

# Best of 2016: Worst Wrestler of the Year

We'll wrap it up with probably the most subjective of all the awards: worst wrestler of the year. Now this can have a few different definitions and the nominees encompass both. In this case it could be either the worst in ring performer or the person who serves the least important purpose. It's very rare to have one person do both but maybe that's the case here with the worst wrestler of the year. As usual, these are in no particular order.

## 1. Dolph Ziggler

This is one of the most controversial of all the possible options. Depending on whom you ask, Ziggler is either the most overrated wrestler of the year or the most underutilized wrestler of the year. My issue with him is very simple: he's not going to win the big one and there's no reason to think he will. Ziggler has spent years on the exact same story: he's on a roll and needs that one big win to put it all together and become a star.

We got it again this year on multiple occasions, starting with the Ambrose feud over the Smackdown World Title and then again with Miz over the Intercontinental Title. Sure Ziggler eventually won that title, but it's not like that really means anything for him as he's held it multiple times before. It also doesn't help that if you've seen one Ziggler match, you're pretty much seen them all. He wrestles a very repetitive style and that gets old in a hurry.

Overall, Ziggler is a case where we've seen all this before and it's not interesting enough to keep seeing it. His in ring work is passable but as soon as you hear that music, you know what you're going to get. I can't put into words how disappointed I was when Daniel Bryan was responding to Miz's amazing promo from "Talking Smack" and our big reveal was Ziggler coming out to fight Miz instead. We've seen it so many times and there's just no reason to see it again, especially as often as it happens.

## 2. Braun Strowman

Remember last year when Strowman was part of the Wyatt Family and basically acting as a more muscular lackey who was otherwise interchangeable with Erick Rowan? Well now he looks like he's primed for a World Title run on "Monday Night Raw" and one heck of a big match at "Wrestlemania XXXIII". That's where people have issues with Strowman and I can't say I disagree: he's nowhere near seasoned enough for this spot.

Strowman only debuted back in December 2014 and is already near the top of the card having matches against World Champions. His offense consists of a bunch of power moves, none of which really offer anything beyond that of someone with about two years' experience in the business. It's rather hard to care about someone who is constantly doing the most basic power moves and little more.

Can you remember any single good match Strowman had in 2016? He had a few watchable ones but almost all of them were built around the other people who helped carry him through. Strowman is little more than a power guy who is in WAY over his head, which doesn't make for the most logical or interesting push in the world. He's passable enough at what he does but that doesn't mean he's ready to be on this stage.

## 3. Eva Marie

I was hesitant to put her on the list because I'm not sure if she even qualifies as a wrestler. In theory, to be a wrestler, you need to actually wrestle somewhere and I don't know if wrestling on the occasional house show is enough of a qualification. At the end of the day, Eva Marie was given a spot on the roster because she comes off as stupid on a reality show and looks great in a swimsuit. That might have been enough a few years back, but now things have changed a bit.

Believe it or not, in today's wrestling world you need to be able to wrestle a match instead of just looking good on the floor. I liked the idea that they were going with in Eva Marie's case as it was clear she couldn't be trusted to wrestle a match on live TV so they came up with one excuse after another (If nothing else it gave us the amazing over the top entrance.). However, at some point you need to be able to do

something in the ring and it really doesn't seem to be likely with Eva Marie.

She's been on the roster for a few years now and after all that time with some of the people she's been working with, you would think she would have gotten a little bit better. Somehow that's not the case though as she continues to be little more than semi-competent in the ring. Why we need to sit through her matches when there are people like Charlotte and Sasha Banks on the roster, I don't see why she's necessary.

#### **4. Carmella**

This is a case where there were forces working against Carmella in the first place and by that I mean the Brand Split. Much like Strowman, Carmella hasn't been in the ring for very long and she is in desperate need of more ring time. In theory she was going to be able to get that down in NXT but with the Brand Split, she was called up to the main roster WAY earlier than necessary.

The fact that she came out to crickets most of the time didn't offer a good sign for her future and while the heel turn helped her, she was then stuck in a feud with Nikki Bella. Compare this to Alexa Bliss, who has only been wrestling for a few months fewer than Carmella but seems a few steps ahead of her at this point. Do you think that might have anything to do with working with Becky Lynch instead of Bella?

Carmella should still be down in NXT and there's nothing wrong with that. The idea of NXT, for some people at least, is to be able to be built up into a wrestler instead of being thrust into a role you're not ready for yet. Longtime fans of the NXT product could have told you that she wasn't ready to be on the big stage, especially without Enzo Amore and Big Cass. However, this is the reality she's stuck in and while she's FAR from a lost cause, she's still in over her head and it's showing badly at times.

