

Monday Night Raw – February 20, 2017: They've Hit the Switch

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 20, 2017

Location: Staples Center, Los Angeles, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

It's a big show this week with a ton of things to get to. First of all, Brock Lesnar is scheduled to be in the house and that's huge in general. Second, Bayley has been told to either give her title back to Charlotte or else, which could mean multiple things. Oh and Rock might be in town. Let's get to it.

In Memory of George Steele. Not Ivan Koloff for some reason.

We open with a long recap of the Festival of Friendship and Kevin Owens turning on Chris Jericho. Sweet popcorn baked into a pie that was an amazing segment.

Owens is sitting in the ring in the dark in a chair to get things going. When he was growing up, if anyone had told him he would be defending the World Title against Goldberg in the main event of a pay per view, he would have thought you were crazy. Of course he'd be in the main event of a pay per view, but against Goldberg? The Goldberg chants start up and Owens thinks that's exactly what he wanted to hear.

That's the chant that makes Goldberg think he's invincible as they head into their match at Fastlane. At the pay per view, all Owens has to do is outlast and outsmart Goldberg because the longer a Goldberg match goes, the weaker and weaker he gets. Owens is the master of outsmarting opponents and no one knows how to play the game like him.

Goldberg can say Owens is next all he wants but as far as Owens is concerned, Goldberg is nothing. As for what happened last week with

Jericho...Owens drops the mic and walks out. This is the Owens that we've been waiting to see on the main roster for a long time and that's nothing but good as we head into the final stretch to Wrestlemania. Owens was great here and that's awesome to see.

Cesaro/Sheamus vs. Enzo Amore/Big Cass

The winners get a title shot at Fastlane. Cass slugs it out with Cesaro to start before it's off to Enzo, who is launched at Sheamus in the corner. Back from an early break with Enzo in trouble but backdropping Cesaro out to the floor. Sheamus gives chase though and Cesaro just blasts Amore with an uppercut to break up the hot tag attempt (Cue crowd reaction shot!). Cass comes in a few seconds later and everything breaks down. The corkscrew uppercut drops Cass but Enzo breaks up the swing. The East River Crossing ends Cesaro at 9:17.

Rating: C-. Can we please wrap up the Cesaro and Sheamus experiment already? They weren't an interesting team in the first place and for some reason we're still watching them do their thing. Then again, the tag division is pretty much four teams (if you count New Day) so it's not like there's any better option.

Post match Enzo runs his mouth and gets Brogue Kicked. That doesn't feel exactly like a heel turn.

Owens is leaving when Mick Foley comes in to say he has a match with Sami Zayn tonight. Kevin chuckles and says he thought Foley liked Sami.

Video on Braun Strowman.

Video on Bayley winning the Women's Title and fulfilling her lifelong dream. This sounds like the setup for a cruiserweight match.

Roman Reigns interrupts Foley and wants to fight Strowman tonight. Foley says that can't happen but here are Anderson and Gallows to interrupt. They want to fight Reigns again tonight and Foley agrees if Roman can find a partner.

Brian Kendrick vs. Akira Tozawa

I would have expected a bit longer build to this one. Tozawa won't shake hands so Kendrick hits him before the bell, including sending him neck/ear first into the turnbuckle hook. The Captain's Hook knocks Tozawa out and there's no match.

In the back, Kendrick says he won't be disrespected like that.

Roman Reigns/??? vs. Anderson and Gallows

Non-title and Reigns' partner is.....not here as this is just going to be a handicap match. Anderson starts for the team but Roman drops them both to control early on. Gallows kicks him in the face though and it's already off to the chinlock. The Boot of Doom is broken up and it turns into a double beating on the floor. A chair is brought in but Reigns takes it away and beats the champs down for the DQ at 3:57.

Rating: D+. Another short match that makes me wonder what the point is in having the Tag Team Champions get treated like this. Is there NO ONE ELSE that can do the mini feud with Reigns? Like, no two big guys you could throw out there? It's almost like having the divisions this divided has ruined a lot of things and gives us moments like this.

Post match Reigns Superman Punches Gallows and spears Anderson out of the air, sending the champs crawling away.

