

The Roman Reigns Problem, Now Featuring Seth Rollins

Kind of a bonus column this week.

So this past Sunday at Extreme Rules, Seth Rollins made his return and attacked WWE World Champion Roman Reigns, seemingly becoming the new top face to take down the rapidly heel turning Reigns. However, the next night on Raw, it was clear that Rollins was in fact still heel and Reigns was in fact still the big dog face that fans are getting very tired of in a hurry. Today we're going to take a quick look at why this continues to make people scratch their heads.

Let's get this out of the way first: Roman Reigns has an audience. Allegedly he's rather handsome and there's something about his arms and hair that appeals to women. If you read most house show results, Reigns gets one of the loudest pops of the night but for some reason that doesn't translate to TV. You can claim that it's the new cool thing to do (which I can completely buy) or whatever, but the fact of the matter is that these reactions are happening and there's no way around them at the moment.

Reigns has a big value to WWE. He has a good look, he can more than hold his own in the ring and he's getting better on the mic. I don't think anyone would suggest that he's worthless or doesn't belong in WWE and if they did, they're just flat out wrong. However, there's a difference between having a spot on the card and having THE spot.

Here's the thing: there's not much that sets Reigns apart. Yeah he has a good look but so do a lot of people. Yeah he can wrestle a good match but others can do it better. Yeah his talking is improving but that's still not saying much given how bad it was in the first place. Reigns is better than he used to be and has improved by leaps and bounds from just a year ago but he's still missing the big thing: a connection.

Why should I care about Roman Reigns? After everything he's said and done over the years, I have no reason to feel a connection to him. He debuted

as part of this elite group where he almost never talked, then became the monster of the team who set a bunch of records and finally became the top dog after the team split, leading to his main event run where he kept beating up everyone in sight because HE IS THE CHOSEN ONE. We don't really have a reason for him getting this spot but he's getting it, he's winning the title at Wrestlemania and there's nothing that's changing that because it's been decided months in advance.

In other words, Reigns is basically Superman: he barely has any weaknesses and he's better than you because everyone is beneath him. There's no personality there and it makes for some really dull exchanges and feuds because Reigns is just going to win no matter what happens. How am I supposed to get interested in something like that?

This is why someone like Daniel Bryan worked. While he was very talented in the ring, he faced a lot of adversity and was held down because of his size, look etc. How many times did you hear the Authority tell him that he didn't have any right to be near the World Title because he belonged somewhere else? In other words, WWE set it up so that people WANTED to see Bryan get this spot. Compare this to Reigns where it was more "Reigns is awesome and is getting the title. You like him!"

Now let's jump back to Rollins. Seth has been presented as the smart one of the Shield, often being referred to as the Architect and an all around mastermind who keeps figuring out a way to escape, normally with the title at the same time. Rollins never lost the World Title and had a reason to immediately challenge his old nemesis Reigns. It helps that Rollins can wrestle one of the most exciting in ring styles of anyone on the roster. This really should have been one of the biggest and easiest layups that WWE could do for a very long time.

And then they just didn't do it. Rollins came out on Raw last night acting like a face and then went right back to heeling it up on the audience, no matter what the fans were begging to see. At the end of the day, a lot of the fans want to see something else on top of the company. Whether or not that's Rollins isn't what matters. What matters is that Reigns just is not working as the undisputed face of the company.

But for some reason that only Vince himself can explain, we're getting Roman Reigns as the star of the company. Now a lot of these problems could be changed by a big heel turn, which really seems like what a lot of the fans want to see. I have no idea what WWE is waiting for as there's an army of names ready to challenge a heel Reigns (imagine Sami Zayn as the underdog vs. the big dog for the title) but this is what we're stuck with whether we like it or not.

Rollins is just another name added to that list. The fans were more than ready to cheer him before he got hurt and then they had the face turn set up for them even stronger than before Rollins was hurt. I can more than accept the idea that Rollins is a better heel than a face but this is another case of someone who looks ready to be the good to Reigns' bad, only to have it be the same thing all over again.

