

Monday Night Raw – February 3, 2014: I Welcome This Show

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 3, 2014

Location: CenturyLink Center, Omaha, Nebraska

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

The big story from last week is CM Punk walking out on the company due to reasons that aren't entirely clear. There's always the possibility that it's a work, but as of right now there's a very good chance Punk isn't at Wrestlemania. Other than that we're three weeks away from Elimination Chamber and the card is already getting filled in. Let's get to it.

Here's Orton to open the show and he immediately has to talk over the CM Punk chant. He says the Authority is trying to teach him something, even though he won the title with hard work. Orton asks the fans how many times he has to beat all five of his opponents inside the chamber. Randy says he'll keep the title there and at Wrestlemania against Batista. Back in Evolution they were equals but now Orton is simply the better man.

This brings out the Authority (with Stephanie showing off some large arms) to talk down to Orton about how he needs to calm down. HHH goes into the same speech he's had every week for months now: he's not sure if Orton is worthy of being the face of the WWE and they might be losing faith in him. Stephanie says Orton is going to be facing all five of his opponents in the coming weeks and if he loses tonight, we might have a new face of the WWE: Daniel Bryan. HHH starts a YES chant, basically erasing the entire end of 2013 from existence.

Shield vs. Big E. Langston/Rey Mysterio/Kofi Kingston

Not a bad group of midcard challengers. Langston takes Ambrose into the corner to start before it's off to Kofi who cranks on the arm for a bit. The announcers bring up the fact that Ambrose never defended the US Title as it's off to Rollins who gets taken down by a monkey flip and a running clothesline in the corner for two. Ambrose comes back in and takes Kofi

down before handing it back to Rollins for a front facelock. Seth cranks on Kofi's head but misses a knee drop, allowing for the hot tag to Mysterio.

A seated senton from the top and a kick to the head are good for two but Rollins makes a blind tag to Reigns. Rey tries a hurricanrana on Rollins but gets caught by a jumping clothesline from Reigns which allows Seth to powerbomb him down for two as we take a break. Back with Reigns holding a chinlock on Mysterio before it's back to Ambrose for some jumping stomps. Dean puts on a chinlock of his own before Rey fights up and slams him down, allowing for the real hot tag to Langston.

Big E. runs over Reigns and hits the belly to belly and Warrior Splash for two until the other Shield members save. Everything breaks down until we're back to Reign vs. Langston with Big E. hitting the Superman Punch. Reigns loads up the spear but Ambrose tags himself in and hits the bulldog driver for the pin on Big E. at 11:34.

Rating: C+. Shield looks good as expected and there's drama at the end to set up the potential split even more. It's going to be a big moment when Reigns Superman Punches Ambrose's head off or spears the vest off of him. A Kofi loss would have been better than Langston here though. I never care to see champions lose.

Post match the Wyatts pop up on the screen with Bray talking about knowing Shield's blueprint. They spend their days crawling to that beautiful moment where they can sacrifice themselves in the name of their king. That moment is closer than they think because Bray is building his empire close to the see so he can watch his enemies drown with a smile on his face. Harper says that he (presumably meaning Bray) has always been their king. Rowan leans forward with the sheep mask and says run.

Bad News Barrett thinks it's funny that 112 million people who watched the Super Bowl and ate so much junk food that they won't be alive for next year's game. Jerry Lawler of all people gets on the announce table and says hopefully Barrett won't be here next week. Nothing more to it than that.

How to download the WWE App. Even JBL and Lawler make fun of him for

this. Cole turns it into a plug for the WWE Network, spelling out the savings on buying all the PPVs. We also get a clip of the Countdown show.

Christian vs. Jack Swagger

Rematch from Smackdown. Jack takes him right to the mat and puts on Luke Harper's Gator Roll before driving him into the corner. Christian sends him to the floor but Jack trips him up to send Christian face first into the apron. A whip into the steps gets two for Jack and a beal gets the same. Swagger rams him back first into the buckle and puts Christian down with a powerslam for another two.

The fans get behind the Canadian and he gets a boot up to stop a charging Swagger. A middle rope missile dropkick puts Swagger down again but Jack knees Christian in the ribs to slow him down. The gutwrench powerbomb is countered into a reverse DDT for two and Christian starts clapping. He snaps Jack's back across the ropes but has to fight out of the Patriot Lock. The Killswitch is countered as is the middle rope sunset flip. The Vader Bomb hits feet though and now the sunset flip out of the corner is good for the pin on Swagger at 5:55.

Rating: C+. I liked this much more than I thought I would. Swagger is good in the ring but he needs to shake off this loser stigma that he's acquired. He's a guy with a lot of ability but he's in need of repackaging at this point. Still though, good match here with both guys looking better than I expected.

The cage is lowered.

Betty White is guest starring next week. Just...why?