Video on New Day being announced as the hosts of Wrestlemania.

New Day vs. Rusev/Jinder Mahal

Reigns couldn't have beaten up Rusev and Mahal? Before the match, New Day says they're working on a bunch of things right now, including being the hosts of Wrestlemania and trying to become the voices of the hyenas in the new Lion King movie (Kofi: "That's not a joke.").

On top of that, they've got the ice cream machine plans back and THEY'VE DIGITIZED THEM! Lana holds up a tablet and says she has the plans....which seem to be authentic. Apparently they include a flux capacitor, three unicorn hairs and New Day starts panicking. Woods: "HOW DID SHE GET THE PLANS?" Big E.: "You know she's Russian right?"

The match is joined in progress with Rusev grabbing a bearhug on Kofi. It's quickly off to Jinder, who can't do a thing due to high levels of being Jinder Mahal. Big E. comes in and cleans house, including putting Rusev on the floor for a big dive. This lets Woods take the tablet back and completely destroy it for a big pop. The Midnight Hour puts Jinder away at 3:42.

Rating: D+. What in the world happened to Rusev? Like really, the guy should have been a big deal or at least feuded with Big Cass but now he's jobbing in a nothing tag team? This really is a waste of someone who could have been something special and of course he still could be fine, but at the moment it's a big waste of time. New Day is fine in this role as it's not like they have anything else to do right now so let them have fun at Wrestlemania.

Video on George Steele.

Austin Aries is in the ring for the contract signing between Neville and Jack Gallagher. Since Gallagher is present, there are already cookies and tea prepared. Gallagher quickly signs before Neville can even come out. Neville does the same and immediately goes to leave, only to be stopped by Gallagher.

Neville mocks all of the British stereotypes and calls Gallagher a caricature. The real streets of England look like Neville but Gallagher is what the WWE Universe wanted Neville to be. Gallagher assures him that he is NOT a joke because this is the real thing. The table, including the tea is turned over and the fight is on with the headbutt sending Neville outside. Gallagher is one of my favorites at the moment but if they don't do Neville vs. Aries for the title at Wrestlemania, they've lost their minds.

Nia Jax b. Sara Pierce

Splash and Samoan drop finish Pierce at 34 seconds.

Post match Nia says she's putting Bayley and the title on notice.

Black History Month video on Barack Obama.

Here's Bayley for her first appearance as Women's Champion. She grew up here in California and had a dream of being a champion and getting to point at a Wrestlemania sign. When she was a kid, her dad brought her to the events and bought her all the shirts and toys. Last week, the first thing she did was call her dad and it's a call she'll never forget. Bayley's dad is here tonight and the fans are making her look cool in front of her dad.

Cue Stephanie McMahon to ask if Bayley's dream included everyone wondering if she could have done it without Sasha Banks. Stephanie's daughters look up to her and she wants to know if Bayley is going to throw everything away for the sake of a championship that she didn't earn. Bayley is about to hand it over when Sasha Banks comes out to say don't do it. She thinks about it but says no way is she handing the title over. Bayley won the title because of the WWE Universe. The title belongs to all of them and she'll defend it any time any place.

Cue Charlotte to say she's cashing in her rematch at Fastlane. Sasha cuts her off and says Bayley will keep the title at the pay per view. As for tonight though, Sasha's knee is feeling fine so let's have a trip down memory lane. Stephanie makes the match right now because of course she gets to have the last word.

Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte

Bayley is on commentary. Joined in progress again with Sasha grabbing a headscissors but getting her face driven into the match. Charlotte does the Figure Four faceplants and grabs a necklock. Sasha is sent outside and we take a break. Back with Charlotte grabbing a dragon sleeper. Sasha fights out and makes her comeback, including a dropkick in the corner. Cue Dana Brooke for a distraction but Bayley cuts her off, allowing the Banks Statement to make Charlotte tap at 10:03.

Rating: C-. This didn't have time to go anywhere with the long break in the middle but you can pretty much pencil in the four way at Wrestlemania from here. Sasha is going to make a great heel when she turns, even if you can see it coming a mile away. Oh and can we please drop the "renewal of a rivalry" when they last fought about two months ago? That's rather

pitiful.

