

Monday Night Raw – March 24, 2014: Everything But Bryan

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 24, 2014

Location: Barclays Center, New York City, New York

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

We're just two weeks from the biggest show of the year but tonight is about the guest stars. Tonight we've got a double shot with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Scooby-Doo, the latter of whom is here because the WWE animated movie comes out tomorrow. Other than that we get the fallout from Bryan being attacked by the boss last week and a showdown between Undertaker and Lesnar. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's closing sequence with the fake cops and Stephanie ranting about respect and HHH destroying Bryan with a chair.

Here's Stephanie to get things going. She talks about how people on social media have been saying how what HHH did last week was disgusting. However, the Authority won't let the YES Movement steer this ship the wrong way. The WWE needs leadership through strong people like herself. The fans LOUDLY cheer for Punk but Stephanie just goes through them until it calms down. She lists off some of HHH's accolades but gets Randy Orton instead.

Randy respects HHH but if he beats Daniel Bryan earlier in the night (Stephanie: "You mean when he beats Daniel Bryan."), he'll do whatever he has to do to retain the title. The fans chant for Bryan and Stephanie acknowledges them by saying he's not coming out. Orton sucks up to Stephanie and suggests that HHH beat the tar out of Daniel Bryan, but let that be it for the night for HHH. The New York fans think this is boring but here's Batista to really fire them up.

Big Dave says the fans can chant and the two people in the ring can run their mouths all they want, but he's the next WWE Champion. The mic cuts out a bit as Batista tells us to DEAL WITH IT. Things stop a bit as we fix the mic until Batista points out that HHH has never beaten him. Batista calls Orton out for sucking up to everyone lately and drooling on Stephanie. "I think she's been drooled on before. Actually, make that a lot." Stephanie slaps Batista for the insult and Orton is nearly keeling over in what looks to be shock or laughter. Stephanie walks out and Batista spears Orton down to LOUD booing.

Sheamus vs. Dolph Ziggler vs. Christian vs. Alberto Del Rio

Winner gets an Intercontinental Title shot tomorrow night on Main Event against Big E. It's one fall to a finish and anything goes. Sheamus and Christian fight on the floor to start until we get down to Sheamus vs. Ziggler in the ring. They trade strikes for a bit until the guys switch off again. Christian dives to the floor but gets caught by Sheamus, who launches him into the barricade with a fall away slam.

Sheamus loads up the ten forearms to Ziggler but has to duck a running enziguri from Del Rio. Dolph knocks Sheamus to the floor and gets two on Del Rio but Christian pulls Ziggler outside again. Sheamus hits a Cactus Clothesline on Christian, sending both of them into the timekeeper's area as we take a break.

Back with Ziggler and Christian in the ring as Sheamus hits the rolling fireman's carry to Del Rio on the floor. Christian hits a high cross body on Dolph but gets rolled through for two. A loud ZIGGLER chant starts up as Christian stands on Dolph's head for two. Ziggler gets knocked to the floor so Sheamus hits his ax handles and high knee to Christian. Alberto charges into the Irish Curse and Christian is sent to the floor. The ten forearms puts Alberto on the floor so Sheamus goes up for a dive, only to be taken down by a top rope X Factor for two from Ziggler.

The running DDT gets two on Del Rio but Christian snaps the back of

Dolph's neck across the top rope. The fans think this is awesome as Christian counters a Fameasser into a powerbomb for two. Del Rio breaks up the pin with a superkick but Sheamus breaks up the pin. There's the Cloverleaf on Del Rio but Sheamus breaks it up to powerslam Christian. Del Rio breaks up the Brogue Kick and puts Sheamus in the cross armbreaker. Sheamus powers up and lifts Alberto up but Zigler takes them both down with a Zig Zag. Christian comes back in with the Killswitch to Dolph for the pin out of nowhere at 12:00.

Rating: B. I had a great time with this one and I was wondering who was going to win in the end. That's the best thing you can ask for in a match most of the time and it worked very well here. Christian vs. Big E. is fine for a one off match and the other guys looked great as well.

Christian won't shake Big E.'s hand after the match.

The Wyatts pop up on screen and Bray talks about fans being interested in things they can't see. But they can see Cena everywhere because he's on billboards and t-shirts. Bray is someone you can't see because he is the key to the city of woe. He's everywhere but you can only feel him. Harper says they're coming to fight Cena. Run.

