

Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: February 9, 2015

We have a new direction for Fast Lane now as for some reason there was a controversy regarding the Rock, which comes off more like “we’re scared because the smarkiest city in the world didn’t like what we were doing so here’s Fast Lane to give Bryan a shot.” Other than that there isn’t a ton of stuff to talk about because Fast Lane doesn’t need to exist. Let’s get to it.

We opened with the required Reigns/Bryan chat which didn’t get us anywhere, so the Authority came out and made Reigns/Bryan vs. Big Show/Kane. The monsters wound up getting disqualified in a match longer than it needed to be which should have ended with Kane tapping out but that would be a waste of his incredible heat so they kept the giants looking strong instead. Bryan and Reigns had issues post match so HHH made a rematch with Rollins/Noble/Mercury being added to the giants’ team.

Somehow, this whole thing took about half an hour and it showed the one major problem with the main event scene at the moment: IT’S REALLY BORING. We’re seeing these giant fight Bryan and Reigns in every possible combination and there’s no reason to see them fight all over again. Bryan vs. Reigns is being shoehorned in when Bryan was eliminated from the Rumble 100% clean.

They screwed up at the Rumble by having Bryan dumped out so early and now their solution doesn’t add up either. The match should be good, but that’s getting into TNA logic: if we have a good ending, the journey there doesn’t matter. At this point, they’re not just getting the fans to calm down but rather getting the fans to stop caring about anyone. Yeah they pop for Bryan, but this story is killing the momentum they had going. It got even worse on Smackdown when Big Show knocked out Kane, likely setting up a feud between the two. Because they’re big and old you see.

Ryback beat Rollins via DQ when the Stooges interfered. Somehow, this was STILL Survivor Series fallout because that's still a thing.

Sheamus is coming back. A lot of people seem to be complaining about that, but imagine him in Kane's current role. Does that make things sound a bit easier to sit through?

Paige beat Brie Bella because WWE still thinks the Bellas are interesting. That's their major flaw: their characters are so basic as the stuck up heels that they can't carry the division on their own. It also doesn't help that we're watching Sasha Banks, Charlotte and Bayley having great matches in addition to having just as defined, if not more defined, characters down in NXT.

One of the big segments of the show was Lana and Rusev mocking Cena for being old and past his prime. There's a story to be told about Cena needing to face the impending end of his career, but calling someone that can throw both Stooges on his shoulders at the same time and go toe to toe with Brock Lesnar over the hill is a huge stretch, especially when they still look like Cena. Just do the Hogan vs. Nikita Koloff formula (it would be an insult to Rusev to compare him to Nikolai Volkoff) and let the fans chant USA for the whole feud. As usual, why mess with something that's almost guaranteed to work?

Bray Wyatt beat Dolph Ziggler in a loss probably designed to make Ziggler eventually snap and turn heel. In theory the idea is that he's worked so hard and isn't getting anywhere because of it, which of course causes another problem: all the momentum he got from the Survivor Series win and subsequent success are thrown away for ANOTHER losing streak angle. We get at least three or four of these a year and they almost always lead to a turn. There a dozen other ways to turn someone heel, but for some reason this is the company's favorite.

On the other hand you have Bray, who is clearly being set up for a Wrestlemania showdown with Undertaker, assuming he's capable of going of course. My guess would be Wyatt wins, because there is zero reason for Undertaker to win. What is Cole going to say? "THAT'S THE START OF A NEW STREAK!"?

Wyatt being the bigger freak and overwhelming Undertaker because he's lost his identity and can't keep up with the younger generation, ultimately leading to his retirement, is an interesting story that would give Wyatt a huge rub, but unfortunately I think we're heading for an Undertaker win to make us feel better about last year's loss because WWE is afraid of hurting our feelings in exchange for thinking for the future.

