

Monday Night Raw – April 3, 2017: HEY WE WANT.....PRETTY MUCH ALL OF THIS!

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 3, 2017

Location: Amway Center, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton

IT'S CRAZY NIGHT! This show has a reputation for being the most over the top and often completely ridiculous show with the crowd making the night all about them. It's hard to say what we might see on here but odds are it's going to be some debuts and other major announcements, as is often the case on this show. Let's get to it.

I was in the arena for this show, sitting in the upper deck and looking almost straight at the screen with the hard cameras on my left. On a personal note, while I was getting food before the show, for the first time ever, a fan recognized me. I'm not sure who you were but thank you very much as that made my night.

The opening video looks at the end of Wrestlemania with Roman Reigns outlasting Undertaker and spearing him over and over for Undertaker's second loss at Wrestlemania. This seemed to signal Undertaker's retirement after the match, marking the end of a nearly four DECADE career in WWE.

We open with the fans chanting for Undertaker and not letting up on it, which is the only way this should go. Some ROMAN SUCKS chants start up and slowly get louder than the pro-Undertaker crowd. Here's Roman, which is the best way they can possibly start something like this. Cole says last night might have been the last ride for Undertaker and calls him the greatest performer ever in WWE. I know he just retired but that's some strong hyperbole.

The chants start up as soon as the music stops with DELETE, F*** YOU

ROMAN, DELETE, YOU SUCK, A**HOLE, RO-MAN SUCKS, DELETE, SHUT THE F*** UP and GO AWAY. Reigns finally gets in five words with "This is my yard now" before dropping the mic and walking out after nearly eight minutes on screen. This was MASTERFUL with Reigns cashing in on all the hatred the fans have for him after he destroyed one of their heroes. It's not clear if this was a heel turn but if it's not, they're actually dumber than I thought.

The announcers do their standard "yeah it's weird but WE TOTALLY LOVE IT!" spiel.

Ad for Wrestlemania XXXIV in New Orleans. This probably aired seven times in two days with people getting sick of it by the end.

Tag Team Titles: Anderson and Gallows vs. Hardy Boyz

Matt and Jeff are defending and this is one of the best things they could put on so early. The fans are going to cheer for the Hardys all night so let them get it out of their system here instead of giving them the focus all night. Anderson and Jeff start things off with the champs quickly shifting to Matt, who gets two off the Side Effect. It's WAY too early for the Twist of Fate so the champs settle for sending the bald guys to the floor as we take a break.

Back with Matt in trouble and the second WELCOME BACK chant of the match. I think we know they're back by this point. Now it's the F*** THAT OWL chant and I'm really not liking these fans turning a PG show into something this vulgar. Yeah I know there's the whole "I bought a ticket and I can say what I want" defense but what would your response be to someone going to a Disney movie and then loudly swearing the whole time?

Anderson holds Matt open for a kick to the ribs but Matt gets over for the hot tag, triggering the DELETE chants. A basement dropkick and splash of all things gets two but Gallows crotches Jeff on the top. The Boot of Doom gets two (with Cole spoiling the kickout by saying we're going to have new champions) but Matt breaks up the Magic Killer. The Twist of Fate into the Swanton retains the titles at 10:38.

Rating: C. Nothing all that special here but this was the absolute right

call. Let Matt and Jeff go out there, soak in the cheers, and get them a clean win in a TV match. Speaking of wins, do you know when was the last time the Hardys lost a non-ladder two on two tag match? As best I can tell, it would be the WrestleCon Supershow in 2015, or over two years ago. That's an INCREDIBLE winning streak in modern wrestling and could go on for several more months.

Stills of HHH vs. Seth Rollins.

Here's Neville to basically say "HAHA I TOLD YOU SO!" There's going to be a full celebration tomorrow night on 205 Live...but here's Mustafa Ali to interrupt.

Mustafa Ali vs. Neville

Non-title. A quick hurricanrana puts Neville down and a kick to the head puts him on the floor. Naturally that means a big dive, only to have Neville toss him into the air for a big crash down to the mat. Back from a break with the fans chanting for the beach balls, which were ALL OVER the arena at this point. There were at least ten going around at various points, which is why a headlock on the mat is getting the loudest reaction in history.

Neville stops to glare at the crowd but Ali kicks him in the face during the distraction. The rolling neckbreaker gives Ali two as the fans are chanting BEACH BALL MANIA. Graves tries to keep the focus on the match, saying the crowd is just going to make Neville even angrier. The fans boo when a security guard takes one away, which is just a second before Neville hits a hard clothesline.

