

# Wrestlemania XXXIII: Thank You

## Wrestlemania XXXIII

Date: April 2, 2017

Location: Camping World Stadium, Orlando, Florida

Attendance: 75,245

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga, Tom Phillips

America the Beautiful: Tinashe

Here we go. I really don't think Wrestlemania needs much of an introduction, especially just a few days after it took place. This is an interesting show as we have multiple potential main events, some of which have people more than a bit nervous. The show has serious potential though and that's more than enough to rope me in. Let's get to it.

I was in the stadium for the show so this is my second time seeing it. My seat was in the upper deck and I had the hard cameras opposite me with the set (amazing visual which looked even better at night) on my right, basically in line with the upper right hand corner of the ring. This presented a bit of an issue as you could see two of the screens above the ring, meaning I was looking at most of one screen and the right side of another. In other words, when New Day was out for example and standing Woods, Big E. and Kofi, I was seeing Kofi, Woods, Big E., and Kofi again. That took some getting used to.

Before we get into the show, a few quick notes about the stadium. This was by far and away the easiest entrance to any Wrestlemania I've been to. After maybe seven minutes waiting for security, I walked into the stadium and had two or three people in line in front of me to scan my ticket. The previous two shows took well over half an hour to get in and seemed much more based on being unorganized than anything else.

The stadium itself wasn't in the best shape and it took a long time to get around, especially since you can only change levels on the long sides

of the building. Obviously it's no AT&T Stadium but the place really didn't come off as all that great looking. It wasn't the best experience, but then again the stadium itself isn't the reason we're there so it doesn't make a huge difference.

The ramp is HUGE, apparently running eighty yards and coming down from what would have been the second deck of stands.

### Pre-Show: Austin Aries vs. Neville

Neville is defending after having destroyed the entire division for months. Aries is back from injury and the best possible option to take the title. In one of my favorite visuals, you can see Aries taking in the whole sight of the stadium. Feeling out process to start as the announcers talk about Aries' eye injury.

Wristlocks don't go anywhere so Aries armdrags him into an armbars. A backslide looks to set up the Last Chancery but Neville bails out to the floor. That's fine with Aries as he takes a rest on the top rope. Back in and Aries wins another battle on the mat, this time with a basement dropkick to really rock the champ. Aries loads up a dive but gets kicked in the face, setting up a hard top rope dropkick for two.

We take a break and come back with Neville holding a chinlock, as is the common action when coming back for some reason. Neville takes too long yelling at the fans and misses a Phoenix splash, allowing Aries to hit the big ax handle to the floor. Another kick to the face stops Aries but he shoves the superplex away.

One heck of a missile dropkick (that looked great) gets two on Neville, who responds by sending Aries into the ropes for a snap German suplex. They're just beating the heck out of each other and trading big shots. A bridging German suplex gets two on Aries and Neville cranks up the trash talking as only he can (the accent really does help in that area).

Aries flips out of the Rings of Saturn and scores with the discus Fivearm to send Neville to the floor. Neville gets pulled back in for a top rope hurricanrana and the 450 connects for a SWEET false finish. There's the Last Chancery in the middle of the ring but Neville rips at Aries' eye

(which was recently reconstructed), setting up the Red Arrow to retain the title at 15:39.

**Rating:** A-. Well that worked. This was one of the matches that a lot of people wanted to see coming into this show and it's easy to see why. I was really happy to see this moved to the pre-show as it meant the match would have time instead of being lucky to get six minutes. These guys beat the heck out of each other and the extra time did them a lot of good. Instead of doing a bunch of flips, this was a heavyweight style match between two guys who hit each other really, really hard and only one of them could stay up. There's almost a guaranteed rematch and that's a very good thing.

#### Pre-Show: Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal

Aiden English, Apollo Crews, Bo Dallas, Braun Strowman, Chad Gable, Curt Hawkins, Curtis Axel, Dolph Ziggler, Epico, Fandango, Goldust, Heath Slater, Jason Jordan, Jey Uso, Jimmy Uso, Jinder Mahal, Kalisto, Killian Dain, Konnor, Luke Harper, Mark Henry, Mojo Rawley, Primo, R-Truth, Rhyno, Sami Zayn, Simon Gotch, Sin Cara, The Big Show, Tian Bing, Titus O'Neil, Tyler Breeze, Viktor

Only Big Show and Braun Strowman get introductions. We see Rob Gronkowski in the front row, just in case you wanted to have some drama about the ending. Braun tosses Primo at the bell and Kalisto goes out a few seconds later. What in the world happened to him? Gotch and Slater are gone, followed by Jey Uso and Goldust. Everyone has been put out by Big Show and Strowman so far to really hammer the idea home.

Show gets rid of Konnor and it's time for the big showdown. Sami breaks it up though and the masses get rid of Show. Strowman dumps Viktor but the rest of the match gets together to eliminate him as well. A break is teased but the audio just goes off for a bit with the video staying on. Hawkins is out and things slow WAY down after a very fast three minutes.

That makes sense though as you have to get rid of a bunch of the dead weight in this thing. Ziggler is sent to the apron for a second time but hangs on again and manages to backdrop Truth out. Rhyno follows him to the floor and Mahal puts Ziggler on the apron again to no avail. American

Alpha dumps English, Axel and Jimmy Uso as the ring is rapidly clearing out.

