

Fastlane 2017: Yep

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Location: Bradley Center, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Commentators: Michael Cole, Byron Saxton, Corey Graves

It's the final show before Wrestlemania XXXIII and it's fairly clear that this is just a way to fill in time before Orlando. The main event is Kevin Owens defending the Universal Title against Goldberg, which has a serious chance of being a squash. Of course it also has the chance of Chris Jericho interfering and costing his former friend the title. Let's get to it.

Pre-Show: Noam Dar/Brian Kendrick vs. Akira Tozawa/Rich Swann

Take two feuds (Kendrick vs. Tozawa/Swann vs. Dar) and throw them into one match. Tozawa starts firing off the kicks early on with Dar barely able to keep up. It's off to Swann for the stereo dives but Kendrick and Dar hide behind Alicia Fox before anything can happen to them.

Back from a break with Swann in trouble as Dar and Kendrick take turns working on the arm. Kendrick chokes in the corner with his boot before it's back to Dar for a more standard armbar. Swann finally sends Noam into the corner and it's time for the hot tag to Tozawa. Now the double dives work just fine and Kendrick eats a Shining Wizard. Swann kicks Dar down and it's a snap German suplex into the Phoenix splash to put Noam away at 9:21.

Rating: C+. This was exactly what this pre-show match is supposed to be as the cruiserweights did their usual high spots and fast paced offense to wake the fans up. Dar taking the pin makes sense as he can just do one of his annoying promos to get back on the annoying side where he belongs.

The opening video talks about how important it is to have momentum on the way to Wrestlemania while looking at the major matches. Strowman vs. Reigns doesn't warrant a major mention though.

Sami Zayn vs. Samoa Joe

This has a lot of potential. Joe debuted a few weeks back and talked about earning his spot here instead of being all happy to be here like Zayn. Feeling out process to start with Sami avoiding for a few moments until a big kick to the chest puts him down. The kneebar doesn't work just yet but Joe does get in an enziguri in the corner to really knock Sami silly. A surfboard hold makes things even worse for Zayn but he flips over onto Joe for two. Sami tries to get all fired up so Joe spinwheel kicks the leg to put him right back down.

A quick (and better than expected) Blue Thunder Bomb gets two on Joe but the offense ends there as Joe boots him in the chest again. The backplash gets two and Sami is all shaken up. He still manages a small package, only to have to escape a MuscleBuster. Not that it matters as Joe enziguris him again but can't get a superplex. Instead Joe is sent face first into the buckle but he still Grabs Sami in the STO out of the corner. The Koquina Clutch ends Zayn at 9:13.

Rating: B. Sami passing out in the hold after fighting with everything he had was exactly what this needed to be. Joe is still establishing himself on the roster and a match where he's able to fight off everything Sami throws at him and then choke him out for the win is a great start. Sami will be just fine though as he always is and that's one of his major strengths: you can have him lose so many times and just a single win gets him right back on track.

Bayley isn't worried about Dana Brooke having Charlotte's back tonight. If Charlotte is the champion she claims to be, she'll face Bayley one on one. Nia Jax comes up and says if Charlotte doesn't take the title, she will.

Tag Team Titles: Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Anderson and Gallows

Enzo and Cass beat Sheamus and Cesaro to earn this shot. Before the match we get some cheap pops from Enzo and Cass about the local sports teams (that will always work) and a few jabs at the champs' bald heads. Cass slugs away on Anderson to start before Amore does the big dive onto both champions. Anderson gets in a running knee to the head though and Gallows

throws in a double Too Sweet to remind us of more entertaining groups gone by.

It's off to the chinlock before Amore manages to get Gallows outside. That's not enough for the hot tag though as Anderson knees him in the face. Anderson misses a charge in the corner though and it's the hot tag to Big Cass. House is quickly cleaned and the Bada Boom Shaka Lacka looks to finish, only to have Gallows make the last second save. A running knee to Enzo is enough for the pin to retain at 9:00 with Gallows shoving the boot off the ropes.

Rating: D+. Just a Raw match here as you almost had to expect from this one. It wasn't very entertaining but that's the standard for the tag division anymore. Why would I care about the match when the build has been almost non-existent and neither team is really all that interesting in the first place?

