

Monday Night Raw – February 5, 2018: The Road To Reigning

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 5, 2018

Location: Wells Fargo Arena, Des Moines, Iowa

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jonathan Coachman, Corey Graves

We're less than a month away from Elimination Chamber and that means we need to fill in the Chambers. Three men have already qualified for their match and tonight we'll have another name added as Roman Reigns faces Bray Wyatt. Other than that we might get some more updates on John Cena's weird actions last week so let's get to it.

Bray Wyatt talks about his greatest victory taking place inside the Elimination Chamber. When he looks at Reigns, all he sees is a string of failures. Tonight, that string continues.

Reigns says the failures and successes are the marks of a great journey. He'll spear Wyatt in half and march on to Wrestlemania to take Suplex City apart. Ignore Reigns reading this off a card.

The announcers are back near the stage instead of at ringside like they were for most of last week.

Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: Bray Wyatt vs. Roman Reigns

They trade headlocks to start until Reigns powers him into the corner. A charge misses though to give Bray two as Matt Hardy is watching in the back. We hit the chinlock for a bit until Reigns fights back and clotheslines him to the floor. The apron dropkick is broken up with a hard clothesline and Reigns is sent into the steps as we take a break. Back with Wyatt holding a reverse chinlock until Reigns grabs a Samoan drop.

Bray runs him over with the crossbody and takes Reigns to the corner. The superplex attempt is reversed into a powerbomb for two on Bray and Wyatt

is in trouble. He's fine enough to counter the Superman Punch into a release Rock Bottom and the backplash gets two. Reigns' spear is blocked and Sister Abigail gets two and it's time to just unload with right hands. Another Sister Abigail is blocked and the spear (which was a shove minus any significant contact) sends Reigns to the Chamber at 14:50.

Rating: C+. These two have solid chemistry but that was a bad ending. Reigns just shrugs everything off and mostly misses a spear for the pin. It's also REALLY hard to buy Reigns as being in jeopardy when you know full well what's coming at Wrestlemania. But let's just act like there's drama there and hope for the best right?

Post match Matt Hardy comes in and hits a Twist of Fate on Bray.

Seth Rollins is worried about Jason Jordan being too injured to help the team tonight.

Finn Balor vs. Dash Wilder

Hang on a second as Scott Dawson wants to make this a tag match if Balor wants to pick one of his buddies to be his partner. We've got a deal.

Finn Balor/Karl Anderson vs. Revival

Anderson and Wilder get things going with neither being able to get very far. Instead everything breaks down in a hurry and it's Revival being sent to the floor in a heap as we take an early break. Back with Dawson holding Finn in an armbar until Balor fights up without too much effort. Anderson gets the hot tag and cleans house, including a spinebuster for two on Dawson. It's back to Balor for the Sling Blade, followed by the shotgun dropkick on Dawson. The Coup de Grace is good for the pin on Scott at 8:10.

Rating: C. Perfectly fine match here and while I wouldn't have had the Revival lose (again), at least they're losing to wrestlers who can get something out of it and aren't in their 50s. That being said, it would be nice to see Revival either succeed or fail in back to back weeks for a change instead of getting my hopes up and wildly dashing them the next.

Sasha Banks is watching her match with Asuka from last week when Bayley

comes in to say Sasha needs to stop torturing herself. Sasha wants to prove that she's still the Boss around here. Bayley brings up Sasha eliminating her from the Rumble and Sasha says she'd do it again in the Chamber. As usual, the scene was fine but the promos sounded terrible because they were reading off a script instead of being allowed to sound natural.

Cedric Alexander/Mustafa Ali vs. Tony Nese/Drew Gulak

205 Live GM Drake Maverick is on commentary. Nese shoves Ali around to start and it's off to Cedric in a hurry. Tony powers him down as well and it's off to Gulak for an ax handle to the ribs. Cedric is sat on the top rope and a hard clothesline from Gulak sends him down onto his shoulder.

A missed charge sends Nese into the corner and the hot tag brings in Ali for a high dropkick. The tornado DDT gets two on Gulak with Nese making the save. Cedric is right back up with a HUGE flip dive to take Nese down but Gulak rolls through Ali's high crossbody for two. A blind tag brings in Cedric and it's the springboard clothesline into the Lumbar Check to end Gulak at 4:18.

Rating: C-. The energy was good but, again, they're not exactly doing anything we haven't seen before. What they are doing though is putting the bigger matches on 205 Live and leaving this nothing match on Raw. That was a huge problem for months and hopefully this is a big step in fixing things.