The announcers talk about a commercial break but the video never stopped. Rather odd but I'll always take extra wrestling. A bunch of people get rid of American Alpha and Bing gets rid of Breezango. Henry tosses Sin Cara onto the pile but gets dumped a few seconds later. There's nothing to talk about in between these eliminations, as is so often the case in these things.

Ziggler superkicks Bing out and the Helluva Kick eliminates Epico. We're down to Zayn, Ziggler, Rawley, Dain, Mahal, Crews, O'Neil, Harper and Dallas. Harper sends Ziggler to the apron AGAIN but Titus makes a rather stupid save. You can tell it's bad when even JBL calls him out on it. Rawley eliminates Dallas (you can hear the booing...er, Bo-ing) and Crews goes out a few seconds later.

Mojo finally gets rid of Ziggler and Titus kicks Harper out (Huh?) to get us down to five. Sami clotheslines Titus to the floor but gets dumped by Dain to suck the life out of the crowd. Mahal is down in the corner so we get Mojo vs. Dain, which sounds a lot more interesting than I was expecting. A tackle actually drops the monster but Mahal sends Mojo through the ropes to the floor.

As you might expect, they wind up right in front of Gronkowski and arguing ensues. Mahal throws a drink at him and it's time to jump the barricade, with the security guard running over to calm things down, only to have the referees come over to smarten her up. There's something hilarious about them saying it's that scripted but I'll take this over the Big Show vs. Shaw match.

Gronkowski gets in and runs Mahal over and Rawley hits the running right hand to Dain, setting up a clean elimination. Mahal gets sent to the apron and eventually the running fist gives Mojo the win at 14:08. I was legitimately scared they were going to give it to Mahal at the end so well done on the fake out.

**Rating:** D. Yeah it was boring (and flat out bad at times) but it was on the pre-show and we got a good choice for the winner (and not just

because I picked Rawley for the win). This is the kind of match where you can give someone a rub without damaging anyone else so if it bombs, no one loses anything as a result. The Gronkowski stuff was harmless (and gave me a good laugh with the referees having to get rid of security) and Rawley is going to energize the crowd. Also, what the heck happened to Strowman? He goes from a potential main eventer to this in a month? Really?

#### Pre-Show: Intercontinental Title: Baron Corbin vs. Dean Ambrose

Ambrose is defending after eliminating Corbin from the Elimination Chamber. Corbin retaliated by CRUSHING AMBROSE WITH A FORKLIFT because that's an appropriate response. For some reason we see the Gronkowski stuff during Ambrose's entrance. Eh I'm sure showing a highlight that's going to be on Sportscenter is more important than a title match at Wrestlemania.

Ambrose charges right at him and gets dropped twice in a row. Corbin tries his slide underneath the bottom rope and gets taken down by a suicide dive. Back in and Dean is sent ribs/back first into the post as the beatdown begins. We get another audio break with no video break and come back (I think?) with Corbin working on the ribs. A choke shove (stop stealing from Alexa Bliss) drops Ambrose for two and Baron sends him into the barricade to vent some frustration.

Back in and we hit the chinlock with Dean looking more bored than in pain. Corbin is sent shoulder first into the post but the top rope elbow is partially blocked. Dirty Deeds is fully blocked but Corbin is sent outside. Dean sends him into the steps and now the top rope elbow connects. Back in and Deep Six gets two on the champ, only to have the rebound lariat put Corbin down as well. Corbin gets up first and starts talking trash, only to take too much time with End of Days, allowing Ambrose to grab Dirty Deeds to retain at 10:54.

**Rating:** C+. I really don't get the idea here as this should have been Corbin winning the title to end Ambrose's fairly nothing reign. The match was completely watchable and Ambrose winning made the fans happy (the only reason I can imagine to have him win) so it's hardly a horrible

choice. Just a bit headscratch inducing.

And now, after that two hour pre-show, here's the five hour (and ten minute) regular show!

Tinashe sings America the Beautiful. I'm not sure who she is but she's an attractive woman and has a very pretty voice. Some military jets fly over.

The opening video focuses on the Ultimate Thrill Ride concept with a camera going down a roller coaster. Almost everyone on the card is seen at one point. All of the usual suspects were booed out of the building, though Miz and Maryse got one heck of a pop. Lesnar received a mixed reaction, which could make for one heck of an interesting Raw World Title match.

Here's New Day, our hosts for the evening, to open things up. We also get the first pyro of the show, which is a very bad thing for someone who doesn't like loud noises (And is sitting in the upper deck with a fear of heights. Why did I go to this again?). New Day is in Final Fantasy gear, which I'm sure Cole read off a card. Kofi and Big E. have swords while Woods only has the trombone. Apparently a bunch of names were considered for this job but New Day was the final choice.

Big E. says it's time to pull our levers, which freaks Woods and Kofi out. In a very funny moment, Big E. keeps flicking his eyes over at Woods with a VERY knowing smile, drawing a huge laugh. He meant pull the lever on the Ultimate Thrill Ride because New Day rocks. This was short but illustrated the point that New Day really doesn't need to be here. Also, somehow there was no mention of the ice cream all weekend. I really can't imagine they couldn't find a way to throw those together, just for a novelty if nothing else.