Stephanie's plane is stuck on the tarmac so Mick Foley is in charge tonight. She yells at him for telling her to relax. She's going to stay on the phone with him for the rest of the show but as luck would have it, Mick accidentally hangs up on her.

We recap Nia Jax vs. Sasha Banks. Jax beat on Banks for a few months while exploiting Sasha's bad knee. This match is taking place because Banks said she would be in Bayley's corner later tonight, which wasn't cool with Stephanie.

Nia Jax vs. Sasha Banks

Banks tries some dropkicks to start but a hard whip into the corner cuts her off in a hurry. A backbreaker makes things even worse and Nia runs her over again for good measure. Nia cranks on both arms before getting kicked in the head for the break. It's off to a torture rack (great visual with Sasha bent bent around like that) and Nia even does some squats for good measure.

Banks spins out into most of a guillotine before a faceplant sets up the Bank Statement. The crowd gets WAY into this for a second but Jax easily powers free. A Faarooq style spinebuster sets up a legdrop to Banks' back

and it's time to gloat. Nia gloats a bit too long though and a quick rollup into a bridge gives Sasha the pin at 9:21.

Rating: C+. This is the formula I was expecting out of Sami vs. Joe actually but the ending was a big surprise. I like the idea of Banks getting the win here as it gives her some momentum back while also making Jax look vulnerable for a change. I'm sure there's going to be a rematch and Jax can run her over there, presumably setting up the Wrestlemania match a bit more.

Earlier tonight, Mick Foley gave Jinder Mahal and Rusev singles matches because they want to end their team.

Mahal and Rusev come out for their matches but get in a fight with Mahal actually getting the better of things.

Cesaro vs. Jinder Mahal

Mahal is in early trouble and a backbreaker gives Cesaro an early two. He seems to have hurt his back though and can't get the apron superplex. A dropkick to the back gets two on Cesaro and a running knee gets the same. The slow beating continues until Mahal's suplex is reversed to give Cesaro a breather. Cesaro hits the Uppercut Train and the Swiss 1 9 (oh give me a break) makes things even worse. Jinder breaks up the Swing but gets in a staredown with Rusev, allowing the pop up uppercut to end Mahal at 8:33.

Rating: D+. The wrestling was fine but my goodness this was one of the least interesting ideas I could possibly think of. Mahal was never interesting either as a singles guy or as a tag wrestler but we're supposed to be interested in seeing him on a pay per view in a singles match? It's nice to see Cesaro win something for a change though.

Rusev beats Mahal up post match and here's his opponent.

Big Show vs. Rusev

You would have expected Sheamus here no? Rusev has gotten one heck of a haircut. The USA chants begin as Show chokes in the corner and then on the ropes. A headbutt makes things even worse and the Final Cut gets two

on the Bulgarian. Show clotheslines him a few times as this has been completely one sided.

Rusev finally takes out the knee and it's off to a leglock as the fans keep chanting USA. A shot to Rusev's face breaks the hold (Graves: "This could be devastating to his handsome status!") and he bails to the floor. Back in and the chokeslam is broken up, followed by a trio of superkicks for two. The Accolade is broken up though and a chokeslam plants Rusev for no cover. There's a second and third chokeslam followed by the KO Punch for the pin on Rusev at 9:38.

Rating: D. I'm assuming this was a way to help set up Big Show vs. Shaquille O'Neal at Wrestlemania, even though they keep hinting that the match isn't happening for some reason. Rusev was completely squashed here, but what do you expect after he was attacked by the likes of Jinder Mahal earlier?

Kevin Owens doesn't think anything of Goldberg because Goldberg has won a single match in about ten years. He's not wrong you know. It doesn't matter who he faces because he'll keep the title as long as he wants.

Austin Aries package with Aries making some package jokes before and after.

Cruiserweight Title: Neville vs. Jack Gallagher

Neville is defending after Jack won a five way for the shot. Gallagher starts the mind games by doing the headstand in the corner a few times to really confuse the champ. A dropkick puts Neville on the floor but he snaps Gallagher throat first across the top rope to take over. Neville's reverse chinlock doesn't last long as Gallagher comes back with forearms to the head, followed by a suicide dive of all things. The announcers make sure to point out how rare that is for him in a rare nice job.

