

Monday Night Raw – April 11, 2016: WWE Is Like Butter. Because They're On A Roll You See.

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 11, 2016

Location: Staples Center, Los Angeles, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

Things have changed a bit now as we're past Wrestlemania weekend and back to the normal way of life around here. AJ Styles is the new #1 contender to WWE World Champion Roman Reigns and we have Shane McMahon as the new temporary boss of the show. It should be interesting to see where that goes but you never know if anything is actually going to happen. Let's get to it.

The show is dedicated to the memory of Blackjack Mulligan.

Here's Shane McMahon to get things going, unfortunately suggesting that the new regime means more talking. He gets right to the point: tonight we're starting a tournament for the #1 contendership to the Tag Team Titles. On top of that, AJ Styles is going to be facing Roman Reigns at some point in the future. That's quite the opportunity. Another opportunity will be given tonight as AJ Styles will be facing Sami Zayn. If Zayn wins, he's added to the World Title match at Payback.

This brings out Kevin Owens to say that he's getting ripped off because Shane has a few screws loose after diving off that Cell. Shane says Owens has blown his opportunities but Owens sees it as being ripped off over and over. Kevin wants his rematch at the Intercontinental Title so Shane is willing to give Owens a chance, if he can win a match tonight. The winner will get a title shot at the Miz, presumably at Payback.

Kevin Owens vs. Cesaro

Winner gets Miz for the Intercontinental Title. Owens bails to the ropes to start and heads outside for an early breather. A headlock has Cesaro in trouble but Owens gets shoved outside again. Back in and Owens realizes that Cesaro has a big bandage on his shoulder and grabs a wristlock followed by an armbar. This turns into a discussion of the Authority with JBL brow beating Byron about how awesome HHH and Stephanie are. Cesaro comes back with the running European uppercuts and a dropkick for two. Owens sends him shoulder first into the post though and we take a break.

Back with Owens kicking him in the arm to break up the Swing before rolling through a high cross body into a crossface. Cesaro rolls into the ropes but Owens pops up to the top for a great looking frog splash and a near fall. The Pop Up Powerbomb is countered though (possibly due to Owens shouting about how it's over) with Cesaro scoring a springboard uppercut. The shoulder gives out on the Swing though and Owens sends the arm into the buckle. Another attempt at the powerbomb is countered with a hurricanrana though and Cesaro grabs the Neutralizer for the pin and the title shot at 14:50.

Rating: B-. If they don't give Cesaro the title at Payback they've lost their minds. Cesaro was his usual self here and the fans are way into him, at least much moreso than they are with the placeholder Miz. Owens losing clean isn't the best result but at least it gives us a good option with the title shot.

We look back at Natalya getting in Charlotte's face last week.

Charlotte is ranting about how she should be on Legends With JBL instead of defending against someone like Natalya. This brings in Dr. Phil to say that Ric is holding her back and now letting her be who she is. Phil wants her to stand on her own two feet and be her own woman. This results in a WOO off with Ric. Words cannot describe how forced Phil felt here.

Shane ejects Owens from the building to prevent him from screwing over Sami later.

Here's New Day to talk about the tag team tournament. Much like a game of NBA Jam, this division is on fire. Woods shows us the following brackets:

Usos

Social Outcasts

Golden Truth

Vaudevillains

Enzo/Big Cass

Ascension

Lucha Dragons

Dudley Boyz

They'll be at ringside for at least the first match.

Tag Team Tournament First Round: Lucha Dragons vs. Dudley Boyz

This is joined in progress but we come back with Kalisto down on the floor and being attended to by medics. D-Von attacks Sin Cara anyway and we see a clip from the break of Kalisto being sent hard to the floor and taking a hard clothesline from D-Von to cause the injury. We get things going with the Dudleyz attacking Cara from behind, setting up a quick 3D at 2:04 shown.

Post match here are Enzo and Cass to draw a HOW YOU DOIN chant. Enzo says the catchphrases but the Dudleyz cut them off to say they're the kind of team that paved the way for Enzo and Cass. D-Von: "We're the reason you guys exist." Enzo: "No the reason I exist is my mom and dad got it on, how you doin." Cass says they're putting holes in the ground so Bubba and D-Von need to put on their hard hats and get back to work because they're SAWFT.

Owens leaves the arena.

Here's Roman Reigns with something to say, including the "I'm the guy" sequence. Roman talks about tonight's match for the #1 contendership, which doesn't matter because he's going to be champion for a long time. This brings out the League of Nations with Sheamus asking how confident

Reigns would be if he was fighting one of them for the title. Rusev calls himself the best looking man in the WWE and Del Rio does his usual insults.

