

KB Goes To Axxess

I took in Axxess earlier today after having wanted to go for the last 14 years or so. There was a lot of good stuff but some of the things could have been done better. I took a ton of pictures which I'll post when I get back home and get to my camera cord. There were some VERY nice surprises there though and I met some people who weren't advertised.

My session started at 1pm and ran for four hours. I got there about 50 minutes early and there were already hundreds of people in line. The line moved FAST though and I was in maybe three minutes after 1. This brings the first major problem: it's a crap shoot as to who is at which booth. You can find out on the WWE App, but NO ONE TELLS YOU THIS. Even the staff didn't know what was going on.

Anyway I got in the second line I saw which had a big WWE 2K14 sign behind it. I passed on the Scooby Doo booth which had Santino Marella as the guest. I asked one of the people next to me who the guest was and then I see none other than Dolph Ziggler (in an NWO shirt for some reason) take the stage.

Despite having maybe 50 people in front of us, it took an hour and fifteen minutes to get through the line. This was partially due to Ziggler stopping to talk to the disabled/handicapped people in a separate line (nothing wrong with that and something that happened all day long). The other reason was Dolph doing a TWENTY MINUTE INTERVIEW while we waited in line. The cool thing about this: I might be on Wrestlemania Today on the Network. The camera pans over his line and I was at the front at the time. Ziggler was very nice and kept eating Pizza Rolls (sponsor) between meeting fans. He shook my hand and posed for a picture while signing the back of my Axxess map.

After that and with $\frac{1}{4}$ of my time gone, I ran over to the NXT booth to try for Dusty Rhodes. On the way I saw about five seconds of Ascension vs. Jason Jordan/??? for the NXT Tag Team Titles. While I was in line for the NXT booth I could hear Paige retaining the Women's Title over Charlotte and the start of a Sami Zayn match against I believe Corey Graves.

Unfortunately I didn't get to see Dusty as the first two hour session was already up and a new set of guests came in during the second hour. To Axxess's credit, they told us we wouldn't get to the front of the line with nearly half an hour to go. While in line I was given a little NXT gift bag with some very nice trading cards made by Topps (big company in the trading card industry if you're not familiar), an NXT poster with the roster on the front and mini bios on the back and a bag which came in handy for carrying all my stuff around.

While I was in line, Bob Backlund of all people came casually walking behind me and went behind a curtain. I waved at him and got one in return but he was too far away for a picture or autograph. You could hear him giving one of his ranting promos in the NXT ring while I was in line.

Since the NXT thing wasn't happening, I ran over to the legends booth to find....Lanny Poffo and the Wild Samoans. Not exactly a thrilling lineup but Lanny is from Lexington, Kentucky so I got to chat with him for a few moments about that. However, I didn't get their autographs because the lineup changed again. In their place, and with me fifth in line: Paul Orndorff and RICKY STEAMBOAT. Orndorff looks great all things considered but he's grown a mustache that would make Hulk Hogan jealous. Both guys were serious but friendly with Steamboat hyping up the crowd while they changed places.

The interesting thing here was the cast of people walking around from an entrance in the back to their booths. From there I saw Eva Marie, the Funkadactyls (all being filmed for Total Divas), Darren Young, Norman Smiley, Damien Sandow and Mick Foley, with a bad limp. Backlund walked right back into the crowd while this was going on as well. He has that goofy look on his face the entire time as well.

After that I walked around to look at some exhibits and to try and find the shortest line. I came across the Legends House booth and saw Hacksaw Jim Duggan signing on a Legends House set. The line took awhile as there was a professional photographer who gave you a card where you could access your pictures online for free. This would have been a great thing to do all over the place instead of just with Legends House but whatever.

This was a very efficiently run booth as I got through the line in about 40 minutes and got to chat with Duggan. I was wearing a Cleveland Indians shirt and he asked if I was from Ohio. I said I saw him wrestle in Lexington about twenty two years earlier and he said I go way back. He asked if it was my first Wrestlemania (it is) and he said once I go I'll never want to miss another one. Very nice guy, as was everyone else.

Something interesting about the Duggan booth is while he was getting up to go meet the handicapped people, he would always start a USA chant or get us all to shout H000 before he went down to meet the people. You can see the old guys know how to keep a crowd going instead of just focusing on the people in front of them. It's a dying art but it worked well here.

After that I was running low on time and started to head to the 30 Years of Wrestlemania exhibit but opted for Undertaker's Graveyard. It's a cool concept with a bunch of Undertaker stuff and a tombstone with the Wrestlemania logo, date and name of the opponent engraved. There's also a

cased urn, a bunch of caskets, and an open grave with a tombstone for Wrestlemania 30 minus a name. I wanted to hit the 30 Years thing though so I cut out in the middle. The biggest problem here: it's right next to the Superstar entrance booth so when the organ music was restarting, you could hear LET'S LIGHT IT UP!

So I run back over to 30 Years of Wrestlemania with fifteen minutes to go...and it's closed. Like EVERYTHING ELSE. The idea is to get the fans out in time for the next batch to come in, but it's cutting off a part of the time the people paid for. Why they can't just have a 30 minute buffer in between is beyond me, but a lot of people were annoyed as the exhibits would take about ten minutes to get through and there was plenty of time to go. I don't blame the guards as they had orders, but that's stupid planning. I walked through the store (you have to as you leave) but the stuff was your usual overpriced weekend event stuff. They had a TON of merchandise though.

Overall it was fun and I'd definitely go again, but man alive were there some issues with how it was set up. For one thing, have a sign up that says who is going to be at your booths later in the day rather than just making it a guessing game. Also, and I'm not sure how you go about doing this, they need to cut down the wait time. Spending an hour to get one signature is eating up too much time. I would think maybe having everyone in a line and you can meet them and then go to booths, but it would get REALLY annoying standing there while everyone got pictures etc. It's more than worth the \$50 to get in and see everything and meet people like Steamboat and Duggan though.

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