At this point Reigns is just in a really weird place. Look back at the AJ Styles feud and tell me who I was supposed to cheer for there. Anderson and Gallows were certainly acting like heels while AJ was getting more aggressive but the Usos lost their big face entrance and generally acted exactly the same way as the newcomers. I really wasn't sure who I was supposed to be for in that feud as Reigns continues to act like a tweener/heel while being presented as the undisputed top face of the company.

So what can be done about all this? I really have no idea. Basically we're stuck in this same holding pattern of the fans rejecting Reigns as this star until he either changes things up a lot (read as a heel turn to make him the guy that everyone wants to boo) or Vince changes his mind. Really at this point it seems that Reigns is at the top because Vince says so and that's just not going to work for the fans who have rejected him.

The worst part of this is that a lot of the criticism can't be placed on Reigns. It wasn't him that set up this push or had him walk out of the Royal Rumble for half an hour (What was that anyway? Of all the things they could do like having him taken out on a stretcher or just left him there unconscious, they had him get on his feet and walk to the back like a heel. Who thought that was a good idea?) or give the main event of

Wrestlemania twenty seven minutes.

Let's talk about that match for a second. What could they possibly have been thinking there? After the show had already gone on for six hours, we got a Mad Max style speech from Stephanie which can be loosely translated as "BOO US! WE'RE EVIL!" to try and get the fans away from booing Reigns out of Texas. As you might have guessed, this really didn't work because that's not what the fans wanted to see.

Then the fans were treated to a match that ran nearly half an hour with a meaningless story of working on a shoulder and capped off by a spear to give Reigns the title (again). Yeah I'm not sure why this third title reign is supposed to be more interesting than the other two times where he won the title clean but apparently this is a much bigger deal.

In that whole big mess of a match, there was one moment that changed the whole thing. At one point, Reigns went for a spear on HHH but hit Stephanie instead. The entire audience suddenly went insane and wanted to cheer him because he did something the fans wanted to see. Stephanie had been the most annoying character in the company for years but never got anything that was coming to her. Then Reigns cut her in half with a spear and he was the most popular thing in the company (for all of five minutes).

This isn't even the first time this has happened. At TLC 2015, Reigns was up against ridiculous odds as he had to face the League of Nations and the Authority at the same time. There was a moment where Reigns just started firing off Superman Punch after Superman Punch to keep the League at bay as long as he could. It made him feel like a superhero and again, the crowd ate it up and treated Reigns like WWE wants him to be treated. Then Sheamus retained the title anyway because that's what WWE felt was the right idea.

After the match, Reigns completely snapped and annihilated HHH with a bunch of power moves and a powerbomb onto but not through the table (because we needed one more moment to define Reigns' career). Again, this worked PERFECTLY as the fans wanted to see Reigns break away from this mold that he had been stuck in and just act like a 6'4 monster with

insane power and some good natural charisma. You know, EXACTLY WHAT MADE HIM COOL WHEN HE WAS IN THE SHIELD. Things got even better the next night when Reigns beat the heck out of Sheamus, Superman Punched Vince in the face and won the title clean.

But after all that and all the face pops we got as a result, it was HHH winning the title at the Royal Rumble, setting up the mess of a title match. All the while, Reigns was back to his cookie cutter self that people didn't want to see but WWE had decided they knew how Reigns should be pushed and the crowd didn't know what they really wanted.

That's where we are now: Reigns has the tools to make the fans cheer him (or boo the heck out of him) but instead WWE is still having him tread water as a lukewarm face while the booing gets louder and louder. There's an army of names waiting to face him (AJ Styles, Sami Zayn, Cesaro, a bunch of people in NXT and I could probably go on) but instead it's the same Rollins vs. Reigns feud that we've seen before (they used to be in the Shield together you know).

Reigns has a big future in front of him and at age 30 (31 tomorrow), he's going to be around for a very long time. I have no idea why WWE is insisting on pushing him this way but as soon as he turns heel (or does something that people want to see), he's going to explode on WWE and be a much bigger deal. Until then though, this is going to be the same kind of thing we're stuck with for months because WWE has decided that's what we're getting. Rollins is just the latest name on a long list of people that the fans want to see take out Reigns but nah, let's just keep going with what hasn't worked because that's what Vince wants.

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