

What If Rock Never Went Hollywood?

So a few months ago, I did a few columns where I answered a bunch of questions every week. It turns out that writing a ten page column in addition to everything else I did was a little insane and I dropped the whole thing. However, I can always find the time to answer a question or two so I might as well take a shot at it. This is going to be COMPLETELY informal and I have no idea how often I'll do it, but if someone asks me a question over on Steel Cage Forums (steelcageforums.com. Check it out if you haven't yet as it's quite good.) or in the comments here that isn't something that can be answered in a sentence or less, I might do something like this. So here's one from the forum:

If The Rock hadn't left for Hollywood what would the WWE landscape have looked like? Would we have gotten Cena, Batista, Orton etc?

For the sake of simplicity, we'll assume Rock stays on Smackdown, where he was when he left.

Oh dear this is a big one. In short, yes we would have but at the same time, things would have been a little different. For the sake of sanity, we'll assume that most things didn't change for the most part, as it's almost impossible to guess how things go otherwise. Therefore, the Brand Split would have kept Orton and Batista over on Raw, where they could grow into superstars on their own.

That leaves Cena, who is easily the most interesting case out of everyone here. I'm a pretty strong believe in the concept of the talent rising to the top and Cena would have found something in there eventually. Rock would have been the top star on one of the shows, but Cena was going to sneak in there eventually and become the next big thing in wrestling, but there would have been a delay.

When Cena and Batista won their first World Titles at Wrestlemania XXI, Batista was the bigger star. He might not have had the same longevity, but he was the bigger deal at the time. Assuming he rises to the top of Raw in the same way, that leaves Cena to...I'm not really sure. You can almost guarantee that there's no JBL title run because no one is buying JBL laying a finger on Rock. As long as Rock doesn't mock Cena's rapping and eviscerate him on the mic, Cena could have risen up and become the new anti-authority character, but it would have taken longer.

The other thing to remember about Rock is the same problem that would happen to anyone: eventually he would have cooled off. Rock was a six time WWF Champion by the time he was 29. With Austin gone and HHH boring the life out of everyone, there was no one in Rock's universe and that can only last so long. It happened to Hogan, it happened to Austin, and it would have happened to Rock too.

At some point he would need someone fresh to face and maybe that's Cena. I'm not sure how well a passing of the torch match would have gone (because they almost never work) but Rock would have had to do something. You can only dominate people for so long before you start losing momentum. Maybe Batista becomes a rival for Rock later on and one of them moves, leaving Cena to stay off on his own. There are a million ways to go, but Rock would have needed someone fresh to face and that's really hard to do when Rock was that much ahead of everyone else.

So yeah, the talent would have risen to the top, but Cena would have taken a little longer because it took him a lot longer to become the top star. It would have happened though.