Back in and a superplex gets two on the champ but he comes back with something like a Stroke. Jack is sent chest first into the ropes though and a wicked snap German knocks Gallagher silly. A middle rope Phoenix splash is only good for two though and Jack gets in the headbutt.

Another headbutt puts Neville down and Gallagher falls on top for two. The running corner dropkick misses but Gallagher breaks up the superplex attempt. Another very, very hard headbutt knocks Neville down on the top but he throws Jack down in a huge crash. The Red Arrow retains the title at 12:08.

Rating: B. This was WAY better than I was expecting and this was by far and away the best match on the show. I had a lot of fun with it as Gallagher was doing his thing here and showing that he has the chops to hang in the ring. That being said, when Neville turns it on, no one can hang with him and it's really not even close. I loved this match and it was by far and away the best thing on the show so far.

Paul Heyman doesn't care if Goldberg or Owens wins tonight because Brock Lesnar wins no matter what. If Goldberg wins, their match is now a title match. If Owens wins, Lesnar will have a plan on how to beat Goldberg.

Here's New Day with a bicycle powered ice cream cart. When they had an idea for a cereal, all they had was a t-shirt and a dream. Then they heard the voices....Big E.: "I HEAR VOICES IN MY HEAD! THEY TALK TO ME.....". Now they stand before you again with a new t-shirt and a dream but Big E. starts trying to sing again. Woods and Kofi think he's been sipping on something but now there's an opportunity. The fans have a chance to have their voices heard and it's all about this New Day bike. They're riding it all the way down the Road to Wrestlemania and...that's it. There's no followup to it and we're done.

We recap Braun Strowman vs. Roman Reigns. Strowman wants competition and has attacked Reigns a few times so here's the big showdown.

Braun Strowman vs. Roman Reigns

Reigns' shoes are white on the bottom and it's very distracting. Is he supposed to be a white feet babyface? Strowman shoves him into the corner to start but Reigns smiles at a shot to the mouth. A clothesline puts Strowman over the top but he pulls Reigns outside and sends him into the steps. Strowman gets in a spinebuster to start in on the ribs and a huge beal sends Reigns flying.

Roman can't get him in a fireman's carry so Strowman grabs his own Samoan drop. A splash sets up a chinlock and they head outside again with Strowman loading up the announcers' table. That goes nowhere and Strowman goes shoulder first into the post to give Reigns his first real opening. The Samoan drop gets two but Strowman pops back up with the powerbomb into a faceplant for two of his own. A missed charge sends Strowman outside though and he comes up holding his knee.

Reigns gives chase (he's got the shoes for it) and gets powerslammed through the table for his efforts. Strowman can't follow up because of the knee though and Reigns gets in a spear for two. Some Superman Punches stagger Braun again but he punches Reigns down (fans: "THANK YOU STROWMAN!"). Braun goes up (Cole: "GET DOWN FROM THERE STROWMAN!") but misses a top rope splash, setting up a spear to give Reigns the pin at 17:13.

Rating: B+. I'm very split on this one because it's a heck of a match but WHAT IN THE WORLD WAS THE POINT IN BUILDING STROWMAN UP LIKE THAT TO HAVE HIM LOSE HERE??? That's the big shine taken away from Strowman for the sake of another chorus of groaning from the crowd because HAHA REIGNS WINS AGAIN. This actually sucked the life out of me and that's hard to do after a great match. Yes it was great because they let Reigns be a superhero (with white shoes) but there was no reason for Reigns to win clean here, period.

Foley tells Samoa Joe to stay out of the main event or face the consequences.

We recap Bayley vs. Charlotte. Bayley won the title last month and Charlotte is getting her pay per view rematch. The idea is Bayley can win on Raw but Charlotte always wins when the lights are on bright.

Women's Title: Bayley vs. Charlotte

Bayley is defending and Charlotte steps in front of Dana Brooke, much to Dana's chagrin. Charlotte takes her to the mat for an early two and Bayley gets the same off La Majistral. They head outside with Bayley grabbing a hurricanrana off the apron, followed by a high crossbody for two. Bayley gets caught in the ropes though and Charlotte drops a knee to

take over. We hit the figure four necklock followed by a legdrop to give Charlotte two.

