

More In Depth Thoughts On Monday Night Raw – February 24, 2014

This was one of those special shows that sticks with you for awhile after it's over and that's exactly what WWE needed right now.

To begin with, Hulk Hogan returned to announce that he will be hosting Wrestlemania XXX. I know a lot of people haven't been pleased with Hogan due to all of the nonsense in TNA, but at the end of the day he has to be at a major Wrestlemania. Yes he's old, not in ring shape and can't remember a basic line like WWE Network, but HE'S HULK HOGAN. He was the hero to a lot of children over a generation including myself. He'll be around in the coming weeks and will probably use his powers before then so things will be fine. It's a great moment and just felt right.

Next up we had the first of the How To guides for the Network. There were several of them last night but they were far less obnoxious than the WWE Apps ones. Also you have to expect these as it's actually a big deal for a change instead of the stupid App. This was fine and they'll be fine over the upcoming months.

Batista and Del Rio had a rematch from Sunday and surprisingly enough, Batista got pinned. Yeah it was off a distraction, but it was his second singles match back in the company. The crowd still didn't want to see Batista, but at least the promo after the match gave signs of hope. Batista isn't going to work as a face and at least the company seems to have caught on to that idea. They're not going to do a heel vs. heel title match though, leaving a few distinct possibilities for Wrestlemania.

They could turn Orton, but he's come off as such a spineless coward when dealing with the Authority that I don't think it's going to work. The other big option is to add someone else to the match to make it a triple threat. The only two serious options are Punk and Bryan, but Daniel seems to be locked into a HHH match and Punk might not even be on the show. For the life of me I can't imagine Batista and Orton getting a one on one match, but stranger things have happened. I can't think of any at the moment but I'm sure they have.

Big E. survived against Cesaro but it was a good example of a match where both guys looked good. It also looked to set up the Real Americans split due to Swagger costing Cesaro a potential win (emphasis on the word potential, as Cesaro was going to set up the Neutralizer but hadn't knocked Big E. out yet). Cesaro needs to beat Swagger at Wrestlemania and split from Colter, but it would only destroy Swagger even more. He needs to do something but that's been the case for years.

Cena and the Wyatts were up next in a match that we've known was coming for at least a month now. The storyline coming in seems to be a (fake) knee injury for Cena which is a basic idea that has been done before but still works wonders if done right. Cena vs. the Wyatts is going to depend on how serious John takes it. If he treats them like the monsters they are and acts cautious but serious he'll be fine. On the other hand, if he treats them as goofy guys who wear weird close and have insane hair, the feud is going to come off as a joke, even if Wyatt wins. Thankfully it was Serious Cena on Monday so I'm cautiously optimistic.

The interesting thing here though is how the WWE has kind of booked themselves into a corner. After Sunday, the logical match would seem to be Shield vs. Wyatts II in a gimmick match (elimination tag maybe?) but instead we're getting Cena vs. Wyatt. Now that being said, the singles

match will be fine but it's not the match that the people seem to be clamoring for. Wyatt beating Cena on the biggest stage of them all will be great for his career but it's not great for short term booking.

Christian vs. Sheamus was fine, but it's clear that Christian is not going to be anything more than he is right now and that his time is winding down. The match wasn't bad but Sheamus was carrying him for the most part. I'm not sure where these two go at Wrestlemania, but there's a chance the two of them will have a match that no one wants to see.

Ambrose and Reigns having an argument would seem to foreshadow a match at Wrestlemania, but I'm hoping Reigns doesn't get the title. He's too good for that kind of a burial.

I'm glad we got Bryan vs. Kane out of the way. Those two have been in a story for over a year and a half now and they needed to have a blowoff match. I didn't buy the idea that it was happening at Wrestlemania and having it here on Raw was the right call. Bryan got the pin with the running knee and then challenged HHH to a match at Wrestlemania. No it isn't the title match, but it makes the most sense with the story they've been telling. Believe it or not the best move would actually be Bryan beating HHH for the title, but that's opening up a can of worms that isn't worth the payoff.

One more note: get the undershirt off Kane. He looks like Marlon Brando from *Streetcar Named Desire*.

Emma and Summer Rae...happened. That's really the only way to describe it. Emma is getting better but Santino continues to take the focus off of her. Why is she stuck in this dancers feud when AJ is desperate for ANY

competition? If nothing else they've got Emma in her ring gear, which is always going to get a better pop than being mostly covered up like she's been since debuting.

As I saw in another review: the Usos and Outlaws need to watch the Hart Foundation vs. the Bolsheviks from Wrestlemania VI. Thankfully the Usos getting the titles seems to still be happening.

Bray and Roman had their singles match and it ended the only way it could have. It wasn't a classic or anything but it was a match in the last hour of a huge show in Wisconsin. Give them a build with an atmosphere on a bigger stage and the quality goes up. Reigns needs more ring time on his own though.

That brings us to the big ending of the show. Again, Lesnar vs. Undertaker was pretty much set in stone months ago but the match was still awesome. I'd like to remind you of something: HE STABBED HIM WITH THE PEN. For the first time in years Undertaker is the aggressor in a feud and that's an idea I can get behind. It might have been seventeen years ago, but go back and watch his stuff from the Attitude Era. Undertaker is at his best when he just starts breaking stuff and it's even better when he breaks them with people's bodies. I'm not sure if Undertaker can keep up with Lesnar's physical style, but the build is going to be fun.

Raw this week was supposed to be a big show and it worked like a charm. At the end of the show I was ready for Wrestlemania for the first time this year and that's exactly what it was supposed to do. There are still five weeks to adjust some things and the main event is still up in the air, but the rest of the card looks solid from here. It looks more like Wrestlemania XIX than Wrestlemania XVII, but that's not the worst thing

in the world.

One of the most interesting things last night was the amount of ring time the matches got. We had four matches break fourteen minutes and another that got ten. There were almost no recaps or stupid backstage segments and the show worked far better. I'm not saying there's no place for a backstage bit here and there, but we don't need to see these long drawn out segments to reenforce stuff that's already been made.

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