We get a clip of the Scooby-Doo movie and here's the Mystery Machine in the arena. Sin Cara (the second biggest wrestler in the movie. If it was based on the active roster, he would be the Daniel Bryan to John Cena) pops out and here's Scooby to go with him. It's a guy in a costume if that wasn't clear.

Sin Cara vs. Damien Sandow

The lighting is back. Sin avoids a charge in the corner and hits a springboard cross body and the Tajiri Elbow, followed by the Swanton for the pin at 1:07.

We look at Kane and the Outlaws beating down the Shield on Friday.

Los Matadores vs. Curtis Axel/Ryback

Ryback and Axel are officially out of the battle royal and will be getting a Tag Team Title match at Wrestlemania. Curtis starts with Fernando but the Shield comes to the barricade for a distraction, allowing Fernando to get the pin at 1:05.

Shield destroys Ryback and Axel post match with the spear and Triple Bomb laying Ryback out.

Cole brings out HHH for a sitdown interview. We look at the attack from last week and Cole asks HHH to justify that. HHH wants to know if he wants an answer as the COO or a competitor. He goes on a short rant about taking advantage of an upcoming opponent before shifting towards Occupy Raw. Bryan and the fans tried to hijack Raw and the people were put in danger. HHH asks Cole why he chalked that up to a memorable moment but what HHH did was despicable.

What happened to this world since HHH stopped competing full time? He did horrible things to people and looked into their eyes, seeing the same lust for success that he had. People would fight the system but now he sees soft and pathetic people in the crowd. He sees a bunch of powerless people with no desire who cry when they don't get what they want. If they're mad, Tweet him about it. HHH is sick of the whole thing because the world has changed and he doesn't like it.

Maybe it's on him to decide where everything goes. This is the beginning of the Reality Era and the reality is this: at Wrestlemania, he ends Daniel Bryan's little run at the top and ends the YES Movement along with it. The reality is at Wrestlemania he'll beat Daniel Bryan and enter a triple threat match where he'll take the WWE Title for himself instead of living off past glory. Really solid stuff from the Game here.

Fandango vs. Cody Rhodes

Goldust has a mask over his face paint now. Fandango takes over to start and a slingshot legdrop gets two. A snap suplex gets the same and Fandango cranks on the arm a bit. Cody comes back with a springboard dropkick but Summer and Goldust have a dance off. Summer hurts her ankle and Cody hits a quick Disaster Kick for the pin at 2:48.

Clip from the new Schwarzenegger movie Sabotage.

Here's Hogan with something to say but we have to wait for the big nostalgia chant. He doesn't want to be nostalgic but Wrestlemania is two weeks away. We might be in a different part of the city, but thirty years ago he and Mr. T. made history in New York. Hogan stops to point at the sign and says he's real psyched up for Wrestlemania. He's also excited about tonight's guest starts: Joe Maganeillo and Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Joe is taller than Hogan so Arnold looks tiny out there. The fans love Arnold and give him a big ovation. A year ago Arnold got to induct Bruno Sammartino into the Hall of Fame with another great hero like Hulk Hogan. Arnold raves about Hogan's physique and asks the fans to cheer Joe. Maganeillo talks about how pumped he is to be in the ring with two icons like Hulk and Arnold. Arnold brings up the battle royal and talks about hanging out with Andre on a movie set. He asks if Hogan has room for two more athletes in the battle royal but here's Miz to interrupt.

Miz says he'll be going to see Sabotage, just like Arnold and Joe went to see his movies. He guarantees to win the battle royal but Hogan says he's in the wrong place. Joe says if Miz wants the three of them gone to get rid of them himself. All three guys get in a shot and Hogan throws Miz over the top.

Big Show vs. Titus O'Neill

Titus kicks Big Show into the corner and stomps away to send Big Show to the mat. A legdrop gets two and a splash in the corner has Big Show in trouble again. The fans chant for Punk again as Titus drops Big Show with a flying shoulder for two. Big Show shrugs it off, spears Titus down and hits the WMD for the pin at 2:24.