We recap Shane McMahon vs. AJ Styles, which I really wouldn't have bet on opening the show. AJ was mad that he wasn't on the card and blamed Shane, eventually throwing him head first through a car window. Shane wanted to fight and we're having a match (yes a wrestling match instead of a street fight etc) as a result.

## AJ Styles vs. Shane McMahon

There's something so cool about the wind blowing the wrestlers' hair around. It makes things feel more unique for some reason. AJ hammerlocks him to start and promises to embarrass Shane. A snapmare takes Shane down again and AJ does Shane's dance for a nice touch. Shane actually grabs a headlock takeover and some armdrags, sending a frustrated Styles outside.

Back in and AJ wants to know if they're fighting or wrestling. It turns into a quick boxing match with Shane's horrible looking shots taking over, only to have AJ pull him to the floor. A baseball slide puts Shane over the announcers' table (Why do I have a feeling that's going to be a big target tonight?) before they head back inside for another strike off. AJ gets the better of it but his springboard is broken up to give Shane his first opening.

That means it's time to pepper AJ in the jaw, including the jumping back elbow. An Angle Slam gets one but Styles comes right back with a Calf Crusher but Shane reverses into a rear naked choke. That goes into a cross armbreaker as the MMA vs. wrestler shenanigans continue. AJ finally rolls out and a double clothesline puts both guys down. Thankfully it's AJ up first with the springboard 450 but Shane is right there to catch him in a triangle choke.

AJ reverses that into a one leg/arm Styles Clash for two (because that move is worthless anymore) and both guys are spent. A slugout goes to Shane but the referee gets bumped, allowing AJ to go and grab a trashcan. As luck would have it he loads up Shane for the Coast to Coast, which is broken up by Shane using the can to knock him out of the air.

Shane is able to hit the Coast to Coast (as the referee, who is on his back and coming to, somehow sees NONE of this) for two. That means it's time for the elbow through the table but Shane moves, giving us our first broken table of the night. The Phenomenal Forearm is countered into a Maivia Hurricane DDT, only to miss the Shooting Star. Now the Forearm is enough to give AJ the pin at 20:30.

**Rating:** B. First and foremost, this was WAY better than it had any right to be, which means I'm going to have a hard time finding anything to

really complain about. Above all else, it's a bit longer than it needed to be and it was clear that this was ALL AJ, who was walking Shane through every single step. Granted a lot of that has to do with Shane not being a wrestler who doesn't need to be in this spot in the first place. At least AJ won a good match at Wrestlemania though, which he certainly deserved to do at some point in his career.

James Ellsworth eats a Snickers and turns into Charlotte. So based off last year's commercial, Ellsworth is also Zack Ryder? I think I can live with this as these commercials are funny.

We recap Kevin Owens vs. Chris Jericho. They were best friends but Owens was just using Jericho to watch his back. Jericho realized that the people were all his friends and now is out to defend his title and get some revenge on Owens for attacking him. I really, really liked this story as the Festival of Friendship was so over the top and entertaining but they paid it off perfectly with Owens having his own list with Jericho's name on it. That gave us a reason to care about Jericho and hate Owens all the more, which is what makes wrestling work so well instead of quick swerves and ridiculous stories that only work to a degree on paper.

#### US Title: Kevin Owens vs. Chris Jericho

Jericho is defending and we even get a return of the countdown in the form of a list counting down from ten to one. If that's not awesome enough for you, Jericho has a light up scarf. They slug it out to start with Jericho getting the Walls less than thirty seconds in. Owens bails to the floor but gets caught with a dive. The fans chant STUPID IDIOT as Jericho drops a top rope ax handle but charges into a superkick.

Owens hits a Cannonball inside and another on the apron, which shows some nice balance if nothing else. We hit the trash talk with Owens asking where Jericho's friends are now before hitting the chinlock, which no one can break of course. The apron powerbomb is countered with a backdrop but Owens comes right back with the package piledriver slam for another near fall.

Owens takes him to the top but gets pulled down with a hurricanrana.



Naturally the Lionsault misses though and Jericho gets superkicked again. Owens is no Shawn though, meaning the Swanton hits Jericho's raised knees. Thankfully Jericho can't follow up because he's holding his knees, which is something I've always wondered about when knees are used for a block. The Pop Up Powerbomb doesn't work so Jericho elbows him down and scores with the Lionsault for two of his own.

Since it's a Wrestlemania match, Owens steals the finisher by putting Jericho in the Walls, though they're pretty easily escaped since it's just a Boston crab. Back up and Owens hits his third superkick of the match, followed by the third Cannonball but Jericho reverses into the Walls for a sweet counter. That's escaped as well and now the Pop Up Powerbomb is good for two.

In the spot of the match, Owens loads up another Pop Up Powerbomb but gets countered into the Codebreaker. Jericho covers but Owens gets ONE FINGER on the ropes for the break. From the seats it looked like he just grabbed the rope so that's a very nice touch (figuratively and literally). Jericho is stunned as Owens rolls outside. A kick to the leg is enough to set up an apron bomb to give Owens the pin and the title at 16:48.

**Rating:** B. This was an interesting match as they definitely had a good one but it feels like a step in a much longer story. The story called for a huge, violent match and I have a feeling that's what we'll get for the eventual rematch. It's exactly what the long story called for with Owens beating Jericho clean and setting up the gimmick match. I still really liked it though and the story makes it all the better to go with the solid match.