Here's General Manager Kurt Angle to announce who will be joining Alexa Bliss in the Elimination Chamber. Challenging Bliss will be Bayley, Mandy Rose, Mickie James, Sonya Deville and Sasha Banks. You may notice the lack of Nia Jax, who will be facing Asuka at the pay per view. If Jax wins, she'll be added to the Women's Title match at Wrestlemania to make it a triple threat.

Cue Alexa Bliss to say this is unfair. She wants to know why there's a double standard going on. Why is she fighting in the Chamber while Brock Lesnar just has to face the winner? Alexa thinks it's sexist so Angle polls the audience on their opinion. The fans chant YES but Bliss walks out.

John Cena is ready to fight his way to Wrestlemania and winning a triple threat match tonight is the perfect way to get there.

Bayley vs. Asuka

Bayley grabs a hammerlock to start but her shoulder block just annoys Asuka. A slugout goes to Asuka and she takes Bayley down with ease. Asuka speeds things up but gets knocked off the top and out to the floor. Bayley slides out for a hurricanrana but a hip attack sends her into the barricade as we take a break.

Back with Asuka elbowing her way to freedom but having another hip attack countered into a hard belly to back suplex for two. Asuka knees her in the head though and a hard kick to the back drops Bayley again. Now the hip attack connects again but Asuka misses a high crossbody. Bayley knees her in the head for two but Asuka grabs the Asuka Lock over the ropes.

That's broken up with a Stunner to send them outside but Bayley has to stop the YES Kicks back inside. The Bayley to Belly is countered and the Asuka Lock goes most of the way on. A rollup gives Bayley a VERY close two (I bought it for a second) but the cross armbreaker makes Bayley tap at 11:14.

Rating: B. That's Bayley's best match in a long time because they played to her strengths: fighting from behind against a better opponent that she shouldn't be beating. She's good with hope spots, even if there's no reason to believe Asuka was going to lose. The drama helped and Bayley was working hard to get in a good match.

Post match Bayley shakes Asuka's hand.

Miz is here for his Elimination Chamber qualifying match and says his star has never been brighter. Two weeks ago, he defeated Roman Reigns to get the Intercontinental Title back and it was the highest rated show in four years. See, now that's the kind of heel logic we need to see more often. He's going to win the Chamber and move on to Wrestlemania where the reality show cameras will be rolling and his daughter will be born to see him win the Universal Title.

Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: The Miz vs. Apollo Crews

Joined in progress with Crews holding Miz in a delayed vertical suplex. We hit a pinfall reversal sequence for two each until Crews hits his Ultimate Warrior gorilla press drop. The standing moonsault hits knees though and Miz grabs a bodyscissors. Back up and Crews hits a sliding kick to the head to take over again, including catching the running corner clothesline. Now a standing moonsault into a standing shooting star combine for two on Miz but he crotches Crews on top. The Skull Crushing Finale sends Miz to the Chamber at 5:27.

Rating: C. I can't believe I'm saying this but Crews is getting better and better with the character work and a lot of that is due to Titus Worldwide. It's certainly not a strong gimmick or character but it's better than nothing and that's an upgrade at this point. If he can go somewhere off that, he could be a breakout star. For now though, just settle for good performances.

Jordan has hurt his neck and is out of the match tonight. Rollins needs a new partner so here's Roman Reigns to take the spot.

Tag Team Titles: Roman Reigns/Seth Rollins vs. The Bar

Rollins and Reigns are challenging. Sheamus shoulders Rollins down to start and it's quickly off to Cesaro. This goes a bit better for Rollins who knocks Cesaro into the corner, allowing the hot tag off to Reigns. It's time to start on Cesaro's arm and everything breaks down in a hurry.

Seth's suicide dive is countered into the Irish Curse and Reigns is sent into the barricade as we take a break. Back with Reigns in trouble in the corner as the Bar takes turns hammering him down. Sheamus is smart enough to knock Rollins of the apron but walks into a Superman Punch. Cue Jordan to help Rollins up to the apron so he can get the hot tag from Reigns. Everything breaks down and it's a Blockbuster to Cesaro, followed by a suicide dive to Sheamus.

Back in and the Sling Blade gets two on Cesaro as Rollins is on a roll. The suplex into the Falcon Arrow gets two more before Jordan trips Cesaro up. Reigns tells Jordan to get out as Cesaro eats the wind-up knee.

Sheamus dives into a superkick but Cesaro breaks up the DoubleBomb. Jordan won't let the Bar leave though, eventually punching them both for the DQ at 13:33.