Diamond Dallas Page Hall of Fame video. This is LONG overdue.

Sami Zayn knew Owens would do this kind of thing and he told us all it would happen. He sees a lot of similarities between Owens and Samoa Joe (insert your own Scott Steiner "HE'S FAT" joke here), including both of them doing all kinds of horrible things for the sake of some demented loyalty to someone else. Tonight, Sami is kicking Owens' teeth down his throat.

Kevin Owens vs. Sami Zayn

Non-title. Before the match, cue Samoa Joe to massacre Sam. For some reason he agrees to the match anyway and it's a Cannonball to crush Zayn even worse. The referee pulls him off so it's a second Cannonball and the Pop Up Powerbomb to give Owens the pin at 1:11.

At 10:48pm, this show is dedicated to the memory of Ivan Koloff.

The bosses are in the back and Stephanie ribs on Foley for not coming out there during either the women's segment or Samoa Joe beating Sami down. Foley FINALLY stands up for himself and blames Stephanie for Seth Rollins being injured. He was telling HHH and Stephanie how great Samoa Joe was twelve years ago and yells about how he's not letting Stephanie's greed get in the way of this show. Stephanie threatens him with an "accident" and Foley leaves.

Cole is in the back for a sitdown interview with Brock Lesnar and Paul Heyman. We get straight to the point with Goldberg but Heyman cuts Cole off and says Lesnar isn't interested in questions like this one. Heyman says Lesnar isn't interested in hearing about Goldberg winning the title so Lesnar scares Cole away and stares straight into the camera.

Paul talks about Owens attacking Jericho last week because Lesnar disagrees with Owens being the most violent champion in years. Lesnar isn't interested in hearing about Owens but Heyman talks about Kevin's greatness anyway. A lot of people want to see Owens pull it off but Lesnar disagrees because if Owens loses, it's Goldberg vs. Lesnar for the

title. That's just one more thing for Lesnar to conquer at Wrestlemania and that's what he wants to do.

The ring is reenforced for the main event.

Braun Strowman vs. Big Show

And yes, this really is the main event. Show grabs a wristlock to start but Braun rolls around and nips up to escape. Now that's going to get him noticed. Show shoves him down but gets punched in the jaw and dropped for his efforts. Strowman charges into a choke but easily reverses into a DDT for two. A clothesline drops Show for two and it's all Strowman so far.

Show reverses a suplex into one of his own and grabs the chokeslam for two. The powerslam doesn't work so Show puts him on top for the superplex. Strowman escapes that but dives into the KO Punch for two. Show loads up the Vader Bomb, only to have Strowman get up for the powerslam (doesn't look great) for two of his own. Not that it matters as Braun hits another powerslam for the pin at 12:10.

Rating: C. Right here is a great example of a match that doesn't need to be good to get the point across. Much like last week, this was about Strowman showing that he's the new star instead of the old guard like Show or Mark Henry. It's a very simple idea but they're telling the right story, which is all you can ask for.

Post match Reigns comes out and gets in a few Superman Punches but Strowman hits the powerslam to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. This was an odd show as they advanced a lot of stories and set up a bunch of stuff for Fastlane but there's nothing going on here that is worth going out of your way to see. Above all else though they've hit the switch and it's clearly time to get ready for Wrestlemania. They're taking things more seriously and you can see where a lot of the stories are going. I can't believe I'm saying it but for once, I actually care about the Raw stories more than Smackdown. The show has been good lately and it's at the perfect time.

Results

Enzo Amore/Big Cass b. Cesaro/Sheamus – East River Crossing to Cesaro

Anderson and Gallows b. Roman Reigns via DQ when Reigns used a chair

New Day b. Rusev/Jinder Mahal – Midnight Hour to Mahal

Nia Jax b. Sara Pierce – Samoan drop

Sasha Banks b. Charlotte – Bank Statement

Kevin Owens b. Sami Zayn – Pop Up Powerbomb

Braun Strowman b. Big Show – Powerslam

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