With the frustration growing, Cole actually explains the BEACH BALL MANIA concept. In an attempt to get the fans watching what they actually paid for, Ali grabs a top rope Spanish Fly to put both guys down. Fans: "HEY! WE WANT SOME BEACH BALL!" Ali hits a superkick and a reverse hurricanrana, followed by a hard tornado DDT for two. The inverted 450 misses and Neville goes up, looks at the crowd, and jumps down for the Rings of Saturn and the submission instead at 10:31.

Rating: B. This is a great example of why I can't stand this crowd. I

paid to watch wrestling and of course all the beach balls flying around are going to be a distraction. Having fun is one thing but taking over the show with something that has NOTHING to do with what you're watching is something else. If you're that bored, go spend your money on something else.

The match was great stuff though with Ali continuing to show just how awesome he can be. Give him a bit of a character upgrade and he'll be a future champion. I really liked Neville here too as instead of ignoring the beach ball nonsense, he tied it into his character who was tired of being disrespected. It's very tiresome to watch a match when something big is going on and the wrestlers have to ignore it. Tie it into the match so things can seem a bit more real.

Vince arrives. You had to know that was going to happen.

Here's Vince for the start of the second hour. Naturally the fans sing his song, drawing a big grin from the boss. A ROMAN SUCKS chant starts up but Vince talks over it (and it goes away), thanking the fans for being so passionate. Wrestlemania may be over but next week we're having a Superstar Shake Up because it's time to shake things up. We have some very sad footage from last night, which shows Stephanie going through a table.

That's going to put Stephanie out for awhile and since we have no General Manager, it's time to hire someone new. The new GM was inducted into the Hall of Fame over the weekend...and here's Teddy Long. Teddy starts dancing until Vince shouts that it's not him. Vince: "TEDDY STOP DANCING!" It's not you!" Teddy: "It's not me?" Vince: "It's not you!" Teddy: "Well...my bad! Holla holla holla!" It's Kurt Angle of course and that's as good of an option as they really had. Angle hits the catchphrase and is already out.

Stills of Kevin Owens beating Chris Jericho for the US Title.

Here's New Day, still with no New Day Pops for purchase. Kofi and Xavier do have what appear to be ice cream cone shoulder pads though. Woods issues an open challenge and CUE TOP GUYS!

New Day vs. Revival

Oh you know they're getting the pop of the night on this show. Dawson SHOVES THE CART OVER so you know it's serious. Woods and Dawson start things off as the beach balls are completely forgotten. Revival starts in on Xavier's arm with Dawson getting in a nasty looking crank. Graves: "That won't separate your shoulder. It'll divorce it!" The arm work continues after the break but Woods sneaks over and gets in the tag to Big E. Suplexes abound as everything breaks down. Big E. is sent outside, leaving Woods to try the Honor Roll...right into a Shatter Machine for the pin at 8:04.

Rating: C+. Now that's more like it! This was the debut that the fans wanted to see and Revival got the clean pin over the biggest team WWE has produced in at least ten years. They did it in classic Revival style and it was as entertaining as it could have been given the short time frame. Woods even took the fall, which is pretty much his only in-ring role. It's also nice to have something actually happen on this show.

Post match Revival takes out Kofi's ankle.

Angle is getting his office ready (with a box of gold medals) when Enzo and Big Cass come in. Enzo: "And you can't teach that!" Angle: "Not in any college I've ever heard of." Enzo on Big Cass being tall: "And you can't teach that!" Angle looks up: "You sure can't!" Enzo: "How you doin'?" Angle: "I'm doing great! I was just inducted into the WWE Hall of Fame and now I'm the new General Manager of Monday Night Raw. How are you guys doing?"

Not too well apparently because they want a title shot. Enzo also wants to know why Goofy is treated like a human and Pluto is treated like a dog. Angle: "I have no idea what you're talking about right now." As for their title issues, Kurt gives them a #1 contenders match against Sheamus/Cesaro tonight so Cass promises to prove the two of them are S-A-W-F-T. Enzo and Cass leave as Angle realizes that's not how you spell soft. This was HILARIOUS and one of the first things I wanted to see when Angle was announced as the new GM.

