

I Want To Talk A Little Bit About Roman Reigns' Rocket Push

And I have a Mr. Fuji reference.

It's early on January 3, 2015 and that means we're on the Road to the Royal Rumble, meaning we're coming up on the off ramp to the Road to Wrestlemania (I hear it's the other exit before Parts Unknown). This past Monday on Raw, we saw Daniel Bryan announce himself as the second official entrant into the Royal Rumble match.

This will be Bryan's big return to the ring after missing about nine months to a neck injury. He made the big announcement and the place went nuts, showing that the crowd had its early (and probably middle and late) favorite to win the match and go on to headline Wrestlemania XXXI out in California. It worked last year in New Orleans and in theory it should work again out west.

However, if you listen to the news and follow WWE, it's become fairly clear that WWE has someone else in mind to win the battle royal. That someone would be Roman Reigns, who debuted over two years ago and still hasn't been pinned in a singles match. To put that in context, in televised matches during the same time span, John Cena has been pinned four times in singles matches and Randy Orton fifteen times (yet people still seem to think Orton and Cena are close to equals. More on that in another one of these things soon).

Based on that stat alone, it's clear that the company thinks something of Reigns and wants him to be something special. It's really not hard to see why they want it either: he has the right heritage, a great look, the required number of tattoos, a really good spear, and a pretty good presence.

That being said, he's only a few steps ahead of watching the paint dry behind a TV showing a test pattern after you got tired of watching the

grass grow. It's just not there for him yet, but for some reason WWE has decided that he MUST win the title at this upcoming Wrestlemania or for some reason he'll never have another chance again. At the age of 29, I really don't see this being the last chance before Reigns has to ride into the sunset, but that seems to be the mentality.

At the end of the day, Reigns just isn't ready for the top spot in the company and it really isn't hard to see why: he doesn't have any real seasoning. Let's take a look back at Reigns' career in the WWE so far and then compare it to some of the other top guys that have been handed the torch over the years.

I had a big timeline ready, but here's the short version: he debuts, Shield wins a lot, he and Rollins win the Tag Team Titles, he sets the Rumble record, Shield goes to war with Evolution, Shield splits, Reigns loses a few multi-man title matches, Reigns beats Orton at Summerslam, his feud with Rollins is cut short due to the hernia injury, it's time for him to win the Rumble and headline Wrestlemania.

Did I miss anything? I just summed up his entire career in a few lines. The big thing people point to is the Rumble record, but let's flash back to Kane's old record. The year he set the record (2001), he went on to win the Hardcore Title at Wrestlemania X7 (praise be its name). The next year at Wrestlemania X8, which would correspond to the upcoming Wrestlemania for Reigns, Kane got rolled up by Kurt Angle for a pin in less than eleven minutes in the fourth match on the card.

Somehow though, Roman Reigns is supposed to be not just headlining Wrestlemania but becoming the new IT guy. That puts him on a short list of guys in company history, so let's take a look at those names and see how their buildup went before they took the top spot in the company. Keep an eye on how many of them actually got the top spot at Wrestlemania because we'll be coming back to it later.

We'll start with Hogan, whose big moment came at a house show. This one is hard to compare to the others as he had his big moment before pay per view was a thing, but he had Rocky III in his back pocket. People around the country and even the world knew him, meaning they would want to see

him wrestle in the WWF. He also had a solid run near the top of the AWA (how Gagne could validate never putting the title on him, even for a short run, will never make sense to me) and had been wrestling for seven years. In other words, he had a background to fall back on.

The next IT guy (which is a debatable list of course) would probably be Bret Hart. He won his first title at a TV taping in November 1992, but his real ascension to the top of the company was really at Wrestlemania X in 1994. Bret slayed the giant Yokozuna and ushered in a new era of smaller guys in the WWF. I don't think I need to go over Bret's resume, but he was a two time Triple Crown Champion and had been wrestling sixteen years.

Shawn is basically the same way as he took the torch from Bret Hart after spending 1995 as the undisputed king of the midcard who was waiting to become the World Champion. There's a very good case to make for him beating Diesel at Wrestlemania XI but instead he had to wait until Wrestlemania XII, over eleven years into his career.

The next really big guy is of course Steve Austin, who had debuted back in 1989 in the USWA. He won Rookie of the Year, followed by every WCW Title except for the World Title. Then he came over to the WWF and became the hottest star since Hogan himself, won back to back Royal Rumbles (just like Shawn) and finally won the title at Wrestlemania XIV.

Rock was the top guy as well, but the day he became that kind of a star is kind of debatable. For me, it was at Backlash 2000 when he dethroned HHH and won the title for the first time as a face. Even with Austin's help, it was clear that Rock was going to be the guy, at least for awhile. He started training back in 1995 but had grown up around wrestling all his life. Again, if he doesn't have the experience in the ring, he has a background in wrestling to grow up on.