We're in a rather slow pace here but Charlotte picks it up a bit with the moonsault for two. Bayley pops right back up and gets in a belly to back suplex for a near fall of her own. It's off to the Tree of Woe with Bayley COMPLETELY missing the springboard elbow to the point where neither the fans nor the announcers reacted to it. The thing really was that bad.

They both head to the corner and I don't see this ending well. Charlotte knocks her back into the ring but Bayley is right there with a forearm to the head to set up a much better looking hurricanrana. Now it's Bayley going up for a top rope elbow and another near fall as this is already starting to get better. Charlotte kicks the knee out but can't hook the Figure Four just yet.

Bayley is sent into the barricade but here's Sasha Banks to break up the moonsault. The distraction lets Bayley get in the Bayley to Belly on the floor (it's not clear if she saw Sasha) but Charlotte gets in a small package with a handful of tights. Sasha tells the ref though and there's no count, allowing another Bayley to Belly to finish Charlotte off at 16:42.

Rating: C+. The tights thing is fine but there was no reason for Banks to be down there in the first place. It certainly feels like we're planting the seeds for a heel turn though as Banks came out there when she wasn't needed (it's not like Bayley was done or anything) and cheated. I'm not sure why it wasn't a DQ and it's a very lame way to have Charlotte lose her first pay per view title match.

Bayley points at the sign and Sasha cheers her on.

We recap Seth Rollins and HHH's segment on Raw.

We recap Goldberg vs. Kevin Owens. Goldberg beat Brock Lesnar at Survivor Series and now he's the #1 contender. Owens is just kind of there but he's cranked up the evil in recent weeks so there's some doubt to this one.

Universal Title: Kevin Owens vs. Goldberg

Owens is defending. Goldberg gets a nice pop but Owens gets a louder one when his music hits (though it dies very quickly). Owens bails to the floor before the bell and it's now 11:00, meaning a show with a JINDER MAHAL match added is getting an overrun. Kevin gets to the apron two more times and bails again both times. Owens finally gets in, Jericho comes out for a distraction, spear, Jackhammer, new champion in 22 seconds.

I'm not even mad really. Everyone and their mother knew Goldberg was getting the title here and defending it against Lesnar at Wrestlemania (because of course) but that makes it worse in a way. The whole "GOLDBERG IS STILL UNSTOPPABLE" thing was fun once but much like giving the Rock the title in 2013, it feels completely unnecessary. Tell me how Goldberg vs. Lesnar is better with the title on the line. If you can somehow make that work, this makes sense. Unfortunately, that's simply not the case and it makes for a very uninteresting Wrestlemania main event. At least there was a distraction though, which does help.

Overall Rating: D+. This is a great, great example of a show where the booking completely overshadows the wrestling (which ranged from Raw levels to very, very good). Look at the last hour and fifteen minutes. Reigns wins clean, Bayley wins in a booking decision that makes Charlotte the underdog and Goldberg is now World Champion after having wrestled less than two minutes in twelve years. I don't know if Goldberg is capable of wrestling a long match (it would honestly surprise me given the circumstances) but can you imagine if they do this at Wrestlemania with the prices people are paying for those seats? This could be your main event? Goldberg vs. Lesnar going 90 seconds?

The rest of the show really wasn't anything noteworthy and a lot of this felt like it could have happened on Raw. Other than that Charlotte's pay per view loss and the title change, what felt like it belonged on a pay per view? Fastlane really didn't need to be a pay per view but we have to have something to get those free subscriptions right? Bad night, though check out Reigns vs. Strowman and the Cruiserweight match.

Results

Samoa Joe b. Sami Zayn – Koquina Clutch

Anderson and Gallows b. Enzo Amore/Big Cass – Running knee to Amore

Sasha Banks b. Nia Jax – Rollup

Cesaro b. Jinder Mahal – Pop up uppercut

Big Show b. Rusev – KO Punch

Neville b. Jack Gallagher – Red Arrow

Roman Reigns b. Braun Strowman – Spear

Bayley b. Charlotte – Bayley to Belly

Goldberg b. Kevin Owens – Jackhammer

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