We recap the Raw Women's Title match. Charlotte and Sasha Banks traded the title for months on end until Charlotte won the blowoff match. That left Bayley to come after the title, which she won in a very odd/questionable booking choice on Raw, followed by a successful title defense at Fastlane, which ended Charlotte's pay per view winning streak. Since it's WWE, this set up a triple threat also involving Banks but Nia Jax was added as a monster because we just needed a fourth here.

## Raw Women's Title: Bayley vs. Sasha Banks vs. Charlotte vs. Nia Jax

Bayley is defending and this is under elimination rules. For some reason Bayley comes out first and slips on one of the tube men. At least it's no Ultimo Dragon. Since she's a Boss, Sasha rides on the back of a car, driven by a chauffeur, to the ring. In a great touch, Bayley looks worried by all three of her challengers. There's also a sweet visual of Charlotte spinning on the ramp with the fireworks going off behind her.

Charlotte goes right after Nia with Sasha and Bayley helping, only to have the monster shrug them all off. Sasha and Bayley get splashed in the corner, leaving Charlotte to chop away at Nia. With Bayley and Sasha on the floor, Nia throws Charlotte onto them and everyone is down. Back in and everyone goes after Nia at the same time, including a big boot into a double belly to back suplex for two.

Nia runs them over again as a WE CAN'T SEE chant starts up from the fans across from the entrance. Apparently the lights were right in their eyes, which would be one of the most annoying possibilities at a show like this. Nia goes to the corner again but gets triple bombed out for the pin and the elimination at 4:14. Then what in the world was the point in having her in the match in the first place???

Charlotte bails to the floor and tells the two of them to fight, only to pull Bayley to the floor so Sasha can score with a flip dive. Charlotte busts out the corkscrew dive and hits it PERFECTLY for a change, which is an incredibly rare sight. Back in and Natural Selection is countered the Bank Statement but Charlotte slips out again.

With frustration setting in, Charlotte rips the middle buckle...partially off but gets caught by Sasha's top rope double knees for two. Banks grabs a rollup, only to have Charlotte kick her into the turnbuckle pad (which was supposed to be the exposed steel) for the elimination at 8:18, leaving us with Bayley vs. Charlotte.

Bayley goes knee first into the steel but Charlotte misses the moonsault. The knee is too banged up though and Charlotte grabs the Figure Four, sending Bayley crawling to the ropes (which she doesn't realize she could have grabbed ten seconds earlier). Charlotte ties her in the Tree of Woe

but Bayley sits up and backdrops her down for a big crash. A Macho Elbow retains the title at 12:13.

**Rating:** C-. I really wasn't feeling this one as they were rushing through the three eliminations and the ending felt a bit flat. This really just should have been a regular triple threat or Bayley beating Charlotte once and for all but why have the logical match when you can throw more people in there and have a big mess?

Cole says the ending is symbolic of the thirty year anniversary of Wrestlemania III when Savage fought Steamboat. You know, except for the fact that that show wasn't thirty years ago to the day and Savage LOST there.

We recap the Hall of Fame ceremony. Teddy Long's line of "I'm a holla holla holla famer!" was great.

The Hall of Fame Class of 2017 is presented:

Diamond Dallas Page (LONG overdue for what he did after retirement if nothing else)

Rock N Roll Express (Even longer overdue)

Rick Rude (I don't see how anyone could complain about this)

Teddy Long (One of the most versatile performers ever)

Eric LeGrand (That's fine of course)

Beth Phoenix (Good worker in a bad era)

Kurt Angle (One of the best of all time and easily deserving of the headlining spot)

This is almost ALL about Angle, as it really should be. The rest of the class is great but come on. It's Kurt Angle. If nothing else it's great to hear the music in WWE one more time for a big old YOU SUCK chant.

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

Anderson and Gallows are defending and this is a ladder match. In your trivia of the night, Enzo's gear is apparently worth \$50,000 due to jewelry and some one of a kind apparel. Sheamus and Cesaro come out in matching kilts and sunglasses. Actually hang on a second as here's New Day (Remember them?) in their gear to say.....we'll pause for the DELETE chants....that this is going to be a fatal fourway.

Raw Tag Team Titles: Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Sheamus/Cesaro vs. Anderson and Gallows vs. Hardy Boyz

And that's your pop of the night, if not of the year. Cole: "THINGS ARE ABOUT TO BE BROKEN!" This is one of those things that we probably should have seen coming the second the ladder match was announced but I didn't think they'd actually do it. They're not Broken here but Matt still has the black and white hair and is doing a lot of the Broken poses.

It's a huge brawl to start (as it should be) with the champs each taking Poetry in Motion. Enzo and Cass are quickly dispatched as well, followed by a Whisper in the Wind to Sheamus and Cesaro. The Hardys start cleaning house with the ladders but Gallows and Anderson come in to take them down. Sheamus and Cesaro come back in though with Cesaro coming off the ladder with a double stomp to Anderson's ribs.

One of the ladders seems to be broken so Cass kicks people in the face. It's time to bridge the ladders between the ring and the barricade with Enzo being launched over both of them to drop Gallows. Anderson gets Swung while Sheamus hits thirty forearms to Gallows' chest. Sheamus and Gallows go up top but Enzo of all people makes the save.

