

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

It's been a bit since I've done one of these for Raw but the show has been so pitiful lately that I figured it was time to take another look at it. The show's ratings are pathetic and it should be interesting to look at how screwy the show has been to see why they're in such a horrible place (even though they're making bank with the sponsors etc.). We're fresh off Survivor Series, meaning Sheamus just cashed in Money in the Bank because of reasons. Let's get to it.

The show starts and it immediately goes off a cliff. Here's the problem: Sheamus is Seth Rollins with pale skin and an annoying accent. The Authority came down to gloat, the new champion came out to say I TOLD YOU SO, the hero challenger came to the ring and issued a challenge, which was eventually accepted for the hardcore based gimmick pay per view.

In other words, it's the exact same thing that Rollins did when he set up his match with Randy Orton at Extreme Rules 2015. That's bad storytelling all around because you could call out every single thing that was going to happen in the opening twenty minutes of this show from the second that Sheamus kicked Reigns in the face the night before.

That's where Raw is having its biggest issues right now: it's so predictable. They have been using this same format for so many years and you can just swap in the characters you want. Why should I care that Sheamus is now going to be HHH and Stephanie's lapdog instead of Rollins? Now we get to see Sheamus go out and work really hard in a match so he can get the Authority's praises and go see them like a four year old that wants his dad's approval. You could see the Authority talking down to everyone again with Stephanie ripping Reigns' balls off because that's all she does these days.

Of course there will be no repercussions because the Authority is on a higher plane than everyone else so they can't be touched. HHH might do a match at Wrestlemania and put someone over (Unless they're Brock Lesnar

because then the fans needed to see HHH get his precious win back. Or if they're Sting and the fans weren't absolutely certain who won the Monday Night Wars, which the match was about because Stephanie said so.) but it's happening once a year because HHH is too busy doing wacky fun stuff like dancing to make the crowd cheer or bequeathing the Pedigree to Rollins so Seth can get a rub.

The Authority taking one loss every few months doesn't change anything about them. It makes them look like they're treating a top star like a charity case. If Rollins or Reigns beat them at Wrestlemania, it would change absolutely nothing because HHH would go into war mode for a big rematch that no one would care about because the Authority will be right back to normal with their charity of the month and doing nice things for the crowd because they're faces one week and serious businessmen the next week. As long as those two stay over though, Raw has accomplished its main goal. Until that changes, Raw isn't getting better.

As for the actual story of the night, Rusev came down and attacked Reigns to set up the main event. Yeah after all that, we get a match that has no real drama and will only end in a DQ or Reigns getting a pin. There's also nothing on the line and the new champion isn't in action. Therefore, there's no reason to watch. Reigns is part of the problem here but it's much more that it's a predictable story. The fans have learned that this kind of story isn't going anywhere until at least after TLC because we're going to have the Authority interfere and let Sheamus keep the title, setting up the Rumble. Why watch until then at the earliest?

The Dudley Boyz beat the Wyatts via DQ in a quick match. This seems to set up a feud, which makes me shake my head even more. If you were moving the Wyatts into a feud with the Dudleyz, do a Survivor Series match the night before with the Dudleyz, Bray and Strowman getting counted out or disqualified, leaving you to do the same finish that you did with Harper taking the final fall. It sets up the feud and protects Bray while still giving us the Undertaker moment. Everyone wins, but as usual we got the lamer idea because that's how WWE works.

Sasha Banks pinned Becky Lynch with a handful of trunks (which Cole was too busy schilling stuff to notice). After that WAY too long opener and

all the Undertaker videos, this got four minutes. "Yeah we want you to revolutionize the division. Here's four minutes with no mic time or a character for either of you. Go rock it!"

Then the New Day came out and made fun of country music for about ten minutes. This was supposed to include an open challenge but New Day canceled it when the Lucha Dragons tried to accept. The Usos came out as well and it seemed to be setting up a three way match (possibly with a ladder and probably the Ascension) at TLC, but there was nothing tonight. In other words, more time being wasted on something that doesn't really go anywhere.

