

Monday Night Raw – May 22, 2017: The Longest Steps Of The Year

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 22, 2017

Location: Van Andel Arena, Grand Rapids, Iowa

Commentators: Michael Cole, Booker T., Corey Graves

Somehow we're less than two weeks away from Extreme Rules and that means it's time to start building the pay per view card. We already have a five man main event for the #1 contendership to Brock Lesnar's Universal Title but a pay per view needs a bit more than that. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the five way being announced last week.

Here's Bray Wyatt to tell us all to stand up. The Beast is all around us and he's the only one who can protect us all from him. At Extreme Rules, four souls will fall before him. Bray lists off the four men who will fall, finishing with Roman Reigns. This may be Reigns' yard but Bray owns the world. Eh it was better when HHH said Undertaker's yard is in the middle of HHH's world. Cue Reigns who promises to win and then beat Brock Lesnar. They bicker a bit until Kurt Angle comes out to make a match right now.

Bray Wyatt vs. Roman Reigns

Roman starts with a shoulder block using the bad shoulder and has to fight out of Sister Abigail. A big boot sends Bray to the floor but he grabs a release Rock Bottom back inside. Bray adds the running body block but here's Samoa Joe to attack Reigns for the DQ at 4:40.

Rating: D. This didn't have time to go anywhere but I like the idea of Samoa Joe coming in and attacking these guys. It makes him feel like a bigger star to be attacking the stronger names and that's the best thing that can happen to him. The match wasn't the important thing here and

there's nothing wrong with that.

Post match Joe chokes on both of them until Seth Rollins makes the save. Just announce the tag match already.

Back from a break and Angle does in fact make the tag match. Rollins and Reigns leave but the Drifter comes in. Angle gives him a match with Dean Ambrose later.

Akira Tozawa vs. Ariya Daivari

Brian Kendrick is watching in the back and giving Tozawa some tips. They trade some shots to start with Kendrick talking about how Tozawa isn't a serious enough competitor. Tozawa comes back with a big boot and a top rope backplash for the pin at 2:05.

Noam Dar and Alicia Fox laugh at Sasha Banks for the loss last week but Sasha blows them off.

Elias Samson vs. Dean Ambrose

Non-title and Samson gives us a quick song before we're ready to go. In case that's not enough, Miz and Maryse are on commentary. Samson actually takes over to start with some elbows to the jaw, followed by a running knee to the face as we take a break. Back with Ambrose fighting out of a chinlock and cutting off the comeback with a Fujiwara armbar. Dean fights up and gets his swinging neckbreaker but a hard knee to the jaw puts him down. Ambrose comes back again but here's Miz for the DQ by attacking Samson (just a single tap to give Dean the loss) at 9:49.

Rating: D+. Nothing to the match again but the ending was somewhat creative. Miz just lightly hitting Samson for the loss made sense and advances the story, which could make for an interesting title match. Having Maryse trying to get Ambrose disqualified makes it hard for Dean to retain and that's how you build up a story. Bad match, good story advancement.

Samson saves Ambrose with the reverse swinging neckbreaker.

Enzo Amore has been attacked.

Here's Finn Balor for a match but first he has something to say. At Extreme Rules we have a Fatal Five Way (he said Final Five at first) but here's Paul Heyman to interrupt. Paul lists off Lesnar's potential challengers and says Brock would make them all victims. Finally we have Balor himself, who Heyman thinks is the most talented performer in WWE today. Paul wants to see them fight and Balor agrees, even though Brock isn't here tonight.

Finn Balor vs. Karl Anderson

Joined in progress with Balor hitting a basement dropkick and hammering on the back. Luke Gallows gets in a cheap shot from the floor and Anderson grabs a chinlock. Balor comes back with a kick to the head and another dropkick, only to get caught in a spinebuster for two. That's about it for the offense at the moment though as Balor sends him outside for a flip dive. Back in and the Sling Blade into the Coup de Grace is good for the pin at 6:19.

Rating: D. This was as exciting as Karl Anderson holding a chinlock for three minutes was going to be. I'm not all that interested in seeing the Club reunite but this is certainly going to bring up more talking about the possibilities. At least Balor won clean, as he should be doing most of the time.

Sasha Banks vs. Alicia Fox

Rematch from last week. Banks tries an early Bank Statement but has to deal with a Noam Dar distraction, allowing Fox to kick her in the face for two. The running knees in the corner stagger Fox and the double knee drop gives Banks the pin at 2:13.

Post match Dar yells at Banks, allowing Fox to lay her out.

Kalisto, in what looks like a rejected Kane mask, thinks Apollo Crews is changing and even accuses him of attacking Enzo. Titus O'Neil comes in and says he's fine with an international member of the team but tonight, Crews is taking Kalisto out.

We look back at Goldust turning on R-Truth.

Goldust says gold is the purest mineral because its shine never fades. He's back in the director's chair and gets to decide how his next film ends. The Golden Age is back.

