring. Lesnar stares Vince down and is ready to go but Vince wisely begs off. Cue HHH as Vince bails to the floor. He's got the leather jacket and

the water bottle so you can tell this is serious. The fight is on immediately and HHH sends Lesnar into the post, apparently busting him open. Another post shot has Lesnar reeling and a clothesline puts Brock into the timekeeper's area.

HHH goes to get a crutch but it allows Brock to fight back. Lesnar hits an AA (not an F5 but an AA) to put HHH onto the announce table. We head back inside with Brock bringing in a chair, only to walk into a spinebuster. A big chair shot to Brock's back sends him to the floor and there's a BIG blood stain on the mat. HHH stands tall.

Ryback vs. Dolph Ziggler

No intro for Mr. MITB. Ryback easily picks Ziggler up and throws him around to start but walks into a dropkick for one. Ziggler tries to keep things moving fast but he charges into a powerslam to put him right back down. A few chops in the corner stagger Ziggler as the fans chant Goldberg. Ryback hits a modified Oklahoma Stampede (powerslam out of the corner) to send Ziggler to the floor as we take a break.

Back with Ziggler caught in a long delayed vertical suplex. We see about twenty seconds of it so who knows how long it actually was. Dolph rolls to the floor so Ryback goes to retrieve him, only to have Langston take Ryback's head off with a clothesline. Back in and Ryback shoves Ziggler away, only to get caught in a running DDT for two.

The Fameasser misses so there's a sleeper on Ryback instead. Ryback counters with a kind of Stunner and starts throwing Ziggler around like he isn't even there. AJ gets on the apron but Langston's interference doesn't work. Ryback hits a kind of spinebuster to Ziggler and Dolph is Shell Shocked for the pin at 11:08.

Rating: C+. It's nice to see Ryback get a big win again and who better to get one on than the reigning king of the jobbers of WWE? Langston vs. Ryback is likely going to be talked about now, despite the fact that they don't need to fight just because they're similar. Anyway, decent match here and good to see Ryback get a win for a change.

Trailer for The Call, starring Halle Berry and with David Otunga.

Here's CM Punk with something to say. He says that tonight is a night of history and a night that people are going to tell their grandchildren about. It's the end as well as the beginning but tonight isn't about Wrestlemania or the people. It isn't even about the WWE Championship. It's not about the future and what is more important than the Rock: it's about PUNK. Punk goes into a big rant about how important he is before finally saying that in this world, he is god.

The latest inductee into the WWE Hall of Fame: Donald Trump. Given how much he's done with Wrestlemania over the years, this shouldn't be a big surprise.

Great Khali vs. Mark Henry

Khali chops him into the corner to start and Henry rolls to the floor. Back inside and Henry easily hits the World's Strongest Slam for the pin at 1:24. This was nothing.

We get a look at Marine 3 starring the Miz.

Fandango debuts Friday on Smackdown.

Here's Miz for MizTV with guests Alberto Del Rio, Jack Swagger and Zeb Colter. After a break, Miz wants to talk to Jack and Zeb to start things off. Zeb says he's here to talk to Gleen Beck but since he chickened out, he'll take Del Rio instead. Colter talks about the problem in America: eleven million undocumented workers who are all calling for amnesty instead of being deported. Those eleven million illegals (his word) are making it harder for Americans by taking things that belong to honest Americans. Alberto cuts Colter off but Miz says let the champion talk.

Miz asks Del Rio how hard it is to become a citizen in Mexico. Colter says it takes ten years to become a citizen in Mexico because of all the corruption. Also foreigners can't own property in Mexico. Colter wants to know what's wrong with Mexicans in that regard. Zeb says this isn't personal, but rather it's about what Del Rio represents to his people. Colter wants there to only be one Alberto Del Rio success story because he doesn't want more criminals in his country.

Del Rio goes on a rant about how America belongs to everyone and how America is built on immigrants. He talks about the American Dream of working hard to make everything possible. Del Rio calls himself living proof of that and says Swagger and Colter are hiding behind the Constitution like bullies. Swagger says WE THE PEOPLE will see Del Rio at Wrestlemania.

During the commercial, Colter yelled at Miz for conducting a biased interview, allowing Swagger to run Miz over with a clothesline.

Antonio Cesaro vs. Randy Orton

Orton hits a quick elbow to start followed by a t-bone suplex of all things for two. Cesaro comes back with the gutwrench suplex for two of his own and we hit the chinlock. Orton easily fights out of it and hits the powerslam to load up the Elevated DDT. Cesaro will have none of that though and snaps Randy's neck across the top rope. The backbreaker puts Cesaro into the corner though, only for him to get a boot up. Cesaro goes to the middle rope and dives into the RK0 for the surprise pin at 3:02.

