

Monday Night Raw – February 16, 2015: The Response To The Acceptance For A Challenge To Talk

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 16, 2015

Location: Amway Center, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Booker T.

It's the go home show for Fast Lane and the main story here is the implosion of Reigns and Bryan. They've gone from respect to attacking each other in the span of a week, meaning it's almost time for them to either win the Tag Team Titles or respect each other again so the story stops making any sense. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Cena to address Rusev attacking his bad eye last week. Cena knows you have to be extra aggressive to deal with something like Rusev. This Sunday it's not going to be the smiling Cena because he's coming to Fast Lane to fight for respect and to win the United States Championship. Notice that Cena makes winning the title sound like it means something to him. Ambrose has been doing the same with the Intercontinental Title and it's a nice touch that we haven't gotten in a long time.

Cue the Russians with Lana talking about how everyone has fallen to Rusev and Cena will be no exception. There is no coming back from this Sunday and Cena will be crushed. Rusev promises to destroy everything Cena has, including his will to live. Cena goes right after him and takes Rusev down on the stage, including throwing him face first into the wall like Rusev did last week. The fans are WAY into this beatdown and even count along with ten right hands to Rusev's head.

Dean Ambrose vs. Luke Harper

Dean brings out a signed contract for an Intercontinental Title shot at Fast Lane, just waiting for Barrett's signature. Ambrose takes him down with a headlock to start but Luke writhes out of it and headbutts Dean into the corner. Back up and Dean hammers away before hitting a nice middle rope back elbow to the jaw. They head outside with Dean's suicide dive being easily blocked in a move you don't see all that often. Harper kicks him in the face and we take a break.

Back with Dean caught in a headlock until he bites Harper's hand to escape. He throws Luke to the floor but Harper pops back in, only to get caught in a tornado DDT to put both guys down. The standing flying elbow drop gets two but Dean walks into the superkick for the same. The rebound clothesline is countered into a sitout Boss Man Slam for two for Harper. Luke misses the discus lariat and Dirty Deeds is good for the pin at 11:06.

Rating: C+. Nice match but it's a shame to see Harper as just another jobber to the stars. He didn't get an entrance here and was just there as a plot device so Ambrose could pin another former Intercontinental Champion. The match was fun stuff at times though with some nice sequences, but you knew Harper wasn't going to have a real chance here.

Quick chat about the Dust Brothers imploding. Bringing in Dusty is the only logical step from here.

The Authority is in the back where Big Show and Kane argue over the ending of Tag Team Turmoil and the Royal Rumble. Kane blames him for everything and they're about to fight again. Big Show keeps saying February 13, which would be last Friday. HHH cuts them off because he's tired of how these two make him look. They have big singles matches tonight and HHH wants solutions instead of excuses.

Bray Wyatt has what looks like a nail in his hand and talks about there is fear inside of us all. It's coming. They're giving themselves extra time before revealing Undertaker, presumably to make sure he can actually go.

The Dust Brothers are in the back with Dusty Rhodes and Stardust is being his usual insane self. Dusty says he's here to tell Cody that none of the

stars and galaxies mean anything without family. He loves them both no matter what happens so get it together. The brothers shake hands and Dusty is pleased.

New Day vs. Goldust/Stardust

Woods and Stardust get things going with Xavier hitting a knee to the ribs, sending Stardust over for a tag to his brother. The brothers start taking over on Woods as we see Dusty watching in the back. Woods enziguris Stardust down and makes the tag to Kofi as everything speeds up. Everything breaks down and Kofi takes a good while to get the fans into his clapping. The brothers nearly collide again, allowing Kingston to hit Trouble in Paradise for the pin on Goldust at 2:58. Not really noteworthy here but Cole confuses Woods and Kingston because he's a moron. If he can rip on people for basic errors, so can I.

Stardust and Goldust hug post match, but Stardust lays him out with Cross Rhodes.

Roman Reigns says he has to deal with Daniel Bryan and Brock Lesnar at the same time. The Authority hasn't been trying to set anything right but rather stop Reigns from riding the fans' momentum. Bryan took the opportunity he had but Reigns is going to take that opportunity back.

Stardust rips into Dusty in the back, saying this family stuff is nonsense. He declares Cody dead and Dusty looks heartbroken.

Kane vs. Roman Reigns

Bryan is on commentary and starts us a YES chant as Reigns runs Kane over to start. Kane sends him into the middle buckle to take over, which Bryan says is on Reigns instead of him. We're already in the chinlock as Cole brings up the possibility of Bryan getting disqualified on Sunday. Bryan: "Why would I have to worry about that? I'm the better wrestler."

Back up and Kane boots Reigns in the jaw for two and we get what sounds like a YOU CAN'T WRESTLE chant. Who exactly are they talking about there? Reigns fights back and gets two off a Samoan drop, followed by another YES chant. Kane kicks him in the face again and they head outside with

Kane loading up the announcers' table, only to eat a spear to give Reigns the countout win at 6:18. If anyone can come up with a reason why that wasn't a pinfall win for Reigns, please let me know so I can tell you why you're wrong.