Tag Titles: New Age Outlaws vs. Cody Rhodes/Goldust

The Outlaws are defending and you can only win by pinfall or submission, not escaping. We get the big match intros after a break and we're ready to go. Goldust grabs a headlock on Road Dogg to start before taking Dogg down in something like an armdrag. He gets on all fours to chase Roadie to the corner but Goldust lets him go. Road Dogg asks Billy what they're doing in here before tagging Gunn in to face Goldust.

Cody comes in with a sunset flip out of the corner for two and a small package gets the same. Back to Road Dogg who takes Cody into the corner as a CM Punk chant starts and quickly dies. Billy comes in again and pulls Cody's bad elbow around the top rope before putting on an armbar. The announcers talk about the tag division until it's back to Goldust for an armbar on Road Dogg. Not exactly inspiring stuff so far.

Goldust pounds on Dogg in the corner with right hands but misses a cross body and crashes into the cage to change momentum as we take a break. Back with Goldust still in trouble via a Road Dogg chinlock until it's back to Gunn who walks into a clothesline out of the corner. Goldust finally makes the hot tag to Cody as everything breaks down. The Disaster Kick gets two on Billy and Cody is frustrated. He looks up at the top of the cage, tells Billy to suck it and starts to climb. Cody goes to the top of the cage, totally misses the moonsault press on Road Dogg and gets caught by the Fameasser to give Billy the pin at 16:10.

Rating: D+. This was a very boring match that didn't need to be in a cage except for the big spot at the end. I'm assuming the Brothers are going to be splitting up soon which isn't the worst idea in the world. It also helps that they didn't go with the losing streak angle to set up the title change.

Zack Ryder vs. Titus O'Neil

Titus has new heel music which starts out sounding like the reveal of a villain in an over the top action movie before transitioning into something more like the Prime Time Players' song. Titus gets in a hard shot to the face to start and sends Ryder out to the floor. Miz comes to commentary to complain about a guy barking like a dog and a guy with a fake internet championship being on Raw when he isn't.

Miz says there's something wrong with that and immediately walks off. That sounded like a heel turn. Titus puts on a bearhug before taking Ryder down with a clothesline. Ryder makes a brief comeback with the Broski Boot but walks into a BIG Clash of the Titus for the pin at 2:46.

Profile on Ernie Ladd for Black History Month.

Time for a dance off because that's what WWE is all about. It's Fandango vs. Santino Marella but Santino thinks it should be Summer vs. a member of the audience. Naturally he picks Emma and it's the same bit they did in NXT: Summer actually dances and Emma does her goofy stuff that the fans like and cheer for. Notice the difference here: Emma is a fun character doing goofy stuff whereas Vickie Guerrero can't dance and we're laughing at her instead of with her. Emma wins and JBL says he's going to be sick.

Ad for Legends House on the WWE Network.

Sheamus vs. Curtis Axel

Sheamus easily takes Axel down to start before pounding him around the ring. Axel gets to the apron and tries a neckbreaker because he's not that bright. Sheamus easily counters into the ten forearms before a big clothesline sends Curtis outside. Back in and Axel avoids a charge to send the recently repaired shoulder into the post. Curtis drops an elbow on the shoulder before cranking on an armbar. Sheamus fights up after a good while in the hold and hits the rolling fireman's carry. The Brogue Kick is enough for the pin at 7:03.

Rating: D-. WAY too long here with that armbar draining the life out of the match. There's nothing wrong with Sheamus getting another win to show off after being gone for so long. Axel still isn't great but I like him in the ring. He just didn't have a chance at all here though and everyone knew it.

Here's Batista to speak but Del Rio interrupts. Blast it all. He says Batista has been in Hollywood while Del Rio was winning titles and it takes cahones to be a champion. Thankfully they get right to the brawl with Del Rio punching Batista in the face, only to have to bail to avoid a Batista Bomb attempt.

Dolph Ziggler/R-Truth/Xavier Woods vs. Wyatt Family

Rowan runs over Woods to start and all three of the Wyatts get their turn on him. Bray hits his especially violent stomps as the fans want Ziggler. That's exactly what they get as everything breaks down. Wyatt hits

something resembling a chokeslam on Truth as things settle back down. Bray leans upside down to look at Ziggler before Sister Abigail lays him out for the pin at 5:08. Total squash.

Rating: D. This was another of those moments that gets on my nerves: WWE has Ziggler cut a great promo after Smackdown about how angry he is and they acknowledge it here, only to have him squashed in the same match as Woods and Truth who aren't going anywhere. Nothing to see here other than the Wyatts being creepy.

Shield comes on screen post match and says they're coming for the Wyatts. Bray says he welcomes this war.

Alexander Rusev and Lana are coming.

Naomi vs. Aksana

Alicia Fox is in Aksana's corner but AJ and Tamina come out to watch as well. It's a dance off to start with AJ calling Naomi a baked potato. So she's good with sour cream? Naomi hits a Bubba Bomb and rolls Aksana round on the mat for two. Aksana comes back with a wheelbarrow slam as AJ says Tamina failed her in the tag matches where Naomi pinned her.