Heyman and Lesnar came out to cut a basic promo on how neither Reigns nor Bryan has any chance to win the title at Wrestlemania and is just fighting for second place. There was absolutely no reason for Lesnar to be out there for this segment and it was a total waste of an appearance. I like seeing the title out there for a change, but Brock didn't need to be there for this one.

Goldust and Stardust did their usual schtick and the New Day got a pin. Get to the feud already.

Reigns and Bryan had a cliched backstage bit where they said they'll work together and then fight at Fast Lane. This is a very by the numbers feud and that's not helping things.

HHH said he wanted to confront Sting at Fast Lane. The lights flickered, a fake Sting popped up in the ring, and the words I ACCEPT showed up on screen. Somehow this took nearly five minutes.

Then we got to the stupid moment of the show, as the Usos lost to Kidd and Cesaro. Not only is this stupid because it's the exact same idea we see far too often, but it was also preceded by Cole saying he had heard a rumor that a win over the Usos could give Cesaro and Kidd a future title shot. This is the team that I believe has won two matches leading up to this past Monday, and now they're the #1 contenders? Off a rumor? This was your standard overbooked and overthought WWE mess that only they care about and no one really benefits from.

Rikishi is going to the Hall of Fame. For some reason people are complaining about this, despite him being a pretty successful midcard guy who was WAY over in 2000 with Too Cool. I have no problems with his induction.

Sin Cara beat Damien Mizdow, because WWE doesn't understand that the right move is to have Mizdow keep one upping Miz until he beats him in the showdown. Instead it's turned into a battle of who sucks less, making everyone look weaker than they should.

Bray Wyatt did his usual cryptic promo, which is about the Undertaker.

Dean Ambrose squashed Curtis Axel but was told he gets no Intercontinental Title shot. This was fine, but hearing Axel being called a third generation sports entertainer made me cringe. Does WWE really believe that anyone outside the company boundaries calls it sports entertainment? A little over a year ago in NXT, Bo Dallas was trying to sound stupid and said he had been sports entertaining around the world. Is that what we're supposed to call it? A sports entertainment contest instead of a match? That's what we're going with? Again, stop overthinking things.

The main event saw Reigns and Bryan get beaten up until Ryback, Ziggler and Rowan interfered and took out Big Show, Kane and Rollins, allowing Reigns to spear Mercury for the win. Just like in Miz/Mizdow, why are we having the guys we're supposed to cheer for look helpless and leave us with two guys who look lame to cheer for? Oh that would be because we have to keep Big Show and Kane looking strong for reasons.

That idea of "for reasons" is something that needs to be addressed. Look at what's going on in WWE right now. Why did the Authority make Reigns and Bryan vs. five guys? I know they're heels, but what is the motivation for going after Reigns and Bryan? There's a history with Bryan so that checks out, but they don't have a clear reason to feud with Reigns. If it's still over Reigns as part of the Shield then fine, but TELL US THAT.

At the moment it's coming off as people doing things because, in the words of Mark Henry, that's what they do. The opening tag was clearly just made because it's what they wanted to do that night and they didn't feel the need to have a logical reason to do so. The same was true of the main event. There's no storyline reason for these matches to be happening and there doesn't seem to be anything for the Authority to gain from it, so why do they keep doing it?

The stories are going in circles and there doesn't seem to be an end game other than "title match at Wrestlemania", after which I would assume it's more of the same: winner vs. Authority's monster of the month. It's like they don't know where they want to go with things and just expect Wrestlemania to bail them out. I hate to say this but TNA is currently far more logical and well written than this mess. Yeah the stories can still be messy and unnecessary at times, but there's a clear path there for them and they know how to get to their goal. I'm not convinced WWE has a goal at this point.

Oh and Reigns speared Bryan after the match and got booed. Nothing wrong with that, but they're running the risk of making Lesnar a huge face at Wrestlemania and they better have something ready to combat that or it's the ending of Wrestlemania X7 in reverse. That's not how you want the next face of WWE (again because reasons instead of common sense) coming off on his big stage.

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>