Rating: B-. I know we're still waiting on the heel turn from Jordan and I think this is about all we're going to get. Rollins and Reigns were rolling here but they were smart to not change the titles here. If Jordan's injury is as severe as it's rumored to be, I have no idea who Rollins is supposed to face going forward though. This tag stuff has run its course and he needs something better in the future, which Jordan wasn't going to be no matter how healthy he was.

We look at Braun Strowman destroying Kane last week.

Strowman is ready to hurt Cena and Elias.

Jordan and Rollins are still arguing when Angle comes in. Seth wishes he was the one who hurt Jordan but Kurt says that's too far. Jason tries to defend himself but Angle screams at him to go home and stay home until he's cleared.

Video on Nia Jax.

Nia Jax vs. Vanessa Floyd

A toss, a splash, a gorilla press drop and the big leg for the pin at 1:13.

Post match Nia says she doesn't fear Asuka and Asuka is going to be wearing the mask permanently. After Elimination Chamber, Asuka will be the empress of yesterday.

Sonya Deville vs. Mickie James

Sonya takes her down to start and drives Mickie into the corner, only to have James slug away with right hands. One of the shots might have broken Sonya's nose so Mickie adds some knees to the face, followed by a running kick to the chest for two. A hurricanrana out of the corner is broken up by a Mandy distraction and Sonya kicks away to keep her in trouble. Mickie grabs a very quick rollup out of nowhere for the pin at 3:37.

Rating: C-. They were hitting each other hard here and that made for an entertaining match. Mickie can certainly still go and was a heck of a hire for the division, meaning she'll be awesome in the Chamber as well. The Chamber should be a lot of fun and if they book it right could make for a heck of a fight. That being said, if they don't do things the right way (the lack of a monster is REALLY going to hurt things), it could be a mess.

Post match Absolution beats Mickie down until Bliss makes the save. That's a very smart move as Bliss continues to try and make an alliance because she knows she's done otherwise.

Next week: Finn Balor vs. Apollo Crews vs. Bray Wyatt vs. Matt Hardy for the last Chamber spot.

Here's Elias to play for a bit, even though he hates small towns like this one. Normally he flies over it but tonight he's stuck here, just before he takes over all of WWE. He skipped performing at the Super Bowl Halftime Show to be here but this song is for him. The song is about how Strowman is just a man and after this it's on to Brock. Cue Cena to interrupt though and we're ready to go.

John Cena vs. Braun Strowman vs. Elias

The winner gets to enter the Chamber in the six spot. That's quite unfair as the two who qualified tonight don't have a chance to get in. Why? Just because they weren't booked last week? What bias. Elias bails to the floor to start so Strowman kicks Cena in the face as we take an early break.

Back with Strowman chasing Elias around the ring, only to get caught in an AA. Well an AA attempt at least as Cena collapses under the weight. Elias is clotheslined out to the floor but some double teaming keeps Strowman in trouble. A double clothesline puts Strowman on the floor and a pair of whips into the post keep him down.

The guitar over the back into the AA onto the steps have Strowman knocked silly but Elias uses the rest of the guitar on Cena. A backbreaker gives Elias two on Cena but he comes back with the finishing sequence. The

Shuffle doesn't work though as Braun is back in with the running powerslam on Cena. Elias escapes one of his own and sends Strowman to the floor before stealing the pin on Cena at 9:58.

Rating: D+. This was much shorter than I was expecting and while the surprise ending does help, I needed a little more than this one. Strowman as the unstoppable monster was a good idea, but it would help a bit if he wasn't just there as the big guy to be vanquished by Reigns.

Post match Strowman powerslams both guys multiple times to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. I liked this show more than I would have expected, which might have been aided by the nine matches in three hours. They advanced a bunch of stuff for the Chamber and that's only going to help with two shows left to go. Hopefully things continue to move forward next week so we can start the proper build towards Wrestlemania. Good show this week.

Results

Roman Reigns b. Bray Wyatt – Spear

Finn Balor/Karl Anderson b. Revival – Coup de Grace to Dawson

Cedric Alexander/Mustafa Ali b. Tony Nese/Drew Gulak – Lumbar Check to Gulak

Asuka b. Bayley – Cross armbreaker

The Miz b. Apollo Crews – Skull Crushing Finale

The Bar b. Seth Rollins/Roman Reigns via DQ when Jason Jordan interfered

Nia Jax b. Vanessa Floyd – Legdrop

Mickie James b. Sonya Deville – Rollup

Elias b. John Cena and Braun Strowman – Running powerslam to Cena

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