Cass puts Enzo on his shoulders for the big climb but a quick save is made, only to have Enzo stay on the ladder, requiring Anderson to make the real save. The four power guys get into it but here's Matt with a Twist of Fate to Gallows. Cesaro and Sheamus are laid out on the bridged ladders...and Jeff gets out the big ladder. Cesaro is crushed while Sheamus just falls off of his ladder, leaving Matt to grab the belts for the win at 11:05.

**Rating:** B. My goodness what a moment. There's almost no way to argue against them winning the titles and it really did make the show feel

special. The Hardys are some of the biggest stars in the history of the division and perhaps the most amazing redemption stories in recent memory. This was a great moment and a very good match to boot. In your trivia of the night, this is the first time the Tag Team Titles have changed hands at Wrestlemania since XVII (pre-show doesn't count).

We recap the Miz/Maryse vs. John Cena/Nikki Bella. This is built around the idea of Miz and Maryse being a real couple and Cena/Bella being a robotic couple who are only there for the cameras. Cena and Nikki finally started acknowledging their relationship on TV and a mixed tag was set, which set up some hilarious parodies of Total Bellas with Miz and Maryse impersonating Cena and Nikki.

This was almost a guaranteed setup for a proposal after the match, which might not have been the most interesting idea in the world to some but it's something you just have to go along with. This story has made Miz the heavy face going in as it's really easy to get his point about Cena/Nikki sounding robotic and only being in this for the sake of their brand.

#### John Cena/Nikki Bella vs. Miz/Maryse

Jerry Lawler is here as guest commentator and Al Roker is here as guest ring announcer in the definition of the most worthless celebrity cameo in Wrestlemania history. Cena runs down the ramp with Nikki joining him about halfway down for a nice entrance. The women start things off but Maryse tags out without doing anything. That means it's off to the men so it's time to hit the stall button.

Cena chases Miz outside but gets stomped on the way back in for the first contact nearly two minutes in. Maryse even gets in a slap as Miz is cheered all over the stadium. The running corner clothesline rocks Cena again as I don't think he's had any offense in the first four minutes. Lawler is stunned at the MIZ IS AWESOME chants so he switches to jokes about Maryse cheating on Miz. Cena gets kicked in the face a few times but avoids another running clothesline.

Maryse pulls Nikki off the apron though and a Reality Check drops Cena again. A quick AA attempt is countered into a short DDT for two, followed

by the YES Kicks. Miz tells Nikki that she can't see him, earning himself a slap into a backdrop over the top for Cena's first significant offense in nearly eight minutes. There's the hot tag to Nikki for a spear to Maryse, leaving Nikki to dive onto Miz. Nikki's big forearm and the ProtoBomb set up stereo Five Knuckle Shuffles and the Rack Attack 2.0/AA for the double pins at 9:42.

**Rating:** D. So that happened. Miz dominated Cena for eight minutes, took three moves from him and then got pinned clean. Unfortunately this was about all you could have expected and that's par for the course: Miz owns the world on the mic but we need to give Nikki her Wrestlemania moment. I really could have gone for Nikki pinning Maryse here but why do that when you can have Miz lose too?

Post match Cena tells a borderline creepy story about asking Nikki if she knew he would marry him while she was drugged up for surgery. Cena proposes and kissing ensues. Yeah it's corny, yeah it feels forced and set up for a reality show but if they love each other, good for them. They kept this short and while it's really not for me, I get that there's an audience for this stuff. At least the fans didn't boo it out of the stadium.

We recap HHH vs. Seth Rollins. HHH turned Rollins into his new protege a few years back, setting the stage for Rollins to win the WWE World Title. Then Rollins tore his ACL, which HHH interpreted as Rollins letting him down. Once Rollins came back, HHH cost him a chance to become Universal Champion and wrecked the knee again. Rollins had to sign a paper saying he couldn't sue HHH or WWE for any injuries, making the match unsanctioned. At the end of the day, this match is about six months overdue and I'm not sure how many people care about it as a result. It's not HHH vs. Reigns but it's still nothing great.

### HHH vs. Seth Rollins

Anything goes. In his annual over the top entrance, HHH comes out on a three wheeled motorcycle flanked by police motorcycles. This is completely redeemed by Stephanie as biker girl in leather pants. I know she gets on my nerves a lot but my goodness she looks great here. Seth

has a torch for some reason, which I guess symbolizes burning the place down. Rollins kicks him to the floor to start but a dragon screw legwhip to the good knee takes Rollins down.

The knee is good enough for a springboard off the barricade into a clothesline, followed by a pair of suicide dives. It's time to load up the German announcers' table (which is next to a restored English announcers' table) but HHH DDTs Rollins onto it instead with the table not breaking. A chair to the already bad knee gets us into the next phase of the match and Rollins is in big trouble.

HHH bridges the knee between the announcers' table and the barricade before dropping his knee onto Seth's knee. The leg work begins until a Downward Spiral sends HHH into the buckle. Seth tries a sunset bomb but bangs up his knee again, just like the way it was injured back in 2015.

