

Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: February 23, 2015

We're past Fast Lane now and the only thing left between here and Wrestlemania is time. Well that and five Raws and Smackdowns of course. The main story tonight is the start of the hard build between Lesnar and Reigns as well as filling in the rest of the card for the biggest show of the year. Let's get to it.

To begin with, let's get through the big story of the week which didn't air on Raw: Brock Lesnar not appearing. Allegedly this was over some undisclosed contract issue, which seems to be very convenient given that he was seen at UFC 184 over the weekend. I'm not saying it's an angle, but there's enough there that it seems like it's a possibility. Either way, Lesnar will be in the main event at Wrestlemania and I'd be absolutely shocked if anything else happened. At the end of the day, Brock will be there for the right price because unlike CM Punk, he isn't completely delusional.

Orton opened the show and said this wouldn't be a twenty minute speech. He wants Rollins but got the full Authority instead, and OF COURSE we had to listen to Stephanie say every corporate name she could fit into a single speech. That might be the most annoying thing she does. Everything has to be proper titles and it comes off like the least natural way of speaking I've seen in years. There's going to be a business conference later in the night to get to the point of this. I'm as riveted as you are. Not by the dumb story, but by Stephanie. I mean, don't you just freeze in place when she speaks?

Dolph Ziggler pinned Bad News Barrett. I've ranted enough about how annoying it is when the Intercontinental Champion loses, but at least this seems to be setting up a big match at Wrestlemania....where the perennial loser will win and all is supposed to be forgotten right?

The business conference was more of STEPHANIE POWER as she got Orton to agree to team with Rollins tonight. As I said back on Monday, this felt

like just a way of killing time until we get to the obvious ending. That kind of storytelling rarely works, especially with so little time before Wrestlemania.

The Prime Time Players beat the Ascension because....well why not just bail out of the Ascension story before it has the chance to go anywhere? Now, can someone please tell me what that story was supposed to be, because the legends thing stopped weeks ago.

Now we get to the big segment of the night: Daniel Bryan endorsing Roman Reigns and then Paul Heyman coming out to say the exact same thing he's been saying for weeks: Reigns is awesome, but not awesome enough. This segment was well done, well spoken and had a very clear goal. However, it completely failed at its intended goal: making me care about Roman Reigns.

They're following a script now and the idea makes sense, but Reigns is just not someone the fans can relate to. Look back at the Bryan story. It's such a basic concept with the volume turned way up: Bryan is the every man who has been held down by the machine but will not stop fighting until he overcomes the odds and achieves his glory. What is Reigns' story? Come see Superman fight Doomsday? That's only a story when Superman loses, and I don't picture Roman Reigns losing at Wrestlemania.

Someone tell me why I should care about Roman Reigns. Yeah he had a really cool run as part of the Shield, but Rollins has grown by leaps and bounds since then and Ambrose has had his moments. Reigns is basically the same guy he was a year ago at this time but without his partners around him. The more I think about it, the more I see him as Diesel in 1994: big, strong, not that interesting because there's little to him other than power and high impact offense. That's not enough to carry him against Lesnar and I don't see this experiment working longer than a few months.

Kidd and Cesaro beat the Usos in their rematch. This was about what you would expect and thankfully they didn't just switch the titles right back. The Usos can do something else besides get the belts back (I'm not sure what exactly) and just let Kidd and Cesaro show off for the next

four months or so. The Usos were good long term placeholders, but I've seen enough of them with the belts in the last year.

Mizdow has gotten a commercial shoot by being the stunt double. This would be the 318th issue to start the eventual face turn.

Bray Wyatt says his usual insane stuff about Undertaker. At least he has a target now.

Jack Swagger beat Stardust with the Patriot Lock after a distraction from Goldust. I don't like Wrestlemania rematches and we seem to be getting more than one this year.

Cena and Rusev argued over political ideologies, monetary policy and whether or not Cena gave up in the Accolade. Or Acolyte, whichever Cena is calling it this time. It's worked for 40 years and it works now.

Rollins and Orton didn't have much to say.

Cool video on Sting to catch younger fans up.

The Bellas vs. Paige/Emma lasted 30 seconds. They seem to be setting up Bellas vs. Paige/AJ in a dream tag match. That would likely be Kevin Dunn's dream with the Bellas going over.

The Bushwhackers are going into the Hall of Fame. Luke licked my face when I was three so I can't complain too much.

Ryback beat Curtis Axel in 44 seconds. That Axelmania and the Royal Rumble clock are the most entertaining things Axel has ever done.

The final match was your standard main event tag with Reigns and Bryan beating Orton and Rollins with the running knee ending Seth. Orton bailed after Rollins tagged himself in but didn't RK0 Rollins for some reason. That reason would be ALL HAIL STEPHANIE of course, because Heaven forbid he offend her.

Overall, this show proved one thing: the road to this year's Wrestlemania is lacking. The stories are being told well enough, but they're just not very good stories. Reigns isn't an interesting hero, Orton vs. Rollins

needs to just get set up already, the Intercontinental Champion is the biggest loser this side of Barry Horowitz and there are at least two upcoming rematches if not more. That doesn't scream biggest show of the year to me. It screams "oh dang we blew our ideas last year and we've got nothing left for this time." That's not good in any way, shape or form.

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