

Monday Night Raw – January 11, 2016: That Football Show

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 11, 2016

Location: Smoothie King Center, New Orleans, Louisiana

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield

We're getting closer and closer to the Royal Rumble though now we're missing John Cena who is out 6-9 months due to a torn shoulder. However, Brock Lesnar is back tonight and there's a good chance he's going to enter the Royal Rumble match which will now be for Roman Reigns' WWE World Title. Let's get to it.

We open with the long recap from last week with Vince trying to screw Reigns over and then making the Rumble for the title.

The roster is on the stage as the McMahons strut down to the ring. Vince welcomes the next WWE World Heavyweight Champion: one of the people on that stage. Whoever throws Reigns over the top might not win the title but it would be quite the moment. It could be someone like Dolph Ziggler who has been around for so long and tried to reach that brass ring. Or maybe Kevin Owens who has accomplished so much in so little time. Or what about a New Day for the title?

Vince and Stephanie laugh at the dancing but we've got Wyatts. Bray says anyone but you Roman, which brings Vince to Brock Lesnar, but here's Roman instead. The Wyatts were focused on for all of thirty seconds there. Reigns asks what happens if he wins and the McMahons nearly die laughing. However, since it's possible, let's have Reigns vs. all tonight. That's right: Reigns in a big handicap match. Again. It might even be against Dean Ambrose, but he's in our first match against Sheamus, who jumps Dean from behind on the ramp.

Sheamus vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title and joined in progress with Sheamus pounding away on Ambrose.

Dean tries to fight back but gets caught with the forearms to the chest and back. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Sheamus tries more forearms to the chest, but you know you can't do that twice in one match. Ambrose counters into forearms of his own, only to be sent to the floor and dropped onto the announcers' table. I love how the rules change depending on how they want the match to end as that's often a DQ. Back inside and Dean scores with some clotheslines, including a big one to send Sheamus outside as we take a break.

It's back to Sheamus putting on a quick broken Cloverleaf and blocking the rebound lariat. The Regal roll is countered into a rollup and a tornado DDT drops Sheamus for two more. Dirty Deeds is broken up but the rebound lariat puts Sheamus on the floor. That's fine with Sheamus as he sends Dean into the barricade over and over, only to get sent into the post as we go to a double countout at 14:09.

Rating: C. This was your weekly back and forth match designed to eat up a bunch of TV time. If this is really their best idea to fill in time before the national champion game starts at the bottom of the hour, they're in some real trouble in the ratings tonight. I didn't care about this match for the most part, but at least Ambrose didn't take a clean loss.

Post match Dean loads up the announcers' table but Kevin Owens comes out and beats him down.

With Ambrose laid out in front of them, the announcers hype the Network. For some reason, that's hilarious.

Back from a break with Dean storming out of the trainer's room and telling Renee to feel his neck. She feels a pulse and that means Dean is still alive.

The McMahons are still dancing through the corridors when they run into Paul Heyman. We get some sucking up to the bosses until Heyman suggests that Brock get the title shot at Wrestlemania. Vince isn't thrilled so Stephanie recommends that they take this to a closed room.

Stardust vs. Titus O'Neil

Stardust has David Bowie themed facepaint. Titus throws him into the corner to start but gets pulled down into an early chinlock. O'Neil throws him down again but Stardust grabs something like Matt Hardy's Side Effect for two. Not that it matters as the Clash of the Titus puts Stardust away at 3:15.

Rating: D. Is there a point coming to either of these two anytime in the near future? Titus has beaten him twice in a row with the same finisher now so why should I want to see them fight each other again? Titus is fine as a midcard guy but he's really just a power guy. This wasn't horrible but totally uninteresting.

Post match Titus celebrates but Stardust chop blocks him and sends Titus into the barricade.

It's time for the Highlight Reel with special guests the New Day. Jericho talks about how awesome it is that he's back and shows us all the social media reaction to his return on the Jeritron 6500. He recaps his entrance into the Royal Rumble and promises to win the title until New Day cuts him off. New Day does some really generic insulting before Jericho starts the Rooty Tooty chant again.

