

Best of 2016: News Story of the Year

This is always a trick one to define. Sometimes there are stories that mean something outside of the ring and often times, those are even bigger stories than anything between the ropes. There were a fair few stories like that this year and for once they don't all pertain to WWE. These stories are in no particular order and hopefully we have more to pick from next year.

1. Hulk Hogan vs. Gawker

Let's talk about Hulk Hogan's sex tape. While the story broke a long time ago, the trial itself actually took place in 2016 and saw Hogan eventually awarded a \$31 million settlement which resulted in Gawker closing its doors. Hogan wasn't exactly shown in the best light but at least it struck a blow for privacy instead of celebrities having their privacy invaded.

Unfortunately it resulted in Hogan basically being removed from WWE programming and anything associated with it. That's really not the most surprising reaction as the idea of having Hogan shown in a sex tape isn't exactly the most PG thing in the world. Hopefully we see Hogan back in WWE soon enough, though hopefully with him wearing pants.

2. Billy Corgan Kicked Out of TNA

Just....wow. So basically TNA was out of money (again) and Billy Corgan offered to loan/give them money to survive through their next TV tapings on multiple occasions. Now here's the amazing part: he actually WANTED SOMETHING IN RETURN. Yes indeed: a multimillionaire who has several business ventures actually hoped to gain something out of another investment.

Well that's what Dixie Carter thought was ridiculous, eventually calling Corgan a "predatory lender". Corgan would be thrown out of TNA with his money back and absolutely no authority in the long term because TNA is ridiculous enough to act like this. There's a reason they come off as the joke of the wrestling world and this is a great example. Maybe Anthem can help things but this came off as horrible and there's little other way to spin it.

3. New Japan Talent Comes to WWE

So you remember back in the day where WCW and WWE would steal each other's talent over and over? Well that's kind of what's happening now but WWE took some of the big names. Just after Wrestle Kingdom X on January 4, Shinsuke Nakamura, AJ Styles, Luke Gallows and Karl Anderson all jumped to WWE, making it one of the biggest signing periods in WWE history.

This really is a big deal as WWE replenished their roster in one swoop and also punched their only major international competition in the face at the same time. Styles became one of the top stars in the company in his first year and Nakamura seems primed for a main roster run in 2017. It was a huge moment and changed the way WWE looked for a long time to come.

4. UK Championship Tournament and Potential for More

If there's one thing WWE has seemed interested in doing lately, it's expanding internationally. On top of that, they love the idea of expanding content on the WWE Network. By running this tournament, they were able to do that in one move. WWE ran a UK Title tournament in Blackpool, England which seemed to open the door for some UK content airing on the Network.

While the tournament was a success, it also seems to have planted the seeds for other tournaments going forward. I know they might not be on the same level as WWE but there are a lot of independent promotions out there which could be major players on the WWE Network. Just imagine one of them getting a weekly spot on the Network going forward. That's a huge upgrade and opens a massive audience that had never seen them before. It's certainly something I would check out which I wouldn't do otherwise.

5. Goldberg Returns

While this was almost certainly tied in with the new WWE video game, it's still a huge deal that changed several things for WWE. Like having him beat Brock Lesnar in less than two minutes for example. Goldberg was one of the big free agents out there who could wind up being a major player in WWE and that's what he's been in one match over the course of several months.

The WWE video game reveal has been a fun day to look forward to every year and that's what we had here. It's gotten to the point

where someone who is put on the front of a video game gets to appear in WWE, which means we get a major match as a reward. I'm still not sure on Goldberg beating Lesnar like that but at least he gave us a major moment.

6. Shane McMahon Returns

Now this was a big one. I mean, Goldberg wasn't exactly expected but this was in the range of WHAT THE HECK JUST HAPPENED. As soon as Shane's music hit, you knew something was changing in a hurry and it made a lot of people very interested to see where it was going. While the story wasn't all that great, the initial surprise certainly was and that's important.

This was a big deal because Shane had been gone for so long. It really felt like he was out of the company for good but now things seem to have changed again. I don't think Shane has any authority behind the scenes but he's always been the one who felt like he could change things in a much better way. Granted I don't think that's going to happen but at least it was a great moment and gave us something to think about.

This might not be the best year in the world for wrestling news stories but it's definitely the New Japan guys. That's the kind of story that changes things in two companies and two different wrestling worlds. Those names could all be major players in WWE (Styles already is) and could help WWE expand into other areas of the world.

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