#### **5. Brock Lesnar**

Now we're getting somewhere and again it depends on how you like your wrestlers. Lesnar is basically the annoying kid playing a video game who finds the one move that works and keeps using it over and over again

because he knows no one is going to beat him. That might be entertaining in real life but it doesn't make for the best professional wrestling matches.

However, I get the appeal of Lesnar in this case. It doesn't make sense for him to do anything other than what works, but that really doesn't make for entertaining wrestling a lot of the time. Lesnar just doing suplex after suplex might make sense for his character but ENOUGH ALREADY. I remember his time right after returning when he was doing more submission work and going after the arm and all that jazz. Why can't we get more of that version of Lesnar?

It also doesn't help that he keeps destroying everyone (not named Goldberg) in his path. Consider his matches with Ambrose and Orton, neither of whom got in much of any real offense on him. An RKO gave Orton a breather but that wasn't enough to come close to finishing Lesnar off. The matches are boring squashes which could be made better by something as simple as two or three more moves. Why is that so hard to get?

## **6. Baron Corbin**

We're going to jump back a little bit here as Corbin is quite like Strowman. While Corbin has been wrestling for a bit longer, he's never really learned how to do anything more than a short match. He's got a good finishing move and won a battle royal but after that, he's really just been beating up Kalisto and acted like a bully for a few months. Couple that with a pretty weak offense and you don't have much to go on.

It also doesn't help that he has a pretty generic character. Yeah his look is good with all the tattoos but the biker music and leather vest have been done to death. Sometimes it's ok to come up with a slightly more interesting character (or even a character at all) before bringing someone up to the next level.

Corbin is another case where he could wind up meaning something eventually and there were some glimmers of good stuff near the end of the year but he's still in WAY over his head for the most part. The problem is there really wasn't much left for him to do down in NXT so they kind of had to bring him up to the main roster when they did. That doesn't

leave him with much but it does leave us with having to watch him struggle through so much of the year.

## **7. James Ellsworth**

We just can't get away from this guy. Ellsworth is someone who took WWE by drizzle in the latter half of the year and came very close to Eugene levels of overstaying his welcome. While the idea was to have him be little more than just a goon who can't do anything more than throw an occasional superkick, the problem is he was just there week after week with multiple moments that should have wrapped him up.

Ellsworth came in and played a role, which is perfectly fine for him to do. Unfortunately there's a point when that role is done and it's time to move on. For some reason that only recently happened and now he's with Carmella for reasons that aren't entirely clear. That's a much better level for him to take before he's released (with his indy bookings going through the roof as a result, meaning it's hardly a bad thing).

As I said at the beginning of this, the person considered the worst wrestler of the year could be someone who either didn't have a role or was incapable of having a good match. Ellsworth's character certainly falls into the latter category as his character prevents him from having any kind of strong wrestling. Maybe he can manage to do something at a lower level but I really didn't need to see him do anything else near the main event after all that time we saw him there.

## **8. Shane McMahon**

You had to know we were coming to this one eventually. McMahon's problem is far more his booking than the in ring abilities but that's still a major problem. When you consider his two matches this year (vs. the Undertaker at "Wrestlemania XXXIII" and in the big Survivor Series match at "Survivor Series 2016") were on major stages and McMahon was treated as the biggest deal in either, it's hard to argue that he was booked properly.

When McMahon came back to WWE, I lost my mind. It was one of the best surprises I ever could have imagined and I was even ok with him being on

the "Wrestlemania XXXII" card due to all of the injuries. However, he completely lost me when he somehow lasted half an hour against Undertaker and whatever he had left went flying out the window when he was put on the Survivor Series roster. There was NO ONE else you could put in that spot? Like, no one at all?

McMahon is the kind of guy who is brought in for the sake of hyping up a crowd. For reasons that aren't entirely clear, he's been pushed as the greatest thing to ever happen to the roster. Despite not wrestling a match since 2009, he's able to hang with people like Undertaker and the best that "Monday Night Raw" has to offer? In what world does that make sense? It's certainly not this one and he's one of the worst things around as a result.

As weird as it is to say, I think I have to go with Lesnar. It's not so much that his abilities aren't great but his matches come off as lazy booking. Instead of something competitive, it seems that we're just there to see Lesnar squash someone a few times a month, only to get destroyed by Goldberg in a big surprise. There really isn't someone miles ahead of the pack here but Lesnar is far enough ahead to take this one.