Monday Night Raw – April 17, 2017: That Ambulance Died in Vain

Monday Night Raw
Date: April 17, 2017
Location: Schottenstein Center, Columbus, Ohio
Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Booker T.

Just in case we haven't had enough going on of late, this is kind of a relaunch for Raw as we have a fresh roster at full strength for the first time. In addition to all the new names, the interesting question is will Roman Reigns be here. After Braun Strowman basically killed him last week, it should be interesting to see if he'll be here tonight. If so, WWE is missing a major opportunity. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Strowman destroying Reigns last week, turning himself into the biggest unintentional face on the roster as a result.

Here's Strowman to open things up. Strowman is proud of the beating he gave Roman last week, which saw Reigns have a separated shoulder and cracked ribs. Reigns will NOT be here tonight and that earns one heck of a YES chant. Strowman says he's ready to tear through the locker room but here's General Manager Kurt Angle to interrupt. The boss gets right to the point and makes Strowman vs. Reigns for Payback. As for tonight, Strowman has the night off but Braun wants more competition. That sounds like a threat.

Samoa Joe vs. Chris Jericho

Seth Rollins, who faces Joe at Payback, is on commentary. Joe goes right after Jericho to start but gets dropkicked out to the floor as we take an early break. Back with Joe in control and hitting his chop to the shoulder blades. We hit the nerve hold for a bit, followed by the scoop powerslam for two. The crowd sounds rather energized tonight, which I'm sure has nothing to do with the lack of Reigns and Stephanie tonight.

Joe misses a middle rope backsplash (though his leg landed on the back of Jericho's head), allowing Chris to grab the Walls. That doesn't last long though as Jericho escapes and grabs the Koquina Clutch. Jericho tries the Bret Hart/Roddy Piper counter but Joe turns over and keeps the hold for the tap out at 9:08.

Rating: C+. They're making Joe out to be a killer and that's a great sign for his future. The fact that he just beat Jericho clean by submission shows that there's something to him and WWE knows it. I'd love to see Joe vs. Lesnar way down the line and they've built him as the kind of guy who could give him a run for his money.

Post match Joe says he remembers the night he debuts and the noise the fans made. Joe worked for HHH and since he cares about his clients, he'll take care of Seth at Payback. Seth says of course it was personal and Joe is going to learn that Payback is a b****.

Anderson and Gallows are on the way to the ring when they pass by the Drifter playing his guitar. They'll be facing Golden Truth tonight but Strowman runs Golden Truth over and beats the heck out of them.

Strowman won't leave.

Anderson and Gallows are in the ring with Anderson saying Golden Truth just got the United Airlines treatment. They came here for a fight so get someone out here.

Anderson and Gallows vs. Enzo Amore/Big Cass

After Enzo calls this the realest night of the week, Cass hammers on Anderson with a right hand to the ribs putting Karl down. Cass keeps things up by throwing Enzo at both bald guys as we take a break. Back with Enzo in trouble (some things never change), including a DDT on the arm and an armbar from Gallows. A spinebuster makes things even worse but Enzo comes off the middle rope with the jumping DDT.

Cass comes in and cleans house with the usual, including a big boot to knock Gallows outside. It takes Cass outside as well though, leaving Enzo to try another jumping DDT. Anderson is ready this time though and

catches him in midair before throwing him knees first at the top rope. That's some rather unique offense but it's enough to put Enzo away at 10:48.

Rating: C-. Well Anderson and Gallows certainly needed the win, especially with Wilder (and presumably the Revival as a whole) on the shelf for a few months. The match was good enough though that ending was a big odd. You would expect Anderson to use that as a setup for the finish but it got the pin so it doesn't make a huge difference.

Video on Mickie James.

Video on Nia Jax.

Here are Miz and Maryse for MizTV. Miz starts talking about the Superstar Shakeup but gets cut off by Dean Ambrose, the scheduled guest, before he can get very far. Ambrose sucks up to the Ohio crowd before ripping on Miz's gear. Miz doesn't want to hear it because he's done everything he can to make the people in that locker room look like superstars while Ambrose makes them look like regular wrestlers.

It doesn't matter though because people love Ambrose, who was #1 pick in the Draft and was WWE Champion at Summerslam. Then Dean wasted all that momentum when he was on the Kickoff Show six months later. Ambrose doesn't care what he looks like because he loves coming out here in front of twenty people or a hundred thousand.