The knee is fine enough for a Buckle Bomb, followed by a high crossbody to the floor to take HHH out again. It's time to set up two chairs and a table (with Stephanie wisely telling HHH that the weapons are there). Rollins hits a frog splash for two but a kick to the knee makes him drop the chair.

Now things get a bit rough as HHH Pillmanizes the knee twice in a row. He goes up top for the third, only to have Seth pelt a chair at his head, setting up a superplex into the Falcon's Arrow. So he had a knee that should have him back in rehab the day after this show, had it crushed by a chair twice in a row, and is up doing stuff off the top thirty seconds later? I know I complain about a lack of selling a bit too much but this is pretty far beyond anything realistic.

HHH throws him in the reverse Figure Four which put Rollins out for weeks but Rollins reverses into a modified Crossface. That goes nowhere so HHH chairs the knee again and puts the hold on outside. Rollins tries to go underneath the ring to find whatever he can, including a sledgehammer which he throws to HHH for reasons of general stupidity. They head back inside with Rollins not only being able to stand but also being able to win a slugout.

One heck of a clothesline turns Rollins inside out but he scores with an

enziguri to knock the hammer away. A Stephanie distraction lets HHH get a Pedigree for a very close two so he teases a super Pedigree. That's broken up as well so Rollins hits a Phoenix splash (oh come on) for two of his own. They trade Pedigree attempts until HHH is knocked into Stephanie, sending her through the table.

That one spot COMPLETELY woke the crowd up after this long match had sucked the life out of them and shows what happens when you finally give the fans the comeuppance that a villain has earned (granted it might be nice if it happened more than once a year but you take what you can get with Stephanie). Rollins hits the Pedigree for the pin at 25:25.

**Rating:** C+. Major knee issues aside, this was actually much, much easier to sit through on a second viewing. It was a horribly boring match live and I was checking out reaction to the show instead of paying attention to the match. This viewing felt like the time was cut in half and I never really got bored.

That being said, it's still not a great match because it ran at least seven minutes too long and you can only watch HHH hit him in the knee so many times before Rollins is mostly fine a minute later before it loses its charm. I really have issues with Rollins having his knee crushed twice and hitting a Phoenix splash in the same match but that's just how wrestling works these days. Rollins was out of action just a week ago and wasn't cleared for the match but he can do this here? That's not a bit of a stretch? It's still a good enough match though and Rollins won, though he should have done this back in October or so.

Pitbull and company perform. You could actually see the fans stand up almost in unison and head for the concourse.

After that eats up about eight minutes (a far more reasonable time than Kid Rock's 20+ minutes), we recap Bray Wyatt vs. Randy Orton for the Smackdown World Title. Orton was tormented by the Wyatt Family so he joined the team and won the Royal Rumble. It turned out that it was a ruse (which wasn't exactly a shock, though it wasn't meant to be) and Orton burned down Bray's barn, which was Sister Abigail's grave. Bray then rubbed the dirt from the grave on his face to make himself all



powerful for the match. Yeah it doesn't make a ton of sense and is a good example of why they're better off staying vague with Wyatt's stuff.

### Smackdown World Title: Bray Wyatt vs. Randy Orton

Bray is defending and my goodness the Fireflies entrance looks amazing in a stadium. There's no way you could look at this and not think Wyatt is something very special. Orton, who comes out second for some reason, has a very cool entrance of his own with the fireworks shower returning and a digital snake that follows him down the ramp for something you don't see very often.

Orton hits the powerslam early on but the threat of an RKO sends Wyatt bailing to the floor thirty seconds in. Back in and a hard headbutt puts Orton down...and there go the lights. With Orton down, maggots are projected down onto the mat. As you might expect, Orton immediately heads outside, which seems to show that it only wakes him up instead of causing him any kind of harm.

Bray runs him over again and hits a clothesline, which means it's time to project worms on the mat. This changes nothing as they disappear and Bray just hits him a few more times. The release Rock Bottom and a backsplash give Bray two and they head outside for Sister Abigail into the barricade. Orton is right back up and rolling to the other side of the floor. Bray gives chase and runs right into the RKO.

That's only good for two so Orton tries the Punt. Of course that's countered so Orton settles for the backbreaker and hanging DDT, only to get caught in Sister Abigail. Orton is down again...and we've got cockroaches this time. Bray pulls him up and Orton is finally like "forget this nonsense" and hits the RKO for the pin and the title at 10:21.

**Rating:** F. I have no idea what to make of that and I'd pay to hear it explained. Not only do we have Wyatt choke AGAIN in the big match but Orton just hits his finisher to win the title after all that nonsense. I get the idea of playing mind games or whatever but could you at least try to have something that made sense? It didn't even make sense in Bray's world and that's giving them a lot of ground.

Above all else though, it's just a lame way to end the match. There's no big moment, there's no real storyline change, there's no big climax. It's just Orton shrugging off all the weird stuff and hitting his finisher for the 100% clean pin. Orton didn't need the title and while there's always the chance that Bray will get the title back in the rematch, but this was a big, big dagger to the knees of his career.

The pilots from the fly over are here.

We recap Brock Lesnar vs. Goldberg, which thankfully isn't closing. Goldberg was awesome in the 90s and then had a horrible match with Lesnar in 2004. Then Goldberg retired for twelve years, only to return at Survivor Series 2016 and beat Lesnar in 90 seconds. He also eliminated Lesnar from the Royal Rumble so now we have one more match for the Raw World Title. Don't you just see the money signs here?