The fight is on and here are the Wyatts of all people for the save. The League is quickly out and we've got the Wyatts staring Reigns down. Before this goes anywhere, Shane comes out and says that tonight it's any two members of the League vs. Roman/Bray. BUT I THOUGHT BRAY WAS BURIED AT WRESTLEMANIA! HOW CAN HE BE IN THE MAIN EVENT EIGHT DAYS LATER????? THE INTERNET CAN'T BE WRONG ABOUT THIS STUFF!!!!!!

Primo and Epico send their greetings from Puerto Rico.

Women's Title: Natalya vs. Charlotte

Charlotte is defending and Dr. Phil is at ringside. Natalya tries a choke to start but gets countered into a spinebuster, only to go for an armbar instead. That sends Charlotte bailing to the floor, followed by the stepover into the basement dropkick back inside. Back in and Charlotte starts dropping some knees before choking with the leg across the throat as we take a break.

Back with Charlotte doing those headscissors face pounds before putting on the Figure Four. That goes nowhere so Charlotte puts on a Sharpshooter but Natalya rolls through for the break. A release German suplex sets up the discus lariat but Charlotte punches her in the face to break up the Sharpshooter. Charlotte kicks her in the face for two more, only to miss a moonsault. Now the Sharpshooter goes on but Ric tries to get in. That goes nowhere so Ric pulls the referee out, just as Charlotte taps, drawing the DQ at 11:00.

Rating: C+. So ignore the referee watching Charlotte tap I guess. This was straight out of the Evolution playbook and it's getting old. Hopefully, and I can't believe I'm saying this, the Dr. Phil thing leads to Flair and Charlotte splitting but they really need to stop doing this same nonsense over and over. We get it: Flair can cheat to help Charlotte keep the title. Now let Charlotte do her thing.

Dr. Phil is disappointed.

We look back at Kevin Owens attacking Sami Zayn last week.

Sami says he didn't come this far to lose because he's the underdog from the underground. This brings in AJ Styles to say he agrees with all that, but he's the only #1 contender and that's how things are staying.

Tag Team Tournament First Round: Usos vs. Heath Slater/Curtis Axel

Jimmy works on Axel's arm to start before it's off to Jey who seems to injury his arm/shoulder early on. Jey gets stomped down in the corner and it's back to Axel for a chinlock. Slater comes in as the referee sounds like he said to go home. Heath clotheslines Jey down and it's time for the Bo Train so Jimmy gets the tag and rolls up Slater for the pin at 4:21.

Rating: D. This was a bunch of laying around with the Usos getting a fluke pin. I mean, it's not like you want to push the Outcasts over a team like the Usos or anything because no one is going to buy it long term but at least come up with something better than stomp, stomp, chinlock, rollup.

Post match the BULLET CLUB (Luke Gallows/Karl Anderson) debuts to beat the Usos down. Jey is sent shoulder first into the steps a few times as the fans are VERY pleased with the debut. They leave through the crowd as security forces them out.

Miz and Maryse are in the back with the latter yelling at a production assistant for having blue M&M's and American water. JoJo comes in and gets yelled at too but Miz brags about his car and calls himself Cesaro's Kryptonite. The last line requires two takes until Cesaro interrupts. Cesaro promises to roll out the red carpet version of all his uppercuts at Payback. Miz tries some water, causing Maryse to freak out that it's domestic.

Sami Zayn vs. AJ Styles

If Sami wins, he's added to the World Title match at Payback. AJ goes after the taped arm to start but Sami reverses into some rollups. Sami jumps over him and snaps off some armdrags into an armbar and it's a

standoff. That's fine with AJ who suplexes him down a few times, only to get chopped HARD in the corner. The dropdown into the dropkick gives AJ his first real advantage and we hit the quickly broken chinlock.

Zayn goes to the floor and eats a stiff knee to the face for two back inside. Back in and Sami knocks AJ right back to the floor for the big flip dive and we take a break. We come back with Sami fighting out of a chinlock, only to eat the seated forearm. The AA onto the knee gets two for Styles but Sami pops back up with the high cross body for two. A tornado DDT connects for two more as they're just trading big moves here.

The half and half suplex is countered with the Pele but the Phenomenal Forearm is countered into the Blue Thunder Bomb for the hottest near fall in the business from a move that has never won a match. AJ rolls into the Calf Crusher but Sami finally gets over to the ropes. With nothing else working, AJ loads up a super sunset powerbomb, only to have Sami backflip out. The Helluva Kick misses though and the Phenomenal Forearm puts Sami away at 16:50.