That's why he's the Intercontinental Champion, which he beat Miz for in the first place. Maryse says the title doesn't make the man so Dean asks her to hold the mic. As Miz goes on another rant, Dean empties his pockets and takes his jacket off before hammering Miz down. Dirty Deeds doesn't work though and Miz and Maryse run.

Strowman drags Kalisto through the back and throws him in a trashcan. Big Show runs Strowman over and says pick on someone your own size.

TJ Perkins vs. Jack Gallagher

Neville comes out to watch in what is billed as a special appearance. This brings out Austin Aries for "an even more special appearance". They

trade wristlocks to start with Gallagher taking him to the mat and cranking on both arms at the same time. Perkins does a bit of dabbing but can't handle the fact that Gallagher pops up. William III is sent to the floor to Gallagher's dismay but he misses a charge to the floor for a heck of a crash.

Back from a break with Gallagher flipping out of a suplex and grabbing a t-bone suplex of his own. The headbutt sends Perkins outside but it allows Jack to reclaim his trusty umbrella. That means the Mary Poppins dive but Perkins throws Gallagher into Aries. Austin is about to go inside, only to have Neville break it up. The distraction lets TJ kick the rope into Gallagher, setting up the Detonation Kick for the pin at 9:56.

Rating: C+. This is what 205 Live had needed to do for months now: build up some other stop stars aside from just the champion and his #1 contender. Odds are this sets up a tag match, which should be rather entertaining if it's given enough time to go somewhere. I liked this match more than I was expecting to and I'm glad they're giving Perkins more of a push.

Titus O'Neil congratulates Apollo Crews on his impending fatherhood but Titus wants to know how Apollo is going to make an impact. The best idea Titus has is joining the Titus Brand. Maybe Crews could get into travel with the Apollo Cruise where they'll dance to Apollo Blues. If that goes badly, they can go to the new law firm: Apollo Sues. Titus gives him a card but Crews doesn't seem convinced.

The Hardys are glad to be back and look forward to working with the new talent. Sheamus and Cesaro come up to talk about how much they respect the Hardys but it'll be an honor to win the titles from such legends.

Sasha Banks vs. Nia Jax vs. Alexa Bliss vs. Mickie James

Winner gets Bayley at Payback. Nia cleans house to start but Bliss bails to the floor, allowing Mickie and Sasha to dropkick Nia outside. Sasha gets the better of it and sends Mickie outside for a dive onto all three as we take a break. Back with Alexa in control until she charges into a slam from Nia.

Jax slams all three on top of each other before swinging Mickie around in a cobra clutch. It's off to a bearhug on Banks with Nia easily suplexing her way out of Sasha's guillotine counter. Mickie armbars her way out of a choke but Nia throws her at Sasha in the corner. Alexa goes up top to try a dropkick but thinks twice when Nia stares her down. A missed charge sends Nia into the post, allowing everyone else to hammer on each other.

The double knees in the corner get two on Bliss with Nia making the save. Mickie gets pulled outside as well and it's down to Sasha vs. Alexa. James has to break up a Bank Statement but here's Nia to knock Mickie off the top. The Samoan drop plants Banks but Bliss runs in for the 13:44.

Rating: C+. The time brings this one down a bit though it was a lot of fun until the end. Bliss winning, especially in her hometown, is a nice touch though they need to stop having Jax get THIS close, only to slip up after dominating everything in sight. It's the right call though as Banks vs. Bayley is still going to be a major showdown one day in the future.

Show says he'll beat up Strowman.

Finn Balor vs. Curt Hawkins

Coup de Grace finishes Hawkins in 36 seconds. Balor isn't even sweating.

Chris Jericho can't stop thinking about his rematch with Kevin Owens and thinks America deserves a better face. If he wins the title back he heads to Smackdown, but it doesn't matter if it's Smackdown, Velocity, Sunday Night Heat or Nitro: the Friends of Jericho will follow him anywhere. Chris: "You hear them Tom?" Mike Rome: "It's Mike, Chris." We get the Bugs Bunny/Daffy Duck routine as Mike forgets his own name. Chris: "You know what happens when you don't know your own name?" Elias Samson wanders up and plays his guitar so Jericho lets Mike/Tom off the list and puts Samson on instead.