We'll jump ahead to Cena, whose moment is kind of hazy as well. It's certainly not Wrestlemania XXI as that was all about Batista. For Cena, we'll say Wrestlemania XXII against HHH (despite it really not being that great of a match). That would have been about six and a half years after he debuted in the California indies.

That brings us back to Reigns. I made sure to mention how long everyone had been in the ring, because it plays a big factor for Reigns. A lot of people overlook when he debuted: August 19, 2010, or about four and a half years ago. The only person anywhere near that short an amount of time would be Rock, and to put it mildly, Roman Reigns is not the Rock.

The other thing Reigns is missing besides all the experience is a feud that makes you want to see him. I won't go into any detailed explanation, but Hogan had Bockwinkel, Bret had Mr. Perfect, Shawn had Jannetty and Bret, Austin had the Bret, Rock had HHH (don't let history fool you. That stable war was background noise for Rock vs. HHH) and Cena had JBL, Jericho and Angle.

Reigns has had one big MATCH. Not a major feud mind you, but a single match, and even that wasn't anything to remember. His character is nothing to write home about either. What exactly is Reigns' character? A big strong guy who can do athletic things and has a good heritage. In other words, he's Rocky Maivia with a frown and occasional smirk. The fact that Ryback, a talking gorilla, has a better connection with his fans after a single speech than Reigns has a few months before he's supposed to take over Cena's spot, is mind blowing.

What I don't get is why this one title win has to be the big moment. If you look back at the other names, a lot of them didn't have their big moment in their first title win. Bret, Rock and Cena were all on at least their second World Title reign when they took over the top spot in the company. Just winning the title, especially in today's world where you have to win the title about nine times before you get anywhere near the top of the list (CM Punk, Daniel Bryan, Jeff Hardy and Sheamus COMBINED have as many WWE World Titles as John Cena. Just think about that for a minute), a first title win really doesn't mean anything.

Instead of giving him the title at Wrestlemania, why not have Reigns win the title at a show with less pressure on him? Say...Summerslam? He wins the belt there, establishes a reputation for himself (because the idea of someone on his level holding a midcard title is heresy in WWE for some stupid reason) and then loses it, setting him on a path to get the title back. It worked for Daniel Bryan, though I have a feeling the actual

story of making people want to see Bryan had a lot to do with it.

Yeah imagine that: a story for Reigns. That's one of the biggest things holding him back right now. The only story he really has is he used to be part of the Shield and wants to get Rollins for breaking up the team. Ok, that's fine. Let that be his first big story. Let Rollins win the title and have Reigns chase him for a bit. Let Reigns do SOMETHING before they just have him beat Brock Lesnar for the title.

Here's a basic story they could go with. Reigns fights someone else at Wrestlemania (after finishing this death feud with Big Show. I won't even get into how stupid it is for his big feud before Wrestlemania to be against Big Show, but it's another horrible WWE idea) like...let's get creative and say Undertaker. He spears Undertaker in half and retires the Dead Man while Bryan takes the title off Lesnar...only to have Rollins cash in on the title. If you don't want to go with that, have Rollins win the title with help at Summerslam and hold it until Wrestlemania XXXII where Reigns beats his old stable mate to win the belt.

Logical, timely, and you can have Reigns as a killing machine (perhaps as a heel) over the summer, running through the midcard and just destroying everyone in sight. It builds him a reputation, gets people interested in him again, and gives him more time to grow a much needed personality. Doesn't that sound better than just spearing Brock and winning the title all of a sudden?

I don't know why just beating someone who is likely leaving (Heaven help them if word gets out in advance that he's leaving and Reigns has to take the belt off him there. Remember Goldberg vs. Lesnar people. It could happen again and that might be Reigns' big moment) and has been beaten multiple times before is supposed to make Reigns this big force. Cena and HHH have beaten Lesnar since he returned and it didn't launch them multiple notches up the card. For some reason though, that's their big idea on how to get Reigns to the top of the company.

Again though, I ask why it has to be here. Why all of a sudden does Reigns have to be the A-list guy? I know Cena is on the downside of his career but it's not like he's Bockwinkel and Gagne in the 80s, hanging on

fifteen years after his prime because someone trustworthy has to hold the belt. Cena is still having some of the best matches in the company and still gets reactions every time he's out there.

Putting Reigns over for the title in the main event of the upcoming Wrestlemania is like throwing him into an Olympic swimming pool and expecting him to win a gold medal (he doesn't even have a broken freaking neck!) when he can't even float yet. It's a dumb plan to get him to a self imposed goal line and him screwing up here could ruin the incredible potential he has. I have no idea why they feel the need to throw him in like this when he's clearly not ready, but it's one of the dumbest ideas that I've seen them have in a long time, which covers a LOT of ground.

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