Rating: B+. This was your standard (yet awesome) let's hit each other with one big move after another until one of us can't get up. Sami losing is fine as he's basically a Canadian Daniel Bryan on the main roster. AJ gets another big win to look like he could pull off the miracle at Payback, meaning everyone gets something out of this. Well done, as usual.

Shane congratulates Sami and AJ on a great match.

It's time for the Highlight Reel with Chris Jericho and a surprise special guest. Jericho tells us to shut up and enjoy the greatness that is himself before talking about all the people he's beaten. Cue Dean Ambrose who gets in trouble for touching the potted plant. Dean has something from Shane and gives Jericho a piece of paper. Jericho: "This is a California speeding ticket." Dean: "Oh wait I need that for later."

Apparently the gift from Shane is a note saying that the Highlight Reel has been canceled and replaced by the Ambrose Asylum. Dean even has a tie for the special occasion. Dean asks Jericho about losing last week and a brawl breaks out, capped off by Dean hitting Dirty Deeds to leave Chris

laying.

R-Truth is in the back when Goldust comes in to see him. Goldust asks about the audition that Truth promised him for tonight but now they're in a tag team tournament. Truth says that is the audition and wants to know whose bright idea this was. Cue Dr. Phil (drawing a lot of booing) to say something but he just walks away instead.

Apollo Crews vs. Adam Rose

They run the ropes to start until Crews does a standing moonsault and clotheslines Rose to the floor. Rose clotheslines him down for two, only to lose a battle over a suplex. Dallas tries to offer a distraction but Crews just hits the toss powerbomb for the pin at 3:32.

Rating: D. This was another debut style squash with Crews destroying someone that had no chance in the match. They need to get him over because he really didn't have enough time to develop a reputation in NXT but you can only have him go over the Outcasts so many times before it stops mattering.

Video on Baron Corbin.

Bray says Roman can trust him.

Roman Reigns/Bray Wyatt vs. Sheamus/Alberto Del Rio

Bray insists that he start for his team and takes Sheamus into the corner, setting up a quick spider walk. Reigns tags himself in and helps stomp away, only to get booed out of the building. It's back to Bray for the cheering but Sheamus gives him a quick Irish Curse to set up a top rope double stomp from Del Rio for two. A chinlock goes nowhere so it's back to Reigns for the hot tag (because of the crowd heat) and a boot to Sheamus' face.

Sheamus tied him up for the ten forearms, only to have Del Rio kick him in the ribs to break up a comeback attempt. The fans count along with Sheamus before it's off to Del Rio. The top rope double stomp is broken up with a situp (thank you), only to have Sheamus break up the comeback. Roman drops Sheamus again and looks over at Bray before making the hot

tag to Wyatt for the big comeback. A release Rock Bottom drops Del Rio and the running cross body gets two with Sheamus making the save.

Roman knocks Sheamus outside but the Superman Punch is knocked out of the air. Rusev kicks Bray in the head and the Backstabber gets two on Bray. Thank goodness for that as they had me thinking they were going to have him lose his first match as a face. Cue the Wyatts to take out Rusev and have a standoff with Del Rio. Alberto slides back in and eats Sister Abigail for the pin at 11:00.

Rating: B-. This was better than it had any right to be and thankfully it seems that they're teasing turning Reigns heel soon enough because the booing isn't stopping now that they're past Wrestlemania weekend. Bray looked awesome as a face (bizarre but awesome) and there could be something interesting if they push this hard. Good match too, which stuns me even though all four are good workers.

Bray and the Family stares at Roman to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. I had a good time with this show and they did a great job of pushing the wrestling as the focus tonight. Unfortunately the show still feels far too long and needed to be an hour shorter but the Bray Wyatt face turn gives me some hope for the future. It's clear that people want to cheer him so it's far past the point of having him turn. I'm not sure if the Family sticks around or not but at least we're getting something out of him for a change. Good show overall though and a good followup after last week.

Results

Cesaro b. Kevin Owens – Neutralizer

Dudley Boyz b. Lucha Dragons – 3D to Cara

Natalya b. Charlotte via DQ when Ric Flair interfered

Usos b. Heath Slater/Curtis Axel – Rollup to Slater

AJ Styles b. Sami Zayn – Phenomenal Forearm

Roman Reigns/Bray Wyatt b. Sheamus/Alberto Del Rio – Sister Abigail to
Del Rio