Rating: C-. The ending was good but did we really need to see the US Champion lose in three minutes completely clean? That's the second straight loss in a row on Raw for Cesaro which makes me think he'll be champion for a long time to come. Nothing to see here and I have no idea what either guy will be doing at Mania.

HELL NO argues over which of them could beat the Prime Time Players on their own. Vickie and Maddox come up to annoy the champions. Due to what Kane and Bryan argued over earlier, the match against the Players will have Kane with one arm tied behind his back and Bryan blindfolded.

We get a trailer for Wrestlemania 21 (you read that right) with JBL and Cena imitating the climax of A Few Good Men.

Next up: Sheamus' Oscar snubs?

Here's Sheamus in a suit to talk about the Oscars last night. He watched the Oscars last night and he has a bone to pick with the Academy: they ignored Wade Barrett. This leads us to the trailer for Dead Man Down

which has nothing from Barrett in it. Sheamus shows us another clip with Barrett in the background but not saying a word. "Tom Hanks wishes he could have done Forrest Gump that good!"

This brings out Barrett with a rebuttal. Wade talks about how the Irish love green and that's apparent right now given how jealous Sheamus clearly is right now. Tomorrow night Barrett is going to be walking a red carpet while Sheamus returns his suit. Sheamus says make sure the camera get your good side but with a nose like that, the good side doesn't exist. They nearly brawl but Barrett bails so he can look good at his premiere tomorrow.

Cody Rhodes vs. R-Truth

Damien Sandow is on commentary. Truth speeds things up to start and Damien calls the hip thrusting disgusting. Cody kicks Truth's leg in the corner and hits a release front suplex to take over. The announcers talk about bromances which apparently appears in the dictionary. Cody hooks a full nelson on the mat but Truth fights up. Cody sends him into the rope but gets caught in a bad looking Little Jimmy for the pin at 2:24.

Post match Sandow runs in and is quickly dispatched.

We get a Zeb Colter/Jack Swagger video about Americans losing their jobs to illegal immigrants. They promise to correct the wrongs in this country.

HELL NO vs. Prime Time Players

Bryan is blindfolded and Kane has an arm tied behind his back. Bryan and Titus start but Daniel grabs the referee for the NO Lock by mistake. The Players mess with Bryan with the whistles and Titus hits a clothesline to the back of the head to take over. Off to Young who sends Bryan to the floor where Kane tries to help him. Bryan hits Kane by mistake before heading back in. Young misses a charge into the post and Kane tags himself in. After beating up Young for a bit, a one armed chokeslam is enough to pin Darren at 3:30.

Rating: D+. This was your standard comedy match that was missing the

comedy. I'm not sure what this was supposed to accomplish other than making the Players look even more worthless than they already do. Bryan and Kane still fight but they still win matches so who knows where it's going. Other than Shield, is there anyone around that could beat them anyway?

We recap the opening fight with HHH vs. Lesnar.

Here's the Shield with something to say. Ambrose talks about how they're what's best for WWE right now and any three man team they send out will be dispatched just like the others. Reigns says believe in the Shield or be turned into dust. Rollins talks about the three wins they've had over super team after super team. He asks if there's anyone else to fight them and here's Sheamus. He says come up here and fight him but as Ambrose and Reigns go after him, Orton sneaks in with an RKO to take out Rollins. I saw those two team up against Shield at a house show a few weeks ago so they've been practicing.

Jack Swagger vs. The Miz

This was set up by Swagger's sneak attack earlier. Miz knocks him to the floor to start but Swagger rams him into the apron to take over. Back in and a shot to the back staggers Miz as the fans chant for the non-super patriot. Miz kicks away at Jack's knee but gets clotheslined right back down. A suplex floors Miz again and there's the Vader Bomb for two. Off to a quick armbars on Miz but he comes back with a neckbreaker to get himself a breather.

Swagger suplexes him back down for two but charges into a boot. Miz hits the running clothesline in the corner followed by the top rope ax handle for two. A sunset flip gets two more for Miz but Swagger breaks up a DDT. He shoves Miz into the ropes where Miz's ankle is tied up, giving Swagger the opening he needs. A chop block takes Miz down and the Patriot Lock ends this at 7:13.

Rating: C. Swagger isn't terrible but he's still too similar to what he was just a year or so ago. Either way, the match here was basic but ok. I'm guessing there isn't going to be any public embarrassment for Swagger after the incident last week, but maybe they're going to punish him

behind the scenes. Match was just ok.

After Lawler and Cole plug Sonic for a bit, we look at a video from the end of last week with the debut of the new title and Punk attacking Cena.

We get a Tout from HHH about Lesnar and we see the opening brawl again.