#### Raw World Title: Brock Lesnar vs. Goldberg

Lesnar is challenging and Goldberg gets the full entrance because this show apparently doesn't have a time limit. Lesnar hits the first German suplex eight seconds in and the third one connects less than ten seconds later. Goldberg pops up and hits back to back spears to send Brock outside for a third spear through the barricade. They're both down and we're not even a minute into this yet. Back in and the F5 is escaped, setting up a fourth spear.

The Jackhammer only gets two (I believe Hogan is the only other person to kick out of that, which I think was due to Nash missing his cue) and you can see the life come back into Heyman. Goldberg loads up another spear but Lesnar leapfrogs him, sending Goldberg into the buckle. Seven more German suplexes (for the sake of the Tye Dillinger TEN from the crowd) sets up an F5 to give Lesnar the title back at 4:47.

**Rating:** B. Given the circumstances, this was as good as it was going to get. Goldberg took a ton of bumps here and put Lesnar over completely clean on his way out as Lesnar looks like the Beast again. I'm really glad they didn't even bother with anything other than big power moves because that's all anyone wanted to see them do in the first place. It might not be a great match or anything resembling one but it was EXACTLY

what these two should have done. The major downside though is the title likely going away for awhile as we build towards Reigns vs. Lesnar next year because that's the main event no matter what.

### Smackdown Women's Title: Alexa Bliss vs. Naomi vs. Carmella vs. Mickie James vs. Natalya vs. Becky Lynch

Bliss is defending and this is one fall to a finish. They're clearly rushing to get this started because NOW we care about saving time. Mickie, looking great here, comes out in a Native American headdress for a rather odd costume choice. Thankfully Carmella has James Ellsworth in the most over the top Wrestlemania themed gear you're ever going to find. Naomi's entrance is one heck of a trip with the colors going all over the place.

Everyone brawls to start and there's almost no point in trying to call most of this. The big showdown is Mickie vs. Becky with Lynch cleaning house until Ellsworth grabs her boot, allowing Carmella to grab a hurricanrana. Bliss chokeslaves Carmella down and hits a Maivia Hurricane of her own for two as trash is talked. Some Bexploders clean house, including one to get rid of Ellsworth, but Mickie takes Becky down with a seated senton. Natalya loads up a German suplex on Becky with Naomi adding a sunset flip (after botching the first attempt) to send Becky flying.

Naomi and Carmella are put in a double Sharpshooter which falls apart before Natalya can even turn it over. The MickDT gets two on Becky and Mickie runs into a superkick (literally, as in she was out of range and had to move forward). Naomi clears the ring and hits the Rear View on Bliss before diving onto everyone else. Back in and Bliss punches Naomi out of the air, only to get caught in a weird submission (kind of a reverse Crossface actually) to give Naomi the title at 5:33.

**Rating:** D-. Yeah this really didn't work and a lot of that is due to the time. They were crammed in there with as much action as they could fit into less than six minutes. This was more about getting the girls onto the stage in their special gear and having them try to do as much stuff as they could without seriously injuring each other. That's on the

company instead of the women so I certainly don't blame them. Naomi winning was obvious and fine, though still not as important as WWE would have you believe.

New Day announces the attendance record of 75,245. Again, I forgot they were a part of this show.

We recap Undertaker vs. Roman Reigns. This is your pretty standard story: Undertaker is the old guard and Reigns is the new young star who thinks this is his yard. I know you hear this kind of story with Undertaker a lot but it really did feel different this time around.

Jim Ross makes a surprise return to call the main event. If you didn't know something was up here, you should now.

### Roman Reigns vs. Undertaker

This is announced as no holds barred, which is a new stipulation. In a very smart idea, Undertaker rises out of the middle of the ramp instead of walking all the way down. I completely missed that as I was looking at the stage and then glanced down to the ring as he was getting in. No matter how old he is, that entrance is still chilling live.

Undertaker starts fast and knocks Reigns to the floor and says this is still his yard. Back in and Reigns scores with a right hand before sending Undertaker over the top and right onto his feet. Reigns goes into the steps, only to come back with a Samoan drop to put Undertaker down. They head outside again with Undertaker popping him in the jaw to cut off the momentum, which makes sense from someone billed as a great striker. They head back inside again with the Snake Eyes into the big boot dropping Reigns for two.

Another trip to the floor (which really does suggest they're hiding Undertaker's limitations) sees Reigns try the apron boot and getting punched in the face again. Reigns tries again and gets chokeslammed onto the STRONGEST TABLE IN THE WORLD which again doesn't break. Undertaker climbs onto the table but get speared through another one to put both guys down.

Reigns is up first and gets inside, only to have Undertaker sit up. Back in again and Reigns fires off the corner clotheslines but makes the mistake of raining in the punches, meaning a powerbomb out of the corner (hardly a Last Ride) gets two. It's chair time and a series of shots look to set up a chokeslam, sending Reigns bailing for cover. Back in (again) and some Superman Punches rock Undertaker, only to have a third countered with a chokeslam onto the chair for two.