Alexa Bliss says last week's attack on Bayley was just the beginning. There's no happy ending at Extreme Rules because Bayley doesn't have it in her.

We recap Reigns putting Braun Strowman on the shelf two weeks back.

Apollo Crews vs. Kalisto

Crews kicks him in the face to start, followed by an enziguri for two. The Toss Powerbomb is countered into a rollup for two and a quick Salida Del Sol gives Kalisto the pin at 2:46.

Sheamus vs. Matt Hardy

The winner gets to pick the stipulation for the title match at Extreme Rules. Matt clotheslines him to the floor to start but Sheamus takes over in the brawling. The ten forearms set up a running knee to send Matt into the barricade. Back in and Matt avoids a charge into the corner but gets caught in a Regal Roll for two.

We come back from a break with Sheamus fighting out of a chinlock and using a Jeff distraction to elbow Sheamus in the head. The Side Effect gets two on Sheamus and a jumping knee to the face gets the same on Matt. Sheamus knocks him to the floor but stops to kick at Jeff, allowing Matt to grab the Twist of Fate for the pin at 12:07.

Rating: D+. Are we done yet? Like really, are we done with this feud yet? They've been doing the same stuff over and over again now with the Hardys never even seeming to break a sweat against these two. I'm liking Sheamus and Cesaro more and more but they need to actually beat the Hardys at some point to make it actually matter.

Matt makes it a cage match. I'm stunned it's not another ladder match.

We look at the opening segment.

Austin Aries vs. Tony Nese

Aries starts fast with the elbow to the back but Nese comes right back with a shot to the knee. A catapult sends Aries into the ropes and he gets elbowed out of the air for good measure. Nese's suplex is reversed into a guillotine, followed by the Last Chancery to make Nese tap at 4:31.

Rating: C-. Just a short match here to show that Aries can win with a submission before we head to the submission match at Extreme Rules. Nese could have been any given jobber here and it would have been the same story. At least he's not being pushed as anything special on 205 Live at the moment.

Neville beats Nese up and gives him the Rings of Saturn. Aries applauds him.

Mickie James vs. Alexa Bliss

Non-title. Mickie wastes no time and sends Bliss into the corner to start before hitting a string of forearms to the champ's face. A basement dropkick actually gets no cover but Bliss breaks up the hurricanrana out of the corner. One heck of a right hand drops Mickie though and the DDT wraps her up at 3:02.

Rating: D. So Mickie goes from being this big talent acquisition to being cannon fodder for a three minute loss on Raw? Bliss' rocket push continues and there's nothing wrong with that. She's so completely awesome in this role and is easily one of the most improved wrestlers in the world over the last few months.

Post match Bliss uses the kendo stick on James, only to have Bayley run in and take it away. She doesn't swing it though as Bliss bails to the floor.

Roman Reigns/Seth Rollins vs. Samoa Joe/Bray Wyatt

As usual, Reigns is hated. Joe and Rollins start with Seth getting in a few jabs, only to be sent crashing to the floor as we take an early break. Back with Reigns giving Bray a Samoan drop but getting dropped by

Joe. A chinlock and enziguri keep Reigns in trouble and Bray throws him outside.

That doesn't go quite as well as Reigns sends Joe into the barricade, allowing the hot tag to Rollins. House is quickly cleaned with Seth nailing a double suicide dive, only to get caught on top. A double high crossbody takes the villains down but Reigns runs into Rollins by mistake. Rollins and Reigns get into an argument and it's the Koquina Clutch to knock Seth out at 14:58.

Rating: C. This would be the latest in the long line of matches that mean nothing but feature people who are going to be important later on and therefore are supposed to make you care. It would have done them a lot of good to slowly announce the participants and give us something to bridge the gap between now and Extreme Rules but that's just not how WWE operates.

Balor comes up to Angle in the back and wants to be in action next week. Angle gives him a triple threat with Joe and Wyatt. He throws in Reigns vs. Rollins as a bonus.

Overall Rating: D+. Even though they set up a lot of stuff for the pay per view, it still feels like they're treading water on a lot of the show. This really did need to be a two hour version as the extra sixty minutes didn't do them any good. At least the build to the pay per view worked, but it felt like it took forever to take a few steps.

Results

Roman Reigns b. Bray Wyatt via DQ when Samoa Joe interfered

Akira Tozawa b. Ariya Daivari – Top rope backsplash

Elias Samson b. Dean Ambrose via DQ when Miz interfered

Finn Balor b. Karl Anderson – Coup de Grace

Sasha Banks b. Alicia Fox – Double knees in the corner

Kalisto b. Apollo Crews – Salida Del Sol

Matt Hardy b. Sheamus – Twist of Fate

Austin Aries b. Tony Nese – Last Chancery

Samoa Joe/Bray Wyatt b. Roman Reigns/Seth Rollins – Koquina Clutch to Rollins