Here are some Touts from fans about what we saw earlier. Nothing of note here.

Cena talks about how important this match against Punk is. He talks about how tonight it's about to going to Wrestlemania and he requested this match to prove that he's back. If you still believe in him, you'll believe that everyone else's time is up and our time is now.

We get a clip of Robot Combat League hosted by Chris Jericho.

We get a clip of Undertaker returning at a show in Waco this past weekend.

John Cena vs. CM Punk

The winner gets the shot at Rock at Wrestlemania. They have a ton of time left too. After some big match intros we're ready to go. The fans are of course split on Cena as we get some chain wrestling to start. Punk gets in the ropes to break up a headlock before putting on one of his own. A hip toss puts Punk on the floor and we take a break. Back with Punk getting backdropped but popping back up with a clothesline to take control again. A neckbreaker gets two on cena and it's off to a neck vice.

Cena powers out of it and slams Punk to the mat before hooking a front facelock to slow things down. Off to a headlock instead but Punk shoves him off and hits a leg lariat for two. Off to a CM chinlock now but Cena fights back up. He hits a shoulder block but Punk ducks an attempt at a second. The suicide dive takes out Cena on the floor and we take another break.

Back with Cena escaping an abdominal stretch and hitting the shoulders again. There's the ProtoBomb but Punk counters into the Anaconda Vice.

Cena rolls over into a cover for two but Punk hits a swinging neckbreaker for two more. Sweet sequence there. Cena picks the leg for the STF but Punk makes the rope.

The springboard clothesline gets two more on Cena but Punk loads up a second, only for Cena to step to the side and hook the STF. Punk slips out and puts the Vice on again but Cena counters into a Crossface (called the STF by that lunthead Cole). Punk rolls backwards into a small package for two and both guys are down again. They slug it out and Cena is getting madder on each punch he throws.

Punk kicks him in the ribs but the high kick misses. There's the ProtoBomb but Punk kicks him in the head to escape the Shuffle. The GTS is countered into a sunset flip attempt but Punk sits on Cena for two. The bulldog by Punk is countered and there's the Shuffle. AA is countered as is the GTS but Cena hits a Batista Bomb for two. The place is losing their minds on these kickouts. John goes up top but Punk gets up before Cena can try anything.

Cena blocks whatever Punk is trying and knocks him down, setting up the top rope Fameasser for two. Cena can barely follow up though and the high kick puts in the corner. Punk hits a WICKED running knee in the corner but Cena IMMEDIATELY hits the AA for two. Punk rolls to the floor and Cena has no idea what else he can do here. Cena goes out after him but gets sent HARD into the post. He isn't moving an inch at nine but is somehow in by ten.

Back in and the GTS gets two and now Punk is ticked off. Another GTS is countered into an STF attempt and even with Punk trying to fight off the hold, Cena locks it in. Punk raises his hand to tap but SOMEHOW gets to the ropes. He kicks Cena in the knee and busts out a piledriver for a VERY close two and we get multiple frustrated covers. Punk goes up top and the Macho Elbow misses, allowing Cena to hit a FREAKING HURRICANRANA and the AA for the pin at 26:32.

Rating: A+. WOW. This doesn't happen often but I was sitting there watching this match with my jaw hanging open. Those near falls were as good as I have seen this side of Austin vs. Rock at Wrestlemania and I

had no idea what they were going to do until the ending. This was a PPV main event for free on Raw and was one of the best TV matches I have ever seen. Absolutely amazing and to people who say “well it wasn’t THAT good”, you’re wrong. Period.

Cena poses to end the show.

Overall Rating: B+. I usually write these ratings before the main event but I had to redo it because of that match. That raised this from a B- to what it is here. That’s happened maybe once in all the years I’ve been doing this. The main event really is that good and you need to find a copy of it as soon as you can.

As for the rest of the show, it wasn’t a masterpiece but the most important thing here is that we can see the Wrestlemania card taking shape. We have our title matches and tonight it looks like some stuff was set up, but Shield vs. Orton/Sheamus doesn’t make sense as it looked like they were setting up Sheamus vs. Barrett. Either is a good option but the tag match probably fits better. Either way, the energy tonight was a good sign and I’m fired up for the Old School show next week. Oh and did I mention a GREAT main event? Very good but not great stuff here.

Results

Ryback b. Dolph Ziggler – Shell Shock

Mark Henry b. Great Khali – World’s Strongest Slam

Randy Orton b. Antonio Cesaro – RKO

R-Truth b. Cody Rhodes – Little Jimmy

HELL NO b. Prime Time Players – Chokeslam to Young

John Cena b. CM Punk – Attitude Adjustment

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my ebook of Monday Night Raw Reviews on Amazon at