

Reviewing the Review: Royal Rumble 2015

We've finally arrived at one of the biggest shows of the year as we're almost to the Road to Wrestlemania. While it seems like there are multiple ways to get to the biggest show of the year, it seems like this is destined to end with Reigns vs. Lesnar as the match that not many people want to see. Let's get to it.

Cesaro and Tyson Kidd beat the New Day in a good pre-show match. It seems like New Day is already a lost cause and I can't say I'm shocked. There isn't much to the team other than a lot of sweating, but they're fine as the face version of 3MB. Kidd and Cesaro have potential but I don't see them being anything more than the challengers of the month.

Ascension beat the New Age Outlaws in the opener and it was exactly what it was supposed to be. I still like Ascension and it's clear where they're going with the team, but they went a long way around to get there. I'm also not sure what other veteran teams they can beat as the Dudleys don't seem to be a possibility and the APA is retired. I'm sure it ends with Usos vs. Ascension for the belts, maybe at Wrestlemania, and the match could be good if they go with an old 80s formula. That being said, I'm not sure how much a win over the Outlaws is supposed to impress me in 2015. They were past their prime in 2000 and they're still kicking around?

Heyman offered the Authority the use of Lesnar to take out Sting. That's an odd choice as I don't want to see Sting ground into dust from Brock's stare, let alone what might happen if they had contact.

The Usos retained the Tag Team Titles over Miz/Mizdow in a match that no one wanted to see again. This feud died months ago, right around the time Naomi was forgotten. Why the writers will never understand that stories can save dull wrestling is beyond me but it's a lesson that would save us a lot of headaches.

The Bellas beat Paige/Natalya with a forearm in the fourth straight tag

match of the night. This looked like filler, was wrestled like filler, and ended like filler. In other words, it was filler because they've blown through Natalya vs. Nikki about five times already.

The old school Rumble promos don't make me think anyone but Reigns has a chance.

Now we get to the real treat of the night as Brock Lesnar defended the World Title against John Cena and Seth Rollins. If there's one thing WWE can get right, it's carnage. That's exactly what we got here as these three guys just beat the tar out of each other for over twenty minutes and it became who could possibly survive.

Cena and Lesnar both got to throw around the Stooges in a power off, leaving Rollins to steal the show with his high spots. The biggest of said spots was a flying elbow from the top rope to drive Lesnar through the announcers' table. The idea here was that Lesnar broke a rib and was out of the match for a few minutes, which he sold like he was dead instead of just injured. However, this caused the lone problem of the match, which happens all the time in WWE main events.

With Lesnar down, Cena and Rollins traded finisher attempt and the fans weren't all that impressed. Yeah they popped some, but there was no question about the kickouts. That's become a trope in WWE main events and it's something they need to change. Have them hit secondary moves here or something, but stop this whole "I hit a finisher and then you hit a finisher" sequence. It was stupid when Orton and Cena did it and it worked about as well this time. Even an STF attempt would work better than the AA, but that's the formula they keep sticking with for some reason.

Before we get to the ending, I have to give Rollins some praise. He's gone from the guy I thought would be the white Kofi Kingston to a guy who looks like he belongs in the World Title scene and stood toe to toe with John Cena and Brock Lesnar in a war. This guy is going to be a star someday and his face turn is going to blow the roof off the place. Just imagine the pop when he curb stomps some big time heel.

Anyway, Lesnar came back in and went into Beast Mode for the F5 and pin

on Rollins. There is some serious money to be made with Lesnar as a face (assuming he isn't back in MMA right after Wrestlemania) and it would be the easiest turn in years. He really wouldn't have to change anything as he would just start fighting heels in the same way he is now, probably without Heyman to guide him, giving him an out to lose via DQ etc. It's not a necessary turn, but he's going to be the face at Wrestlemania anyway, so why fight it at this point?

That brings us to who he'll be the heel against at Wrestlemania...and of course it's Roman Reigns. I've spent far too much time talking about how Reigns isn't ready and the 8000 stories they could go through to make things better (and those ways do exist. This story isn't guaranteed to be the disaster people are sure it's going to be) so instead we'll look at the Rumble piece by piece.

First up we'll look at the returns. This wasn't the best part of the match as once you get past Bubba Ray's good return, which didn't lead anywhere as he wasn't even out there five minutes, the returns took a big hit. I mean, the Boogeyman, Zack Ryder and Diamond Dallas Page? They were out there about four minutes in total and the last one was gone about halfway through the match. This can be a major strong point for the match and it fell totally flat here.

