

Payback 2016 Preview

For once I'm actually looking forward to a regular pay per view as Payback has had an awesome set of buildup over the last few weeks. Things really have been picking up in recent weeks and while the ratings haven't been great, it's been an awesome series of wrestling matches and storytelling. Let's get to it.

We'll start with a title match as Kalisto defends the US Title against Ryback on the pre-show for the second straight pay per view. I have no idea why anyone would think Kalisto keeps the title here as his title reign has died worse and worse every single week. Ryback actually needs something to do these days and it would be nice to see him get another title run. I was digging his Intercontinental Title reign last year before it was handed over to Kevin Owens so the US Title would be just fine.

In another title match we have Charlotte defending the Women's Title against Natalya in a match that is really more about Ric Flair being opposed by Natalya's uncle Bret Hart. I get the idea of the match but I'm still not a fan of the match being more about the older guys. I'm sure the wrestling will be very good and of a high quality but I'm expecting Flair to help cheat again because that's how this story is going to roll.

Of course right now we're waiting on Sasha to get her big shot so this is more an exercise in waiting than anything else. On top of that, it would have been better if we hadn't just seen this at Roadblock but you can't expect WWE to come up with another idea that fast. I mean, it's not like they have a full division of possible challengers here or anything like that.

We'll keep up the title match theme here with what should be the biggest layup of the entire show: Cesaro taking the Intercontinental Title from the Miz. If Miz has proven one thing over the years, it's that he can take loss after loss before coming back to win the Intercontinental Title for a nothing reign with the title being dropped off to an upcoming star.

In this case, that would be Cesaro. There's no reason to suggest that

Cesaro doesn't get the title here as he's rocketed up the card and finally has the kind of character that can go somewhere. The only thing missing now is an actual accomplishment and the Intercontinental would certainly fit the description.

Speaking of results that should be obvious, Baron Corbin should be going over Dolph Ziggler. Much like Miz, Ziggler is a made man who can lose every single big match he has and not lose a drop of popularity so putting Corbin over is exactly the right move. Corbin is someone who could get some traction on the main roster and a win over Ziggler would be a good second start to his WWE career.

In the last of the lower card matches, we've got Enzo Amore vs. the Vaudevillains in the tag team tournament final for the right to face New Day for the titles later on. While this should be a layup on paper, I'm not so sure on who wins here. On one hand you could give the Vaudevillains the title shot to put New Day over a fresh team while they wait to have the Bullet Club get the belts in the summer.

On the other hand you could go with Enzo and Cass....but do you give them the titles this fast? You really don't want to risk Enzo and Cass losing what they have to the better act in New Day but you also don't want the new guys losing to a team that just isn't as good as they are in Gotch and English. We'll go with Enzo and Cass but I really wouldn't be surprised to be wrong here.

Now we'll get to some of the more interesting stuff and we'll start with Dean Ambrose vs. Chris Jericho. After the win at Wrestlemania, it would seem that Jericho is getting ready for one last main event run, perhaps with one more World Title shot. If that's the case, a win over Ambrose would certainly do him a lot of favors. At the same time, Dean REALLY needs a big win after his near squash loss to Brock at Wrestlemania. Either way I can't imagine this is the last match we're going to see between the two and I think Dean goes over early on, but the idea of a draw is up there as well.

This brings us to probably the second biggest match on the card as Sami Zayn and Kevin Owens actually get to face each other on the WWE roster

for the first time ever (likely of many times in the future). For me, this one is an absolute layup: Sami should win and he should win going away. Owens is a bigger deal at this point and Sami needs a big main roster rub. I'm sure Owens will wind up winning the feud because Zayn doesn't win long term feuds (as he shouldn't) but he wins the first match to get things going hot. Owens will be fine long term and doesn't need the win as much here so we'll go with Sami starting fast.

That leaves us with the biggest match on the card and I'm not sure where to start here. Roman Reigns is defending the WWE World Title against AJ Styles but there's also the shadows of Luke Gallows and Karl Anderson who may or may not be in league with Styles. In this case, I don't think we're going to have the big Bullet Club moment yet but there's almost no way AJ loses. Instead, what I think is Reigns gets Anderson and Gallows on his side as the Roman Empire with AJ bringing in Finn Balor and then someone else for a big feud down the line.

WWE has done an excellent job setting up this match with AJ going over big name after big name and Reigns just kind of being there. It's a good way to have AJ look awesome while also giving Reigns a big win in his first title defense. The match should be a lot of fun as Reigns is great once the bell rings (assuming the match isn't 27 minutes long of course) and AJ is AJ. I'm really looking forward to this one and there are a lot of possibilities of what might happen at the end.

Payback looks like one heck of a show and it's going to be in front of a white hot Chicago crowd, which could be a big hit or a miss depending on how things go. This is a show that looks like it has a great batch of matches with almost nothing looking weak on the entire card. It should be a lot of fun, which is so strange to say outside of Wrestlemania season.

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