

Reviewing the Review: Monday Night Raw – August 1, 2016

I hadn't planned for this to be a recurring feature but this week's show seemed like it deserved a second look. Last week's show was outstanding while this week's show felt like any old episode and that's not a good thing. I know things had to come back down to earth a little bit but there were some things here that really came off bad. Let's get to it.

The show opened with a voiceover saying Last Week On Monday Night Raw. I know they do these almost every week but this made it feel more like a special feature instead of something to fill in time. They also kept it shorter and more to the point for a big improvement.

Sasha Banks (with the Women's Title looking WAY too big) came out to open the show but was cut off by Charlotte (of course). They went back and forth a bit with the rematch being made, but Chris Jericho of all people interrupted. This turned into a back and forth between the Jericho and Sasha over which woman deserved to be champion more. The worst part about this was hearing Ric Flair's name brought up over and over, making me think he'll be back soon. You know, because last week's title change was begging for Ric Flair to be at ringside.

Anyway Enzo Amore came out on his own to defend Sasha and hit on her as only Enzo can. The result was some actually funny comedy between Jericho and Enzo (I say actually because Jericho's interactions with other big time comedy names often go badly) until Mick Foley came out to make it a mixed tag. The heels won with Charlotte pinning Sasha, which isn't a good idea a week into her reign. Yeah it's to set up the rematch but you couldn't have Sasha get knocked out with Natural Selection on the floor to make it a countout? Also of note: Kevin Owens was on commentary here and didn't like Enzo at all.

Braun Strowman squashed a jobber. These matches have gotten me more interested in Strowman than anything since his debut.

Mark Henry was given a US Title shot against Rusev later in the show. The

match was exactly what you would expect from the two of them fighting with Rusev winning via the Accolade. There were two interesting parts here though. First of all, Lana was in her wedding dress and dear goodness that woman is gorgeous.

In the more interesting part though, Roman Reigns came out for the save post match and seemed to set up what seems like a feud against Rusev for the US Title. Punishment over the drug test aside, this is the kind of thing Reigns needs to do: fight in the midcard in a feud where people are going to cheer for him in a simple story so he can build more love from the fans. This is what he needed to do years ago to get himself over instead of getting one third of the Shield over but for some reason REIGNS MUST HAVE BEEN THE STAR AT WRESTLEMANIA XXXI NO MATTER IF HE WAS READY OR NOT.

Golden Truth seems to be breaking up over Pokemon Go. It's not like Smackdown needs tag teams or anything. No instead let's break them up for the sake of a lame comedy bit after spending months setting them up in the first place.

Now for the big speech of the night as Finn Balor came out for a chat and was cut off by Seth Rollins. Seth kept to the idea that he's done everything Balor has done over the years but did it first. Balor talked about how there's always someone talking down to him and everywhere he's gone he's taken their spot because he's the better man before kicking Rollins out to the floor.

For some reason people have been saying Balor looked bad here but I liked the exchange. Balor definitely isn't the most comfortable talker in the world but that's where modern WWE gets in trouble: they seem to think that if everyone doesn't fit their idea of what a big star is then that person has no value. Balor is going to get over because of his in ring ability, his look, his in ring work and his overall cool factor. But no, for some reason he's doomed to never make it in the main event because he can't stand in the ring and exchange with someone on the mic.

Look back at some of the biggest stars ever. How much did someone like Austin, Rock, Hogan or Sting get over based on their look and how you had

to see what they were doing? Balor has the same appeal. There's the leather jacket and the cool music and the posing and the Demon and all the other intangibles he brings to the act. No he isn't the best talker in the world but what people don't get is that he doesn't need to be.

The same thing played a big role in bringing Reigns down: he was bad at talking in the middle of the ring but he didn't need to be doing that in the first place. How over did Balor get in NXT while barely ever talking? The reaction to this seemed to be that Balor was stumbling over his words and having no business being there. I'm not sure what they were watching but I saw Balor looking just fine (different than excelling) in an area he really shouldn't need to be great in.

Titus O'Neil beat Darren Young in a bad match. Afterwards they seemed to set up something more with Titus yelling at Bob Backlund and getting laid out by Young. I don't want to see this continue but they have to fill those three hours somehow.