Before we get to the really bad things, let's touch on the good stuff. Bray Wyatt had a REALLY strong stretch in there and looked like the monster he used to be. There's still a lot of potential for him and I'm interested in where he's going from here, even if it's fighting Undertaker (though that depends on what you do with Undertaker going forward. I'm sure I'll get to that at some point). Wyatt was the iron man at just under 47 minutes and made it to the final batch.

That gets us to the end of the really good/memorable parts (even Kofi's save wasn't anything special this year, though it was a matter of time until we got to the Rosebuds saving someone) so now we'll get on to the really big flaws. We'll start with what ended Wyatt's, as well as far many others', night: Big Show and Kane. This is where the Rumble went from being boring to just flat out bad.

At the end of the day, the Rumble set up a ton of potential with guys like Reigns, Rusev, Wyatt, Ziggler, Ambrose and Cesaro around near the end. That opened the door for a really hot ending in the same vein as Reigns vs. Rusev in the Money in the Bank qualifying battle royal back in July. What we got instead was the wrath of the Big Balds as Kane and Big Show threw out Ziggler, Wyatt and Ambrose in short order before getting in a quick fight with each other, allowing Reigns to dump them out at the same time.

So yeah, at the end of the day, it came down to Reigns vs. Big Show to end the Rumble, despite it being the least interesting story in years. I've yet to hear from anyone who actually cares about these two fighting but it closed the Royal Rumble to send Reigns to the biggest show (hardy har har) of the year. Why would we want to see these young and interesting guys when we can see Big Show being the same character he's been since 1999? I mean, it worked for the New Age Outlaws in the opener so it can work here in the main event. It's like bookends!

If that wasn't enough though, they had Kane and Big Show go after Reigns again, only to have the Rock make a return for the save. The fans weren't pleased even with one of the biggest stars ever out there, and can you really blame them? It didn't help that they seemed to mistime things as Rusev came back in after not being eliminated and was tossed with ease in a final screw you to the fans with one more blast of false hope.

That brings us to the real problem of this match: the lack of doubt. Daniel Bryan came in at #10, eliminated Tyson Kidd, and was out in ten minutes, being eliminated between Adam Rose and Fandango. He was little more than a throwaway entrant as it seems WWE isn't interested in doing anything with him this year. Here's the thing: I can accept that. It may not be the most popular move, but Bryan is fresh off major neck surgery and has been back literally less than three weeks. I can understand WWE being hesitant to put the title on someone 33 years old and coming off a major injury, especially after they nailed his win last year.

What I can't understand though is the idea to put him out that early. At the end of the day, this Rumble was over the second Bryan's feet hit the floor. That elimination sealed every bit of doubt away forever as it was

just a matter of time until Reigns showed up, cleaned house (by which I mean three guys. Quite the way to showcase your new star WWE) and won the match. It was right out of 1993 where Undertaker was thrown out and there was zero doubt that it was going to Yokozuna (who just happens to be related to Reigns).

All the drama was gone and it became really, really boring. There was some hope, but Big Show and Kane took away whatever chance there was of the match being interesting. Daniel Bryan didn't need to win, but he needed to be there to keep the crowd under control until the end. Having him lose clean, especially to Wyatt, is fine but don't have him get thrown out in ten minutes after barely doing anything that early on.

The overarching problem with this Rumble was the lack of drama. Much like many bad Rumbles, there was zero doubt as to who was winning. There can be fun stories to be told if you stack the deck against them, but the final three (excluding Rusev) had as much drama as Mr. Perfect and Rick Rude vs. Hulk Hogan in 1990. On top of that they threw out Bryan ala throwing out Hogan early in 1989 and the results were just as lame. It didn't help that the rest of the Rumble was horribly uninteresting with only one fun surprise and nothing else worth talking about. I could see it being the worst Rumble ever but 1999 is hard to top.

Overall, this show needs to be incredibly grateful for the classic World Title match because without that match, it's a bunch of lame tag matches and a dreadful Rumble. That being said, the World Title match is good enough to make me forget about the earlier weak stuff, which is a common case in wrestling (see also Wrestlemania VI, where the show is pretty fondly remembered due to one match alone). WWE can salvage Wrestlemania's main event, but this show left a horrible taste in a lot of mouths due to Reigns and Reigns alone being shoved down our unready throats.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book on the History of Saturday Night's Main Event at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00SATPVKW>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>