The Tombstone gets the same and you can feel the air go out of the arena, along with a BS chant. Undertaker loads up a second Tombstone but Reigns reverses....and just can't get Undertaker up. Eventually he just gives up and gets two off a Superman Punch for your horribly botched sequence of the match. The first spear connects but Undertaker pulls him into Hell's Gate.

Reigns makes it to the ropes, which shouldn't mean a thing in a no holds barred match. I believe that would be the third person ever to survive all of Undertaker's finishers (HHH and Batista if memory serves). Undertaker is completely gassed so Reigns grabs the chair and wears him out, all the while imploring Undertaker to stay down. Two more spears add up to four and the fans try to believe that Undertaker has a chance.

Reigns Superman Punches him again so Undertaker sits up...only to collapse again. Undertaker pulls himself to his knees and says Reigns can't do it....before some miscommunication sees Reigns have to stop running the ropes and try it again. Another big spear puts Undertaker down for the pin and likely forever at 22:59.

**Rating:** D+. I don't think anyone is going to consider this match great or even very good but it told a perfectly fine story (Undertaker gave it everything he had but just couldn't last as long as the younger and stronger Reigns) and had some good enough moments at the beginning. It's a good passing of the torch moment, albeit in a pretty bad match.

Reigns poses in front of the big fireworks display in what would normally end the show.

With Reigns gone, Undertaker is still down. The THANK YOU TAKER chants start up until he finally does the sit up. We look at some replays and

come back with Undertaker in the ring wearing his hat and coat underneath the blue lights. He looks around the stadium as this feels like Mark Calaway in Undertaker attire instead of the Undertaker. Almost looking like he's in tears, Undertaker goes to the ropes but stops and goes back to the middle of the ring and looks around some more.

He takes off the gloves (just like last year), the coat and finally, with a heavy sigh, the hat, leaving all of them in a pile on the mat.

Undertaker finally leaves the ring, kisses Michelle McCool in the front row, and walks up the stage to the riser that brought him up for his entrance. With one last look back (and what appear to be tears), Undertaker raises his fist one last time as he descends to the gong sounding and THANK YOU TAKER CHANTS.

As a wrestling fan, it's very rare to have something reach you on an emotional level. That's what happened here though, as this truly does seem to be Undertaker's retirement. I know he took the gloves off last year but it was more of an afterthought than anything else. This felt like it's finally over, and I think that's for the best. Undertaker's performances haven't been great for a good while now and you can only trot him out there for so long. If they do bring him back, it's going to be almost impossible to top this exit and I don't think Undertaker is the kind of performer who would want to. Thank you Taker.

**Overall Rating:** B. This is an interesting case as there's a lot of good stuff on here but at the same time there's a lot of bad dragging the good way back down. Let's get the big problem out of the way first: this show is way, way too long and it kills so much momentum. Unless you're a Wrestlemania XVII level show, this is too much in one night and there's no way to keep up the energy.

Now that being said, a major upgrade over last year was we knew it was going that long. With XXXII, it wasn't clear when things were going to end and that made an incredibly long night feel even longer. You do reach a point where there's no reason to keep going other than to fill time, which this show didn't quite reach. Yeah I was getting tired, but I knew when the show was ending and it took away a lot of the dragging feeling.

It also helped that there was no 30 minute Shane vs. Undertaker match (hour long segment), no 27 minute waiting period (another nearly hour long segment) disguised as a match while we counted down until the most obvious ending ever and no Rock playing with a flamethrower for five minutes. Undertaker vs. Reigns, which eventually feeling obvious, didn't come off like we were just waiting around for Reigns to spear him down for the pin.

I never felt like this show was desperately trying to fill time or make the show longer. This time around it felt like they had put too much in, though nothing felt like it was just there for the sake of being there. Yeah there's stuff that could be trimmed or cut, but this year it only feels like a bit could be cut off here and there. Last year, there's probably a good hour that could be cut without too much trouble.

As for the actual wrestling, I'd call it a big improvement as well. There wasn't any blow away match (unless you count the pre-show) but other than the Smackdown World Title match (which was mainly the booking more than anything else) and the Women's Title match (time more than anything else), nothing on here was really terrible. There may not be a classic but there's more than enough good to bring the show up.

Overall, the show is certainly entertaining and I had a better time watching it back than watching it live (not surprising as I did so over the course of two days). It's a marked improvement over the previous year's effort, though there are still some issues that are dragging it down. Trim the show down (wrap it up before midnight) by a bit and this show goes up a few more steps. As it is, it's quite good but it has some major problems.

## Results

AJ Styles b. Shane McMahon – Phenomenal Forearm

Kevin Owens b. Chris Jericho – Apron powerbomb

Bayley b. Nia Jax, Sasha Banks and Charlotte – Top rope elbow to Charlotte

Hardy Boyz b. Anderson and Gallows, Sheamus/Cesaro and Enzo Amore/Big Cass – Matt pulled down the titles

John Cena/Nikki Bella b. Miz/Maryse – AA to Miz and Rack Attack 2.0 to Maryse

Seth Rollins b. HHH – Pedigree

Randy Orton b. Bray Wyatt – RK0

Brock Lesnar b. Goldberg – F5

Naomi b. Carmella, Alexa Bliss, Mickie James, Becky Lynch and Natalya – Arm trap submission to Bliss

Roman Reigns b. Undertaker – Spear

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