Bray Wyatt asks what we're afraid of. Maybe the unknown? The dark? Or the monster underneath our bed. Fear lives in his house and we hear about how much Bray wants to hear Randy Orton scream. I love Bray but these things are getting really tiresome as there's no reason to believe he has a chance of winning and he'll just keep plugging along like the loss means

nothing.

Alicia Fox and Dana Brooke are watching clips from 205 Live when Emma comes up to say Dana was laughing at Alicia getting powder thrown in her face all week long. Fox doesn't want to be Dana's friend anymore. Dana calls Emma out for lying but Emma says that's what she gets for standing on her own two feet.

Jeff Hardy vs. Cesaro

Cesaro takes him down to start but gets sent to the floor for a clothesline from the apron. Jeff seems to be banged up on the floor and gets caught with the running uppercut. Back from a break with Cesaro getting two and having his chinlock broken in a hurry. Jeff's knee seems to be fine but Cesaro nails him with the springboard corkscrew elbow for two.

Jeff fights up and gets the same off the Whisper in the Wind, followed by the Twisting Stunner, which isn't the Twist of Fate but you can't expect the announcers to be able to really call the moves properly. I mean, it might run them afoul of JBL and that just sounds scary. Anyway, the Swanton is good for the pin at 13:01.

Rating: C. They billed this as a dream match which is quite the stretch, though I do appreciate WWE treating Jeff like a legend. I know it's been nearly ten years but Jeff is a former three time World Champion. You have to treat someone like that as something special and it's a good sign that WWE is doing just that.

Golden Truth and Kalisto are injured but here are Heath Slater and Rhyno, the latter of whom is eating cheese whiz and crackers. Slater is VERY excited about being back on Raw but they both hide when Strowman comes by. Rhyno even dropped his crackers!

Big Show vs. Braun Strowman

The brawl starts in the aisle with Strowman tossing him into the barricade. Show sends him into it as well and we actually start the match. A baseball slide of all things puts Strowman on the floor but he

comes back with a running dropkick of his own. Strowman gets in a suplex and drops an elbow as they're moving in very slow motion here.

Show escapes the powerslam and hits a splash in the corner. The chokeslam gets two and Strowman's powerslam is good for the same. Braun gets crotched on top but knocks Show away, only to dive into the KO Punch for two. With nothing else working, Show goes up top but gets superplexed down……and they break the ring for the no contest 12:36.

Rating: D. Nope. I know the ring breaking spot is going to get a lot of attention but this COMPLETELY missed the point of the match and did nothing to push Strowman. You know who looked good here? Show, who hung move for move with a guy who TURNED OVER AN AMBULANCE LAST WEEK.

We've already established that Strowman, who didn't even win here, can beat Show and be the bigger monster but that wasn't even shown here. No, what we saw was Big Show getting to prove that he's on equal footing with Strowman, which doesn't make Strowman look unique. That makes Strowman look like he has an equal, which completely misses the point.

Strowman gets up and poses, which I guess is WWE's version of a follow up, to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. This was a bit of a rough one as they certainly did a lot of stuff but the Strowman stuff felt really bad. Beating up Kalisto and Golden Truth and then going to a draw with Big Show doesn't exactly make me think he can beat Reigns or Brock Lesnar (the guy that regularly destroys Show).

The wrestling wasn't great but the show definitely felt like it was moving around at a faster pace, which is an upgrade over some weeks. There's good stuff to be seen here, but Payback is really holding things up. You have one of the new Raw guys being stuck waiting to face the Smackdown Champion in a match he has almost no chance of winning and Jericho teasing going to Smackdown while losing to Joe.

There's enough stuff on here to make me look forward to the pay per view but I'm not wild on some of the directions. Strowman's booking made my

head hurt and Hardy vs. Cesaro wasn't the most thrilling thing in the world but I like Bliss getting the title shot and Joe being treated like a monster. Overall though, Strowman was the focus here and that REALLY bombed, but at least Big Show looks like an equal to the unstoppable monster.

Results

Samoa Joe b. Chris Jericho – Koquina Clutch

Anderson and Gallows b. Enzo Amore/Big Cass – Anderson threw Amore knees first into the corner

TJ Perkins b. Jack Gallagher – Devastation Kick

Alexa Bliss b. Nia Jax, Mickie James and Sasha Banks – Samoan Drop to James

Finn Balor b. Curt Hawkins – Coup de Grace
Jeff Hardy b. Cesaro – Swanton Bomb

Big Show vs. Braun Strowman went to a no contest when the ring broke

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