

Best of 2016: Non-Wrestler of the Year

As I'm sure you know, a lot of what goes on in a match isn't what goes on in a match. A lot of the time it's what happens outside the ring or before the match starts or just on commentary. That's what we're going to look at today: the best non-wrestlers of the year. This could be anywhere from a manager to an authority figure to a commentator or really anything but a wrestler. Hence the term NON-WRESTLER in case you're a bit slow today. In no order of course.

1. Mauro Ranallo.

Sometimes you just need someone that sounds like they love their job and has a blast watching it. Over on Monday Night Raw you get the corporate shilling Michael Cole (who is very underrated at his job but that's another story). Over on Smackdown and 205 Live though, it's Ranallo, who sounds like he's put in way more research and prep time than necessary but still comes off like one of the most knowledgeable commentators in years.

Ranallo's major moments came at the Cruiserweight Classic where he made you believe that what you were watching right this instant was the most important thing in the world. In other words, he was doing his job. That's something that you just don't get often enough in wrestling these days as everyone either either sounds like an idiot (Byron Saxton), sounds WAY too rehearsed (JBL) or is just a tool that you would rather punch in the face than listen to (Josh Matthews). Ranallo is on the other end and that's a great perk on Tuesdays.

2. Daniel Bryan.

Speaking of the Cruiserweight Classic, we have the new Smackdown General Manager who can be around for most of the important decisions while Shane McMahon shows up on major occasions. Bryan is still incredibly over and there's the whole YES thing which is always going to get a crowd involved in a show. It's always going to work and that's what matters in Bryan's case.

On top of that, there's the Miz thing. I'm still not sure if that's going anywhere or where it's going but that makes me want to keep

watching the shows to see if anything actually does come from it. That makes for an interesting story, which adds even more to what Bryan can do on his own. That's really impressive and something not a lot of people could pull off.

3. Corey Graves.

One more commentator here as we have one of the most natural heel commentators in a long time. I never got the big appeal of Graves as a wrestler but I certainly get the appeal of him as a commentator. The guy comes off as such a jerk but a smooth jerk, which is exactly what he's going for. I can even tolerate him picking on Saxton because...well, it's Byron Saxton and that's what he deserves.

Graves just gets the idea behind being a heel and plays the heck out of it. He praises the heels and likes to call out faces for their nonsense, which makes him much more of a Jesse Ventura than a Bobby Heenan. That's not a bad thing either as Ventura was one of the best of all time. It's been a long time since we've had someone like that and Graves does it like few others could.

4. Maryse.

Let's go with the women for a bit here as Maryse returned back in April and was all of a sudden the best heel manager in a long time. There's something about the fact that she can go from wearing the dress and looking all proper to wearing the skin tight leather body suits during Miz's matches. That's a great way to show how different her two sides can be and that's always impressive to pull off.

On top of that she's raised Miz up that much more. Sure Miz is annoying and a loudmouth but how much more do you hate him because he has an absolutely stunning blonde wife who loves him? It helps so much and makes the whole thing that much better. Miz is a great heel and on an amazing roll but Maryse has helped him so much.

5. Dario Cueto.

We might need to just rename this award after Cueto as he almost always seems to be the perfect option. I can't emphasize enough how great it is to have an actor playing this part instead of just another wrestler. Cueto has gotten WAY into the character and knows how to play him like no one else could. That's why the character works: he's played to absolute perfection.

I know Lucha Underground doesn't get the most coverage but at least they have some bright spots. Cueto seems to be involved in the major story of the season...whatever that might be. Whatever it winds up being, it's going to be entertaining because that's what a good actor is capable of doing with almost anything.

6. Renee Young.

One more good looking blonde for the road. With Young, it's much easier to list off what she can't do instead of what she can. I don't remember the last time we had someone who could do almost everything like she could and that's a great asset to have. Young is just talented and it was interesting to see her get involved with a storyline as Miz feuded with Dean Ambrose.

It could be an interview, a talking segment, hosting or doing something on the Network but Young just knows how to be charming on camera. It's always helpful to have a jack of all trades like her around and that's one of the best things possible. I really wouldn't be surprised to see her snatched up by ESPN sometime soon so enjoy her while you can.

Overall...dang this is actually hard. I think I'm going to go with Bryan though, if nothing else due to how much nicer it is to have a face boss instead of yet another corrupt and evil authority figure. Couple that with the chance of Bryan making one more in ring appearance down the line and it's hard to go wrong with him, even in such a stacked field.

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