

Cordova's Commentary: Swing And A Miss: The Bobby Lashley Story

A few weeks before Wrestlemania, rumors began to surface. A mass exodus from Impact Wrestling was on the horizon, with the piece de resistance being the potential WWE return of Bobby Lashley. When the rumors were proven to be true, it should have been enormous news, but there was a major problem.

Bobby Lashley had returned.

It's now almost two months later and Lashley's return has fallen flatter than Titus O'Neill on a ramp. Easy jokes aside, let's take a look at why the return has been such a failure.

First off, we must look at the return itself. In the world of WWE, MMA is currently king. Brock Lesnar is Universal Champion, Shayna Bazler is NXT Women's Champion, and Ronda Rousey is treated as the biggest coup to the women's division ever. In Bobby Lashley, you have a man who has been successful in the world of MMA, to the tune of a 15-2 record in his career. He's every bit the legitimate fighter that Brock Lesnar is, but in the two months he's been back, I can't think of one instance where his MMA background has been mentioned. Not one.

Without that MMA background, he's just Bobby Lashley, a guy that hasn't been seen in WWE for about a decade. What was he doing in the decade away, baking cookies?

Now, I might be able to look the other way on this glaring omission if the re-debut itself positioned Lashley in a positive way. It did not.

Perception is everything in wrestling. Think back to 1999. In

WCW, Chris Jericho was in the cruiserweight division and everyone in that division was positioned as such that they were less than the "important" members of the roster. They were a side show, and they would always be the side show. Realizing this, Chris Jericho left WCW to join the WWE. Now, had WWE debuted Jericho in a segment with Taka Michinoku in their Light Heavyweight division, I'm sure he would have done ok in that role, but he again would be treated as someone that lacks importance. Instead, the WWE chose to debut him in a segment with their biggest star, The Rock. This told the audience right away that Jericho was important, not fodder.

Conversely, the returning Bobby Lashley returned as the latest guy to interrupt Elias, which, while fun, tells the audience that he's just like everyone else. Midcarders galore had interrupted the former drifter, so those new to Lashley see him as just another guy annoyed by the midcard heel.

Imagine though, if instead, his return went something like this: Paul Heyman is gloating in the ring about how even WWE's golden boy Roman Reigns couldn't defeat Brock Lesnar. No WRESTLER can beat Brock Lesnar.....and cue Lashley's music. Out he comes, with Michael Cole explaining how Lashley is back after a decade of dominating in MMA. He stands toe to toe with Lesnar and they fight with no one getting the upper hand. They are pulled apart and the segment ends.

In this scenario, Lashley looks like a killer and a savior, and you don't even have to follow up on that segment for months. That feud is ready to go when you want, and Lashley in the meantime looks like an enormous deal and someone to fear.

Going back to reality, we got Lashley the former star and quite honestly, he didn't look or seem any different than he was in 2008. That's not a good thing, considering his run from that time period was largely mediocre due to his total lack of personality. To alter that perception, this past Monday WWE decided to air an interview with Lashley to show the fans

“what he’s all about”. What we got was an awkward sit-down where Lashley showed no range of emotion and told stories about his sisters. I suppose this is supposed to make us see him as a “family man”, but this is another case of WWE not understanding what they have.

The presentation of a Bobby Lashley should be simple. He’s similar to Brock Lesnar in that he’s huge, a successful athlete, and powerful. He also sounds like a 12-year-old when he speaks, so limiting that is always for the best. All you need to do is show him killing people and give him reason to do so. For a good idea of how, see how TNA booked him (yes, I’m praising TNA. Enjoy it while it lasts because it won’t happen often).

As it stands, we have a musclebound midcarder who’s happy to be back after a long hiatus, and one who’s first run we can’t even talk about because he once wrestled on behalf of our current US President. This is fixable though with an eventual turn on Braun Strowman. Maybe then we’ll get the Bobby Lashley we all want to see. It certainly can’t be any worse than the flop of a run we’re getting now.

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