Aksana puts on a chinlock as we randomly go to a wide shot of the arena. Back with Aksana holding Naomi in a figure four necklock. Naomi fights up with some dropkicks and a headscissors with some gyrations. A knee to the face puts Naomi down as the match grinds to a halt. Naomi quickly takes her down again and hits the split legged moonsault for the pin at 4:51.

Rating: D. I can't stand the Divas at this point. The hip swivel stuff was just annoying with it being nothing more than trying to make the crowd chuckle. Aksana looked horrible out there and the ending with the knee to the face stopped the match cold. It sounds like we're heading to AJ vs. Tamina though which makes sense.

Randy Orton vs. Daniel Bryan

They have a lot of time for this and it's non-title. Feeling out process to start with Bryan taking over by throwing Orton down. He sends Randy into the post and wraps the knee around the steel before hitting a

running dropkick to drive it into the post. Back in and Bryan throws on a leg lock before turning it over for a two count. Off to a modified Indian deathlock but Randy bites Bryan's hand to escape.

Daniel will have none of this being in trouble nonsense and gets two off a backslide before taking Orton down with a dragon screw leg whip. He cannonballs down on Orton's leg to send the champion outside but Bryan follows him out with more kicks to the leg and ribs. All Bryan so far and he throws Orton over the announce table for good measure. Back inside and Bryan gets two off a top rope hurricanrana. There's the double knee stomp out of a surfboard and Orton is reeling.

Orton gets caught in a half crab and Bryan drags him back to the middle of the ring. Orton gets all serious and crawls to the ropes before heading outside. Randy finally gets in some offense with a belly to back suplex onto the barricade and Daniel is in some trouble. Back in and Randy mouths YES before going off with right hands in the corner. Daniel comes back with kicks to the ribs and knee before moonsaulting over Randy in the corner, only to have the clothesline countered with the powerslam. I love how Orton learns from his past matches and counters signature spots. He's done that throughout the years and it's smart.

Back from a break with Bryan hitting more YES Kicks but having his last one countered into a capture suplex. Orton takes him to the floor and sends Bryan's shoulder into various metal objects for two back inside. Randy cranks on a Fujiwara armbar before just stomping at the arm instead. The bad arm is draped across the top rope but Daniel fights out of a superplex with rights and lefts to the ribs.

Bryan puts Orton down with a missile dropkick but injures his arm again. They slug it out with Bryan taking over with kicks until Randy grabs the arm and wrenches it to the mat to get the advantage back. There's the YES Lock out of nowhere but Orton is quickly in the ropes. Bryan goes back to the alternating kicks in the corner but hurts his arm again on a running dropkick. The injury slows him down enough that Orton is able to hit a running dropkick of his own to put Bryan back down. Sell the freaking knee Randy.

The Elevated DDT would look to set up the RKO but Bryan kicks him square in the head to block. Bryan goes up, points with one arm, and hits the flying headbutt for a VERY close two. There are the YES Kicks to the chest and the big one to the head has Orton down. Here's Kane who is dropkicked off the apron almost immediately. Orton is low bridged to the floor as well and the FLYING GOAT puts both of them down. Kane is sent into the steps and the RKO is countered into the running knee for the clean pin at 26:58.

Rating: B. Good but not great match here. The biggest in ring problem here was Orton forgetting about the knee injury after the break. It was a very good match and I'm so glad they didn't have Bryan lose because of the interference. That being said, I'm not wild on Orton losing clean in the middle of the ring to anyone at all, but at least it was Bryan.

Kane and Orton double team Bryan with no one making the save to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. There were some bad parts here but in perhaps the only instance of this ever, I don't think there were any backstage segments tonight. It was all about the in ring action tonight and it was a very nice change of pace from the usual Raw formula. That being said, there were a lot of problems tonight as well.

First of all, there wasn't a standout match until the main event. The first two matches were decent enough but they're nothing I'm going to remember in a few days. I liked Miz coming out in the Titus match to protest stuff but at the end of the day it's still Miz. Things are shaping up heading into the Chamber, but with the amount of stars missing, there are a lot of ways they could go heading into Wrestlemania and that's not the best thing in the world. Different but not great show, making this a decent birthday show for me.

Results

Shield b. Rey Mysterio/Big E. Langston/Kofi Kingston – Bulldog driver to Langston

Christian b. Jack Swagger – Sunset flip

New Age Outlaws b. Cody Rhodes/Goldust – Fameasser to Rhodes

Titus O'Neil b. Zack Ryder – Clash of the Titus

Sheamus b. Curtis Axel – Brogue Kick

Wyatt Family b. Xavier Woods/R-Truth/Dolph Ziggler – Sister Abigail to Ziggler

Naomi b. Aksana – Split legged moonsault

Daniel Bryan b. Randy Orton – Running knee

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