However, there's one more major thing here: Kofi said that he hated country music and it wasn't even his character talking because he REALLY hated country music. How do you even respond to that? I understand the kayfabe is dead, but this is running out there and holding up a big sign that says "HEY! YOU DO KNOW THIS IS ALL FAKE RIGHT??? LIKE, KOFI KINGSTON IS TOTALLY A NICE GUY AND YOU DON'T NEED TO GET ANNOYED AT US OVER HIM!"

This screamed of trying to make it seem like Kofi was a jerk instead of just having him play one and letting us get immersed in it. The idea has worked for years but now we have to tinker with it for some reason because the fans are too smart. Yeah there are smarter fans, but there are also a lot of fans who either aren't smartened up (they're called kids) or a bunch of fans that like to be swept up in the whole idea (they're called the majority). Stop trying to reinvent the wheel.

Neville pinned Mark Henry in a quick match. Henry showed him respect after the match and that was that. This might be the start of a Henry retirement angle but as of now it seems like another match that didn't mean much. I like that actually as it's nice to just have a match for a change instead of having an angle and a story involved in every single thing that happens.

The Prime Time Players and Goldust beat the Ascension and Stardust. It was short and it was meaningless, but in this case it was boring. Not everything can work.

Del Rio and Colter did their weekly thing and no one cares. Like

seriously, no one cares. It's the most boring thing on the show every week and I have no idea where it's supposed to go. Colter is awesome on the mic but he's got NOTHING to work with here. Oh and then Swagger came down and went after Del Rio again. This brings up another problem for WWE: they give someone a gimmick and that's what they're stuck with for good. This feud could have gone to anyone that they make into a patriot but instead we're getting Swagger, who will lose in the end because that's what Swagger does.

Charlotte and Paige had a much better rematch than the mess they had the previous night. They actually acted like they wanted to hurt each other instead of having a lame wrestling match, which made for a much better story. The ending helped as well with a double countout to likely set up a big brawl at TLC. It makes you wonder what they were thinking at the first pay per view match, but it was probably them letting them calm down after the whole Reid Flair fiasco.

Ryback beat up Heath Slater in another filler segment. Not a match of course, but a segment.

Ambrose/Ziggler beat Owens/Breeze in ANOTHER midcard tag match that barely went anywhere. This was to help set up Owens vs. Ambrose for the title, so of course Breeze had to take yet another pin. Breeze is another great example of a guy that has been crippled coming out of the gate because he's a fresh name for the bigger stars to beat and since they only know a few ways to build up a challenger (beat the champ or beat the same guy over and over), this is what we're stuck with.

Then Reigns beat Rusev via DQ in a long, dull main event with King Barrett interfering. Did this mean that Reigns was fighting more adversity? Of course not as he cleaned out Sheamus, Barrett and Rusev AFTER they beat him down. That's how the show ends: with Reigns looking like he's about to deal with even more midcard goons who aren't going to beat him before he gets to fight for the title, where I'm sure he'll get ripped off again before he wins the Rumble and likely fights Lesnar and wins the title at Wrestlemania XXXII.

In other words, we're going another few months before Reigns finally gets

there. The problem is we've been doing that same story for over a year now and the fans are on the verge of giving up on him. There's a large group of fans that want to see Reigns, but so many of them are just fed up with having him lose and then deal with some midcard feud before going after the title again and then starting another midcard feud when he gets screwed over. They need to do something and do it soon because this stuff is really old.

Overall Raw was a total mess. In addition to the completely predictable opening and main event developments, we have the huge gaping holes due to all the injuries. Since this is WWE, we certainly can't give the other Divas match more time or bring in some people from NXT for a showcase match or an angle that changes things up a bit. No instead we're getting Heath Slater and New Day making fun of country music because it makes Vince laugh.

The big idea here is that the show is stale. It's the same formula and the same ideas that we've seen forever but there's no indication that they're going to switch it up. We're at the point where Raw opening with a match is considered shaking things up. How am I supposed to get excited for a show when I have to wait twenty minutes to get to the first match because HHH needs to say "I told you so" and Stephanie needs to screech at whoever she's adding to her collection this year? How is that good television?

Apparently a lot of people don't think it is either and the ratings are showing it. Another bad show this week and something they need to fix in a hurry before it gets even worse. It's something they could fix easily too, which makes the shows that much more frustrating. Just stop doing the same stuff over and over and the show will feel better, which is half the battle already.

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