Big E. makes fun of Chris' clothes until the Usos come out to interrupt as well. New Day turns down a request for a tag match but Jericho points out that there are six of them out there. A tag match is made for later to end this really lame segment. New Day vs. Jericho sounds like something hilarious on paper but there's just no effort on either side and it's really not working.

New Day vs. Usos

Non-title with Woods and Jericho are on the floor here. Joined in progress with Kofi kneeing Jey in the ribs. A double elbow gets two for the Usos and it's off to Big E., who isn't happy with Jey dancing. That's fine with the Usos who easily knock Big E. around before it's back to Kofi, who gets caught with a quick running Umaga attack in the corner. Kofi shoves Jimmy off the top and out to the floor, meaning it's time for Francesca. Jericho chases Woods up the ramp and we take a break.

Back with Jimmy having to fight out of Kofi's chinlock but getting crushed by a Big E. splash on the apron. Woods is back with more tromboning as the abdominal stretch is quickly broken up. Jimmy gets in a few uppercuts for a breather but Big E. takes Jey off the apron to break up the tag attempt. Back in and the Boom Drop crushes Jimmy but he gets over for the tag off to Jey as things speed up.

A belly to belly gives Big E. a near fall but Jey superkicks both of them, only to have Xavier offer a distraction. Always helpful, Jericho blows the trombone in Woods' face after Kofi has crotchted Jey on top. Jericho breaks the trombone to scare Woods into tears for a funny bit. It's also an important bit as the distraction lets Jey roll up Kofi for the pin at 15:12.

Rating: C+. The match was fine but the booking continues to get on my nerves. The idea here was supposed to be that the win gets the Usos into the title hunt because they pinned the champions. Again, is there no other possible way to set up a title match and who in the world didn't think the Usos were in the hunt already? The division has like four teams and the Dragons are out due to injury. It's lazy booking and I'm really getting tired of it.

We look at Cena's shoulder surgery.

Stephanie turns Heyman's suggestion down again. Heyman tells her to have Vince go tell Brock that but Stephanie goes all serious and says Brock is in the Rumble.

JBL announces Sting as the first inductee into the 2016 Hall of Fame class, setting up Sting's induction video.

Wyatt Family vs. Social Outcasts

The Outcasts interrupt Bray's pre-match promo with Slater suggesting that we get some penicillin because they're about to go viral. Rose and Strowman get things going but Bo tags himself in to go after the monster. A biel sends him flying into the corner though so it's off to Axel, who actually scores with a flying forearm and some right hands. That's about it though as Braun runs him over with ease to take over. It's off to Bray

but cue Ryback to go after the Wyatts. The Outcasts try to help and we'll say the match is thrown out at 1:25.

We recap Kalisto pinning Alberto Del Rio in a non-title match on Smackdown.

Kalisto talks about what being US Champion would mean to him after what people like Cena and Eddie Guerrero did for the title.

US Title: Alberto Del Rio vs. Kalisto

Del Rio is defending but before the match, he talks about how Cena isn't going to be in the Royal Rumble or going to Wrestlemania because Alberto took him out. Why in the world did we not hear about that after Alberto won the title in the first place??? Kalisto is run over to start and a quick DDT sends him out to the floor.

Back in and Del Rio hits a quick top rope ax handle but Kalisto comes back with a top rope seated senton. The hurricanrana (which got Kalisto the pin on Thursday) is countered into a powerbomb and we hit the chinlock. Kalisto gets back up and snaps off a headscissors to send Alberto outside, only to have the champ send him hard into the barricade as we take a break.

We come back with Kalisto missing a dive off the top and getting caught in a chinlock. This time it's Del Rio going up top but getting pulled back down, setting up the corkscrew cross body (more of a headbutt), followed by a tornado DDT for two. Kalisto tries to speed things up too much though and gets caught in a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker for two. The low superkick is countered into a rollup and a rolling kick to the champ's head gets two more.