Rating: D. Boring match here and again, why in the world does WWE have no problem having people like Miz and Mizdow both get pinned going into their match but Kane only has to lose by countout? This protection of the giants astounds me as they're both made men and can lose every match for the rest of their careers and not have their legacies hurt, but they're protected like Fort Knox.

Bryan starts another YES chant and Reigns offers him a chance to get in. Daniel walks away instead.

Post break, Bryan says Reigns is going to have to deal with a lot more YES chants Sunday than he did tonight. If he wants to be World Champion, he has to be mentally tough. This is at least somewhat interesting.

The Bellas steal Paige's clothes so she can't have a match tonight. Cameron won't let her borrow any gear so Paige grabs one of the Rosebuds, who I believe is played by indy star Mia Yim. Again, this is an acceptable use of the Divas, but there's no room for people like Charlotte and Sasha Banks to have an awesome match because it's not what fans want to see. No, they want to see pranks like you would see at a summer camp from "reality TV stars".

Summer Rae vs. Paige

Paige is dressed as a fairy princess because that's supposed to be entertaining. She runs Summer over and drives knees into Summer's chest, only to take a spin kick to the face (clearly didn't connect), setting up a full nelson with the legs. Paige rolls out and hoots the PTO for the win at 2:45.

Post match the Bellas come out but Paige cuts them off and says she doesn't need an outfit to make her look good. This Sunday, she'll look even better because she'll be wearing the Divas Championship.

Sheamus return video.

Here's Rollins for his match with Ziggler but first he rips on the idea of Presidents' Day because it's about the past. That's a waste of time because the future is right here in front of you. He's the most talented performer in the world and could do anything he wanted. Maybe he should run for President even though he isn't old enough. Or he could host the Daily Show and make it watchable. Or maybe he should just become World Champion and main event Wrestlemania.

Instead he's stuck dealing with people like Dolph Ziggler, who cuts Rollins off. Dolph says Rollins had a bad Valentine's Day. Did the Stooges get him the wrong chocolates? Maybe HHH screwed up the talk about the birds-uh and the bees-uh. Rollins calls Ziggler a nothing but Dolph says he raises the bar every time he's in this ring. If he can't keep the Authority gone, the least he can do is take care of their golden boy. Ziggler knocks Rollins to the floor and the opening bell is after a break.

Seth Rollins vs. Dolph Ziggler

The match is joined in progress after a break with Ziggler fighting out of a chinlock. The Stooges get caught interfering and earn an ejection for their troubles. Ziggler eats a forearm to the jaw but sidesteps a charge to send Rollins into the post. The buckle bomb is countered into a sunset flip for two and the running DDT gets the same. Rollins starts hammering away but misses the top rope knee. A superkick to the ribs looks to set up the Curb Stomp but Ziggler scores with a superkick of his own. The Zig Zag has Rollins beat but the Stooges run in for the DQ at 5:18.

Rating: C. The match was decent enough but my goodness can we get some better motivation here? Yeah there are some lame matches and stories, but it's hard to always blame the wrestlers for the results. Look at this one for example. Why were Rollins and Ziggler fighting? Over who is the best? Well ok fine, but that's not what their promo set up. Why didn't their promo set that up? Because it was clearly just there to fill in time rather than to set up their match. You can't pin that (or Kane for that

matter) on the wrestlers, at least not all of it.

Rowan and Ryback come in for the save and lay out Noble.

Here's HHH to address Sting's actions from last week. First up we get a video recapping Sting helping get rid of the Authority at Survivor Series and helping the three fired guys get their jobs back. HHH says the word on the street is that he's afraid of Sting. This Sunday, the unthinkable is going to happen when WCW and WWE are in the same ring. I'd try to forget the Invasion too boss. Before he can get too far though, here's Ric Flair to interrupt.

Flair says he's here because he respects and loves HHH. This is the same town where HHH inducted Flair into the Hall of Fame and said Flair should have his own wing. HHH politely cuts him off to say he already knows how good Sting is, but Flair don't put yourself in a position to fail. HHH talks about how Sting took Flair to the limit at the first Clash of the Champions and then lived off that reputation for years.

If Sting had shown up here over the years, HHH would have done whatever it took to get rid of him on principle alone. If Sting is WCW, then HHH is the WWE. Flair tries to cool HHH down by bringing up him not being a full time wrestler now (as opposed to Sting of course). HHH needs to be careful that he doesn't get caught up and lose to Sting.

In a good line, HHH says he may not be Flair in the ring, but when it comes to taking care of Sting, Flair is no HHH. Flair says don't let Sting shove you down again, so HHH shoves Flair down and rants about how important WWE is to him. This worked a lot better than I was expecting, despite all the HHH's nose sized holes in the idea.

Darren Young/??? vs. Ascension

Young's partner doesn't even get an entrance. The beating is on before the bell with Konnor crushing the nameless guy (even the announcers are referencing the fact that they don't know his name) until Titus O'Neil comes in for the save. So the Prime Time Players are back together and Slater Gator is done?