Now we get to the thing that actually made me want to do this again this week, though unfortunately I can't take credit for pointing this out in the first place. Stephanie and Foley were backstage (They were on the show a lot more this week but it wasn't annoying. Yet.) when Sheamus came in wanting to know why he didn't get the US Title shot. Cesaro came in and asked the same thing. Foley said a lot of Cesaro's issues are due to his Draft spot, which was lower due to that shoulder injury.

Here's where we get to the big issue: Cesaro is drafted lower because he's three months removed from a shoulder injury but less than half an hour earlier Rollins was talking about his near career ending knee injury that he returned from about a month ago. Rollins was the #1 pick in the Draft but that knee injury hasn't been mentioned once by Stephanie or Foley or any other boss.

This is a great case of WWE picking and choosing their storylines and not paying attention to continuity. A simple "but he's Seth Rollins and we believe how great he can be" from Stephanie would solve this but odds are we're never going to hear about it because the writers either A, didn't notice or B, think/have been told that it's not important enough to

mention. It's inconsistency that should be solved so simply but instead it's just left sitting there because Heaven forbid you close a small plot hole with a quick statement.

Oh and one more thing: Cesaro and Sheamus' match isn't for the #1 contendership or a future title shot. Well it kind of was but not directly. See, instead of the WINNER getting the prize, it was whoever would impress the bosses more. In other words: wrestling doesn't matter because it's all about making the bosses happy. I've never liked that idea and I was really hoping it would go away but that's not the case just yet.

Nia Jax squashed another jobber. Same idea here as Strowman and the same positive result.

New Day beat Gallows and Anderson (which seems to be their official name) in less than ninety seconds to set up a post match beatdown. Big E. was crotched against the post to potentially injure him. I'm really not sure what the point is in having Gallows and Anderson lose so quickly is, unless their rematch will see them get serious and win the titles. Stupid again, but that's WWE for you.

Cesaro and Sheamus had a good power brawl with Cesaro winning clean off the Neutralizer. I've seen these two fight before and they didn't do anything we haven't seen a dozen times but at least it was entertaining. Unfortunately this match further illustrated the problem with someone like Cesaro or Dolph Ziggler.

Yes, Cesaro has a lot of cool moves that are going to pop the crowd but he does them EVERY SINGLE MATCH. It's kind of hard to get fired up over the same cool stuff week after week. They just stop having the same impact when they're out there every single time but they have to do them to get the crowd going. Save that stuff for the bigger matches and find some basic stuff to get you through the regular matches.

Jinder Mahal and Heath Slater came to the ring to say they wanted jobs, Foley came out to make a match for said job and Mahal won in 14 seconds. Next.

Owens said he had Jericho's back. Fine enough, especially if it leads to Kevin turning face.

Rollins beat Sami Zayn in a good enough main event. The idea here was to have Rollins beat someone similar to Finn with all the NXT experience to set up the Summerslam match and it worked just fine, though hearing the announcers brag about this being on Raw for the first time ever made me cringe.

The other reason I wanted to do this again was the closing segment, which I completely undersold in the live review. Paul Heyman and Brock Lesnar came out to do their usual speech with a focus on Randy Orton not being able to hit the RKO on Lesnar. Now anyone who has watched wrestling before knew what was coming here but it was still awesome to see Orton run through the crowd and lay Lesnar out with an RKO to end the show. I really liked this and it was pulled off perfectly.

Of course that's assuming you don't mind Raw and Smackdown already invading each other less than two weeks after the Draft. I really, really don't need to see this already as it defeats the point of the Draft in the first place. If you want these shows to be separate then be separate. If you want them to be the same then let them be the same. There's a very good chance that this is just because the match was announced before the Draft but I have a feeling that this is going to be the norm going forward.

Overall this show was up and down but the biggest issue was a lack of energy. Aside from the opener and one or two other things, most of the show felt like any given show that you might see in the middle of May instead of with just a few weeks to go before Summerslam. Hopefully they can make things better once they work the kinks of the Brand Split out but this was a letdown after last week's great show.

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