Shield comes in to see the Authority and wants to know where the three of them stand in this whole thing. HHH says the business between Kane, the Outlaws and the Shield is between the six of them. Stephanie makes Shield vs. Real Americans for later and they can discuss things afterwards. Reigns gives HHH a bit of a look.

John Cena is in the bathroom and running water over his face. The sheep mask can be seen in the mirror.

John Cena vs. Luke Harper

Luke takes Cena into the corner to start and the fans are all over John here. Cena fights back but walks into a backbreaker for two. A loud LET'S GO HARPER chant starts up as Cena comes back with right hands in the corner. Something resembling a Stinger Splash crushes Harper in the corner but he walks into a pumphandle throw for two. Cena is thrown to the floor and Bray crouches in front of him but Harper comes out with a forearm to the back. We get a Fruity Pebbles chant as Harper hammers away even more.

Back with Cena fighting out of a chinlock but walking into a suplex to put him down again. The AA is countered and Harper gets two off a boot to the face. Cena counters the discus lariat into the ProtoBomb but Harper pops up and hits a Michinoku Driver for two. Luke tries a powerbomb but gets countered into what was supposed to be a hurricanrana. The STF is kicked away to send Cena to the floor and Harper hits a great looking suicide dive. Cena's head bounced off the barricade and Bray came out of his chair.

Back in and Cena grabs the STF but Harper pokes him in the eye. A DDT gets two on John and Harper puts him on the top rope. Cena powers out of a butterfly superplex attempt and hits the top rope Fameasser for two. A second ProtoBomb and the Shuffle connect but Harper escapes the AA and picks him up for a belly to back suplex, only to slam Cena face first into the mat.

Cena EXPLODES out of the corner with a clothesline but the lights go out as he loads up the AA. You can hear something in the ring and as the lights come back on, Cena is tied in the ropes with the sheep mask on. The Wyatts surround an unconscious Cena as the match is thrown out at about 14:00.

Rating: B. I was digging this match and I really liked the ending. Harper looked better tonight than he ever has before which gives me hope for his future. The ending with Cena being tied up and us not seeing what happened to him is creepy as there's something terrifying about having to imagine what those three monsters did to him.

Divas Title: Naomi vs. AJ Lee

AJ is defending. Naomi quickly sends her to the floor but AJ says she doesn't need this. She skips out and it's a countout at 1:12.

Post match here's Vickie Guerrero who AJ insulted on Smackdown. Vickie didn't care for what AJ said on Smackdown, so at Wrestlemania it will be the Vickie Guerrero Divas Championship Special. AJ will defend against the Funkadactyls, the Bella Twins, Natalya, Eva Marie, Emma, Aksana, Alicia Fox, Summer Rae, Rosa Mendes, Layla and Tamina.

Scott Hall is announced for the Hall of Fame.

We look at the opening segment again. Orton vs. Batista one on one next week.

Real Americans vs. Shield

It's Rollins and Ambrose meeting the Americans in the aisle to start the big brawl. The fans chant WE THE PEOPLE as Ambrose throws Cesaro inside for the opening bell. Dean stomps him down in the corner and we get a Hart Attack with Rollins hitting a neckbreaker instead of a clothesline. Off to Swagger but Seth meets him with right hands and Three Amigos with Ambrose helping out on the third.

Shield takes their turns on Swagger until he drives Dean into the corner for the tag to Cesaro. The WE THE PEOPLE chants continue as Cesaro takes over and puts Dean in a chinlock. Back to Swagger for the Vader Bomb but Ambrose gets his feet up. A middle rope back elbow drops Swagger but Cesaro knocks Seth off the apron. Cesaro counters a backdrop into the Swing but Seth breaks up the cover. Ambrose is sent outside and the Americans swing him by his arms and legs into the barricade as we take a break.

Back with Cesaro putting Dean in a front facelock but making the mistake of slapping him. Dean says bring it so Cesaro kicks him in the chest. Dean pops back up and clotheslines Cesaro down, finally allowing the hot tag to Seth. Rollins cleans house and hits the running forearm in the corner to set up a Downward Spiral into the middle buckle. Cesaro gets LAUNCHED over the top to the floor and Swagger gets clotheslined as well.