Miz and Barrett agree to take care of each others' problems.

Preview of the Destruction of the Shield DVD.

Damien Mizdow vs. Bad News Barrett

Non-title. Barrett stomps away in the corner to start but Mizdow stomps him down, only to have Miz ring a bell, meaning to stop. He needs Mizdow to come buff his shoe, allowing Barrett to kick him down off the apron. Mizdow takes over again but another bell (potential smudge on sunglasses) distracts Mizdow so the Bull Hammer can give Barrett the pin at 2:31.

Ambrose hits the ring post match and ties Barrett to the post. Ambrose demands that Barrett sign and puts a pen in his hand, literally forcing Barrett to sign. Bad News: "GET A KNIFE! THIS IS ILLEGAL!" Ambrose says that makes it official and the match is on for Fast Lane.

Bray pounds the nail into a board and shouts to find him before he finds whoever he's talking to.

Jimmy Uso/Naomi vs. Natalya/Tyson Kidd

The Usos defend against Cesaro and Kidd on Sunday. Kidd bails to the corner to tag in Natalya instead of fighting Jimmy. After a few armdrags, it's back to the guys as Kidd actually fights for a change. Jimmy stares back at him and it's back to the girls. Natalya throws Naomi down and hits a quick basement dropkick but Kidd still doesn't want to come in. Naomi flips Natalya over into a nice pinfall reversal sequence with a sunset flip getting the pin on Natalya at 2:55.

Kidd blames Natalya for the loss.

Daniel Bryan vs. Big Show

Reigns is at ringside. Bryan kicks away at Show's leg but gets shoved down. JBL: "It's like Jack and the Beanstalk, except the Beanstalk doesn't fight back." As in the story where JACK FACES A GIANT, meaning the entire analogy is completely overthinking the idea and missing the point? Show throws him around but gets caught in a sleeper as Reigns gets up and

starts signing autographs. It doesn't seem to bother Bryan as he takes Show down to his knees. Show fights out as Reigns is taking pictures with fans. Bryan gets thrown down as we take a break.

Back with Reigns sitting again and Bryan fighting out of a chinlock. Show puts him in a bearhug but gets guillotined on the top rope as JBL tells Booker to stop talking about fairy tales. Big Show is finally pulled over the top rope but Reigns starts throwing out t-shirts. Daniel is thrown into Reigns so Show spears Roman down for some reason. They get back inside and Bryan knocks Show into the corner. He counters a chokeslam into the YES Lock but Show makes the ropes. Here come the YES Kicks for two but Bryan gets launched off the kickout. Bryan goes up top but Reigns Superman Punches Show for the DQ at 14:38.

Rating: C+. That would mean Big Show beat Bryan and Kane only lost via countout. Only in WWE. Anyway, this was actually a pretty decent power vs. speed match and the Reigns stuff was a nice addition to everything. We'll call this a pleasant surprise more than anything else. We'll also call the tag match on Thursday, where Bryan and Reigns cleaned out the tag team division, not meaning anything a pretty obvious non-surprise.

Post match Bryan dropkicks Reigns down and the fight is on. Referees eventually break it up but the fans wake up to shout LET THEM FIGHT. Instead they begrudgingly shake hands before fighting again, much to the fans' delight. Bryan kicks him to the floor and hits the FLYING GOAT but Reigns sends him into the crowd to keep the fight going. A chair is brought in but they're eventually dragged away to end the show. That was a really good closing segment and I was getting into it by the end.

Overall Rating: C. This is what you call "OH SNAP THERE'S A PAY PER VIEW ON SUNDAY AND WE HAVEN'T DONE JACK!" All night long they were flying

through everything they could in an attempt to hide the fact that Fast Lane doesn't need to exist. The wrestling was ok at best, but they did a decent job of setting Sunday up. The US Title match feels a lot bigger all of a sudden but I don't think Cena walks out with the title. Other than that, the Flair/HHH segment was good enough if you can ignore some of the lame motivation.

That's this show's biggest takeaway for me: the lack of logical motivation all over the show. Look at Ziggler and Rollins for example. They had an issue three months ago, but both guys have moved on since then. Are they really just fighting because of what happened at Survivor Series? All we heard from them was some lame stuff about Valentine's Day, which makes me think there was no given reason for the two of them to be fighting. That's a far too common problem in this company and it's really starting to show.

Results

Dean Ambrose b. Luke Harper – Dirty Deeds

New Day b. Goldust/Stardust – Trouble in Paradise to Goldust

Roman Reigns b. Kane via countout

Paige b. Summer Rae – PT0

Dolph Ziggler b. Seth Rollins via DQ when Jamie Noble and Joey Mercury interfered

Bad News Barrett b. Damien Mizdow – Bull Hammer

Jimmy Uso/Naomi b. Natalya/Tyson Kidd – Sunset flip to Natalya

Big Show b. Daniel Bryan via DQ when Roman Reigns interfered

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>