Bayley/Sasha Banks/Dana Brooke vs. Nia Jax/Charlotte/Emma

Yes Emma instead of Emmalina. Emma does her pose on the announcers' table and is all fired up with Graves suddenly being a huge fan. Charlotte and Dana start things off but Emma tags herself in. A low dropkick puts Dana down and it's off to Bayley for a showdown. The announcers keep talking about how Emma doesn't know who she is but thankfully shift over to her new found aggression. Bayley takes her down and rolls around Emma's back as we take a break.

Back with Bayley in trouble as the announcers talk about Nia being unstoppable at Wrestlemania. You know, until she was stopped. Bayley gets caught in the Tree of Woe for some choking but she's able to send Charlotte to the floor. The hot tag brings in Sasha for the house cleaning, including the double knees in the corner for two on Charlotte. Everything breaks down and Bayley dives on Nia, leaving Sasha to grab the Bank Statement to make Charlotte tap at 9:14.

Rating: C-. I wouldn't be surprised if that was Charlotte's last match before being shipped over the Smackdown. There's nothing else for her to do on Raw and it would make Bayley look more like a conquering hero. Charlotte has dominated the roster for so long that she needs some fresh challenges and Smackdown would be just the place.

Post match Charlotte yells at Nia and is promptly laid out in what feels like a face turn for Jax. Emma gets stared down and immediately bails in a smart move.

Sami Zayn is in Angle's office and talks about wanting to cultivate a relationship with him like the one Sami had with Foley. Angle says Zayn demonstrates the three I's and thinks he'll be fine. Jinder Mahal comes in to complain about the battle royal. Kurt gets tired of the arguing and puts them in a match tonight.

Here are Paul Heyman and Brock Lesnar for a chat. Brock is a little happier than normal tonight and has allowed Heyman to tell us a bedtime story that both of their children hear. There once was a superhero named Goldberg who stood for honor and valor and all that good stuff. Then he took the Universal Title but went on a little side trip through south central Suplex City where the Beast beat him up and took his title. The

happy ending: there's no more Goldberg around here ever again. Fans: "THANK YOU BROCK!"

That means Brock needs new challengers. Fans: "FINN! FINN! FINN!" Heyman suggests Seth Rollins, either Hardys or even both Hardys but let's talk about the 2 in 23-2. Yes he means Roman Reigns and history says that these two must meet. If Reigns is the big dog then Lesnar is animal cruelty. Heyman wants to do it tonight but here's Braun Strowman instead to not much of a reaction (not that surprising). Strowman wants Lesnar's attention because Brock already has his. Lesnar lays the title down in front of Strowman and says bring it but Strowman leaves instead.

So that happened. I know we're getting Lesnar vs. Reigns in New Orleans whether we like it or not but I really, REALLY hope they don't announce it in advance as it makes everything until then seem like a waste of time. Let the story get there on its own and things will likely be a lot better. As far as Strowman....in theory he's next for Reigns but I don't see how you have Strowman lose to Reigns to set up Strowman vs. Lesnar, nor do I see how you have Reigns lose to Strowman for any reason at all.

Chris Jericho is confirmed to have a rematch with Kevin Owens at Payback. As for tonight though, he loves this raucous crowd and BEACH BALL MANIA IS RUNNING WILD BABY! These people are the friends of Jericho, los amigos de Jericho or the mates of Jericho. CHEER HIM ON MAN! Tonight he's starting his revenge against Kevin Owens and he'll stat with the tip of Owens' finger. Last night the tip of Owens' finger saved him and do you know what that means? THE TIP OF OWENS' FINGER JUST MADE THE LIST!

Cue Owens and Samoa Joe to beat Jericho down and put him through a table. I'm sure this won't result in Jericho being pulled out of tonight's tag team match (Rollins/Jericho vs. Owens/Joe). Even if it does, that's totally different than last year's post-Wrestlemania Raw where Owens powerbombed Sami through a table to take him out of the main event. See, that took Sami out of a four way and this year is a tag match. Totally different story.

Jericho is out of the main event but Angle promises to find Rollins a new tag partner. Just start the FINN chants now.

Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Sheamus/Cesaro

The winners get the Hardys, presumably at Payback. Enzo is in Orlando Magic themed gear and gets an early two on Cesaro. Now we get the catchy chant of the night with "SHEAMUS AND CESARO! HEY HEY HEY!" I couldn't make it out from the stands (I heard "SHEAMUS IS AWESOME") but Cesaro chants it for a bit as well. Cass avoids a charge in the corner but gets the back of his neck snapped across the top rope.