Del Rio crotches him on top but thankfully superplexes him down instead of doing that double stomp. The springboard Salida Del Sol is countered and Del Rio ties him in the Tree of Woe. The double stomp misses though as Kalisto is the first man to ever NOT SIT UP. Kalisto snaps off the hurricanrana driver for two and you can hear the fans groan at the kickout. Another Salida Del Sol is countered but Kalisto reverses a German suplex into a victory roll for the pin and the title at 15:18.

Rating: B-. Thank goodness. Del Rio is one of the least interesting champions I've seen in years and it's really cool to see them actually push someone instead of just having him win a non-title match and then go out and lose in the big showdown. The false finish off the hurricanrana driver was a nice touch too as I was almost sure Del Rio was retaining after the kickout. Really nice surprise here and long overdue.

We look back at Charlotte turning full heel on Becky Lynch last week.

Charlotte doesn't understand why she's the villain here when everyone looks up to her. She's going to do everything she can to be champion because she's the victim in all this.

Brie Bella vs. Charlotte

Non-title. Actually non-match as well as Becky Lynch jumps Charlotte during her entrance before being taken out by security. Ric says Charlotte is in no condition to wrestle tonight.

Post break, Becky raves about being all alone against Charlotte and Ric Flair. Charlotte talks about being genetically superior but Becky made her tap on Thursday. She did it once and she'll do it again.

We look at Stephanie vs. Heyman from earlier.

Roman Reigns vs. All

In this case, all means Sheamus, Alberto Del Rio, Kevin Owens, the Wyatt Family, New Day, Stardust, Ascension and Tyler Breeze. Vince sends Owens in first and this seems more like a gauntlet than a handicap match. Owens grabs a waistlock to start but is quickly sent to the floor in a bit of frustration. Back in and Owens stomps him down in the corner before putting on a chinlock. Roman fights out and grabs a quick neckbreaker, only to get punched out to the floor as we take a break.

Back with Owens sending Reigns to the floor for no interference from everyone else. It's time for another chinlock before a superkick gets two for Kevin. Off to chinlock number three (Owens: "HE SAYS YES!") for a bit before the Cannonball connects for two. The backsplash misses though and Reigns glares at the McMahons during his breather.

Roman blocks a superkick and drops Owens with a big boot but here come the troops as the Superman punch is loaded up. Ascension takes the right hand instead and the combined forces of Breeze and Stardust are quickly dispatched. Vince sends in the rest of the troops and the match is thrown out at about 17:00.

Rating: D+. Well for a one vs. all match, this was about as lame as it could have gotten. I like the idea of keeping the heels protected, though they could have fed a few of them to Reigns before having the long match with Owens. At least Kevin didn't get pinned so it's not a total loss. Just not very interesting though as we were waiting on the big run-in to close things out.

Post match Reigns gets destroyed and here's Brock for the big showdown. The first victims are New Day before Owens and Del Rio are tossed with German suplexes. Sheamus gets in a few shots until Brock levels him with a clothesline. The Wyatts didn't get involved and it's just Brock and Reigns left in the ring. Roman can't stand so Brock pulls him up and plants him with an F5. Reigns smirks up at Brock to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. Did I mention that the NCAA National Championship game was on tonight? You could certainly tell that WWE knew as there wasn't exactly a lot of thought and effort being put into this one. As soon as they announced Reigns vs. All for the main event, it was very clear that there was nothing interesting happening tonight because they could air Rock vs. Austin and not put a dent in ESPN's ratings. As annoying as it is for those of us that watch, I more than get the idea here, as lame as it was. The show wasn't even terrible, but you could tell they were just waiting for next week when people will be watching.

Results

Dean Ambrose vs. Sheamus went to a double countout

Titus O'Neil b. Stardust – Clash of the Titus

Usos b. New Day – Rollup to Kingston

Wyatt Family b. Social Outcasts via DQ when Ryback interfered

Kalisto b. Alberto Del Rio – Victory roll

Roman Reigns vs. All went to a no contest when everyone interfered

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