A suicide dive puts Cesaro into the crowd and Seth runs back in for a BIG flip dive to take Jack down as well. Back in and a top rope knee to the head drops Swagger but Cesaro makes the save. Ambrose runs in but gets backdropped to the floor. Rollins clotheslines Cesaro outside but gets caught in the Patriot Lock. He makes the rope and lands on his feet, setting up an enziguri and the Black Out (now called Peace of Mind) for the pin at 14:00.

Rating: B-. Seth Rollins is perfect for what he's doing at the moment and Ambrose continues to look awesome. Face Shield is totally working for me as they've transitioned perfectly in about a week. That's a sign of incredible talent and another reason why Shield is the best act in a long time.

Post match Reigns hits the Superman Punch and spear on Cesaro, setting up the Triple Bomb through the table. Shield poses but Kane and the Outlaws (all in suits) come to the stage. Kane announces the six man tag at Wrestlemania. The Outlaws just do not work for me in this role at all. Shield just tore the house down with two very talented guys. I'm not buying into seeing the Outlaws do their little shortcuts and the same jokes we've heard on a million reunion shows.

It just doesn't work for me and the minute I saw them come out on Smackdown I lost most of my interest in this story. What does Shield get out of this feud? A rub from a former World Champion? They've gotten that from far bigger stars than Kane. A match against former Tag Team Champions? They've destroyed every team they've fought and had a better match at Elimination Chamber than the Outlaws could ever dream of. This is a BIG step down for Shield and it doesn't interest me in the slightest.

Here are Heyman and Lesnar to close the show. Paul talks about how the Streak is the most impressive thing in WWE history, which is why Brock (sporting an Eat, Sleep, Break the Streak shirt) is going to end it. That doesn't take away from the 21 victories that Undertaker has and his legacy will still be great. John Cena couldn't go 21-0, Andre the Giant couldn't go 21-0 and even Brock Lesnar will never be able to be 21-0 at Wrestlemania.

Paul goes on about how important Wrestlemania is but Brock takes the mic. He says he's here to fight and since he and Undertaker are both here, let's do it right now. There's no gong but we've got druids. They bring a casket to ringside as the chanting plays through the arena. The druids

stand in the aisle and Brock is starting to look a bit nervous as he stares at the casket. Brock kicks at the lid as the chanting continues. He finally opens it but the casket is empty. Heyman isn't pleased as Brock asks if this is some kind of joke.

Brock goes to yell at the druids who start to walk away. He slowly stalks them but they get most of the way up the ramp. Brock walks back to the ring and closes the casket, drawing an Undertaker chant. Lesnar says he's not here to play games and Paul starts to talk, but Brock says he's leaving.

Heyman stops him because that's what Undertaker wants. Paul rants about Undertaker being a coward and says all Undertaker can do is an empty casket, so of course the casket opens up to reveal Undertaker. He sits up and Paul PANICS. The lights come on and Brock looks scared but doesn't bail. The fight is on with Undertaker hammering away and clotheslining Brock onto the casket. Paul says it's not worth it and begs Lesnar to leave. Lesnar points to the sign as Undertaker does the throat slit to end the show.

Overall Rating: A-. The Wrestlemania build continues to rock as tonight they focused on Shield, Batista, Orton and HHH. Bryan wasn't there tonight but that's a good thing in a way. Yeah the odds are that Bryan leaves with the title, but they're doing a great job of planting even the slightest bit of doubt. Daniel Bryan vs. HHH is arguably the real main event, but they're making it seem like there's a chance that something else could happen, and that's the right move.

Other than that we had some great build for the show with the battle royal getting a nice focus and a solid main event segment as well. We also got some of the best in ring action we've had on this show in months with the long matches being good and the short matches being the uninteresting ones. Couple that with three new matches being announced to likely fill out the card and I was very pleased tonight. The company is clicking at the right time and that's all that matters.

Results

Christian b. Sheamus, Alberto Del Rio and Dolph Ziggler – Killswitch to Ziggler

Sin Cara b. Damien Sandow – Swanton Bomb

Los Matadores b. Curtis Axel/Sin Cara – Rollup to Axel

Cody Rhodes b. Fandango – Disaster Kick

Big Show b. Titus O'Neil – WMD

John Cena vs. Luke Harper went to a no contest

Naomi b. AJ Lee via countout

Shield b. Real Americans – Peace of Mind to Swagger

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