Cesaro tries to come in for a save so Cass launches Enzo at him instead. It works so well that he launches him at both of them again, sending us to a break. Back with Enzo getting thrown around as the Sheamus and Cesaro chants continue. Cass gets dropkicked through the ropes and it's time for Enzo to go swinging. The Sharpshooter is broken up though and it's time for the Bada Boom Shaka Lacka, only to have a Brogue Kick drop Cass. Sheamus launches Enzo into an uppercut from Cesaro for the pin and the title shot at 9:47.

Rating: D+. Cesaro and Sheamus have grown on me in recent weeks and a lot of that is just getting away from the Best of Seven series and the annoyance of what they were forcing us to sit through. They're actually a decent power team and this was the right call as putting the Hardys vs. Enzo and Cass would pretty easily make Enzo and Cass the heels, which is the last thing you want to do before they win the titles for the first time.

We see some Tweets from wrestlers on Undertaker's retirement.

Sami Zayn vs. Jinder Mahal

Jinder jumps him before the bell and the referee actually bothers to ask if Sami can go. Mahal takes him down for a kneedrop and grabs an early chinlock as the OLE's start up in a hurry. Sami fights up, hits the exploder into the corner and finishes with the Helluva Kick at 2:21.

Samoa Joe/Kevin Owens vs. Seth Rollins/???

You know it's going to be Finn Balor, I know it's going to be Finn Balor and the crowd knows it's going to be Finn Balor, all of which I type

during the entrances, capped off by.....hey look it's Finn Balor. Other than maybe Nakamura, this was the only realistic option they had and it's the right call. Thankfully the commentators are smart enough to keep quiet until Balor has been able to get in four poses.

Rollins and Owens start things off with Kevin ducking a low superkick for a standoff, meaning it's off to Joe for a slugout with Seth. A quick trip to the corner is enough for the hot tag to Balor as the NXT chants start up. The fact that four former NXT Champions (and three former WWE World Champions) are main eventing this show is an amazing sign. Owens bails from the threat of a double team but gets taken down by a suicide dive.

That's not enough for Seth as he hits a big flip dive onto both villains, only to bang up the knee and get caught by a DDT back inside. The STUPID IDIOT chants start (I would have expected them earlier) as Owens grabs a chinlock. It's back to Joe to crush the knee again as those gold tights are making me think of Savage's bad knee at Wrestlemania VIII.

Joe misses a backsplash though and Rollins enziguris his way into a hot tag to Balor. Chops and kicks a go-go ensue but Owens catches him in something like a swinging White Noise for two. Rollins breaks up the Koquina Clutch and the running dropkick into the corner sets up the Coup de Grace to put Owens away at 12:12.

Rating: B-. Standard main event tag in front of a hot crowd. This did exactly what it needed to do as I'd assume Balor will get the shot at Owens if Jericho is off touring. You could put the title on Balor without much of an issue as Jericho vs. Owens II is about revenge instead of the title anyway. Joe vs. Rollins should be a lot of fun too.

Rollins and Balor pose to end the show, apparently burying the hatchet over Balor's wrecked shoulder.

Overall Rating: B+. First and foremost, this show is NOT about the wrestling and it never has been. This show is about moving things forward and surviving an insane crowd. The opening half hour was almost perfect with the Reigns stuff being as great as it could have been and the Hardys fired up the crowd even more, if that was possible. The Angle announcement and Revival debut were both very strong, as was Balor

returning at the end.

All in all, the surprises worked very well, even though we knew most of them in advance. Almost nothing on here was a major surprise but that's not exactly a bad thing. WWE hit almost all of the big ideas on the checklist and gave us a really fun show. Nothing on here was really bad, Reigns was confined to the opening twelve minutes and Angle meeting Enzo and Cass certainly didn't disappoint.

The big problem though was the announcement of the Superstar Shakeup. Basically that said "none of this matters so we'll just wait for the important stuff next week." That kept hanging in my mind all night and while it didn't kill the show, it did hold things back a good bit. Raw was a lot of fun this week though and that's what matters here.

Results

Hardys b. Anderson and Gallows – Swanton Bomb to Gallows

Neville b. Mustafa Ali – Rings of Saturn

Revival b. New Day – Shatter Machine to Woods

Bayley/Sasha Banks/Dana Brooke b. Nia Jax/Charlotte/Emma – Bank Statement to Charlotte

Cesaro/Sheamus b. Enzo Amore and Big Cass – Uppercut to Amore

Sami Zayn b. Jinder Mahal – Helluva Kick

Finn Balor/Seth Rollins b. Samoa Joe/Kevin Owens – Coup de Grace to Owens

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