

Starrcade 2018: I Didn't Know North Carolina Was In Ohio



IMG Credit: WWE

Sure why not. Last year, WWE brought back Starrcade in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, marking the first edition of the show in about seventeen years. Now it seems to be a tradition over Thanksgiving weekend (the show's original time, at least in general) and I took in this year's edition in the US Bank Arena in Cincinnati, Ohio. The show ran over three and a half hours, including a fifteen minute intermission.

Before the show, they aired an ad for the Wednesday night lineup, including the Mae Young Classic. The show that ended a month ago.

The crowd was hot all night and attendance was strong, with some sections blocked off. I didn't see a hard camera so I'm not sure how this was shot, though there were regular cameramen around all night.

The show opened with a tribute video to Dusty Rhodes, who created the idea for Starrcade. This was well received and you could tell the fans were slightly older here, with a lot of Ric Flair and Dusty fans all night long.

After a Welcome to Starrcade (not THIS IS STARRCADE but close

enough) from hometown boy Greg Hamilton, we opened with Elias playing a little guitar and bringing out Ric Flair to a huge ovation. Flair was in fine form tonight, hitting on various women and saying that Elias would be at the Hyatt hotel tonight waiting for them. Flair wanted to walk with Elias and said Elias could have any woman he wanted...except Charlotte of course. They started to sing one of the songs off of Elias' album but were interrupted by Mickie James, Tamina, Alicia Fox and Nia Jax (who uh, wasn't popular). After Flair hit on Mickie, this happened:

After the song was over, Elias said that Nia's singing was almost as painful as her hitting Becky in the face. That didn't sit well but we had some more visitors to set up a match.

Bayley/Sasha Banks/Dana Brooke/Ember Moon b. Nia Jax/Tamina/Mickie James/Alicia Fox – Bank Statement to Fox (6:50, C).

This was a really good choice for an opener with the fans going coconuts for Bayley and Banks while booing Jax out of the building anytime she was even looked at. With Bayley in trouble, Jax came in and loaded up the right hand before smiling and putting on a chinlock. I'm not wild on her getting such a push after all of her errors, but she knows how to milk things. Brooke managed to botch two moves in about thirty seconds of ring time, including a slam (she nearly dropped whoever she was picking up) and trying a high crossbody that hit James in the legs. Banks got the hot tag and everything broke down with Banks making Fox tap.

Drew McIntyre b. Finn Balor – Claymore (7:06, C+).

The hot crowd continued here with the fans being very pleased by Balor. Dolph Ziggler was out with McIntyre in street clothes and interfered a few times, suggesting that his foot injury isn't going to keep him out of action for that long. Balor fought back and hit his usual stuff but a Ziggler distraction let McIntyre avoid the Coup de Grace and hit the Claymore for the pin.

B Team b. Revival – Sunset flip to Dawson (5:32, D).

There's not much to say here as Axel did his dancing and annoyed the Revival, who said they were here to wrestle and not make people laugh. The B Team's entrance was over, which isn't a surprise given how catchy it is. This really could have been cut and I'm still not sure how to handle the B Team being former Tag Team Champions and the Revival never winning the belts.

Smackdown Tag Team Titles: The Bar(c) b. New Day – Brogue Kick to Big E. (8:37, C).

This was another fun one as the crowd was WAY into New Day's antics. Before the match, Kofi LAUNCHED some pancakes into the crowd but had some left to throw at the Bar. They actually threw them back at New Day in a fun segment. The cool spot of the match saw Big E. get kicked in the face and nearly fall down but wave his arms to keep his balance and then clapping while in the Trish Stratus Matrix pose. It was really impressive and another example of what an athletic freak he is.

There was a funny spot in the middle where the spike White Noise got two and Sheamus yelled at the referee in the corner. The referee yelled right back at him and Sheamus backed off in a hurry, even cowering in the corner. Cesaro got in on it too and almost got yelled off the apron. Earl Hebner used to do that with HHH but I haven't seen it in years. It's still very funny though. Anyway Kofi got beaten down but made the hot tag and hit a big dive (with trombone accompaniment) but Big E. walked into the Brogue for the pin. Fun match.

Bray Wyatt b. Baron Corbin – Rollup (7:08, C-)

Corbin came out gloating over injuring Braun Strowman on Raw and issued an open challenge. This was Bray's first match since September 15 and the time away seems to have done him some good. He was a full on face here, even slapping hands on his way to the ring. There was definitely an extra energy to him and it showed a lot. Wyatt didn't hit Sister Abigail, but did almost every other signature spot. Corbin tried the slide under the ropes clothesline once too often and got rolled up for the pin.

Post match, Corbin said that didn't count because of various reasons so they restarted it as a No DQ match. This brought out Ziggler and McIntyre

to beat Wyatt down but Balor and Elias ran in for the save. The good guys eventually took over and Sister Abigail finished Corbin at 4:15. Call the whole thing a C, with Wyatt's return being a very nice surprise.

Intermission.

Charlotte b. Asuka – Rollup (10:08 B).

Easily the match of the night so far, though the fans weren't sure what to make of Charlotte. She slapped hands on the way to the ring but then bragged about injuring Ronda Rousey, which didn't sit well with the crowd at all. But hey, I guess the whole crowd is antiquated and stupid for not understanding WWE's brilliant moves. Asuka's offense still looked crisp but her aura is long gone and she's just one of the women on the roster now. Charlotte hit a hard spear for two but had to keep rolling out of arm holds, including three Asuka Locks. One more rollup gave her the pin and they posed together after.

MizTV with Rey Mysterio, in a neck brace, and Shinsuke Nakamura. Rey namedropped some Starrcade legends, including Eddie Guerrero to a very positive reaction. Nakamura was pleased with what he saw Randy Orton do to Rey on Tuesday and wanted in on it. The fight was on in a hurry.

US Title: Rey Mysterio b. Shinsuke Nakamura(c) via DQ when Miz interfered (2:11)

This was just a quick one with Rey doing what he could but taking Miz out by mistake. Rey did get a good near fall on a cradle to counter Kinshasa. You could see the finish from the Miz landing, but I don't think you saw what was coming next.

Rusev/Rey Mysterio b. The Miz/Shinsuke Nakamura – Jumping superkick to Miz (6:20, C-).

What in the name of Coliseum Video exclusives is this? The double beatdown was on after the previous match but Rusev ran out and Lana challenged the villains for the tag match. Amazingly enough, Lana is really, really good in the cheerleader role. This was quite the mess but the whole visual of these oddball teams worked well enough. Not bad or

anything, and Rey hitting a double 619 made up for a lot of it.

Brief pause to set up the cage, with highlights of Flair vs. Sting from Starrcade 1989 playing to fill in time.

AJ Styles b. Samoa Joe – Calf Crusher (12:35, B-).

Picture every match these two have had and put it in a cage. That's about what they did here and while it wasn't great, it's virtually impossible for these two to screw something up. AJ worked the leg and Joe sent him into the cage a bunch but since AJ couldn't springboard, he settled for the submission win. Of note, Joe grabbed for the rope and the referee told AJ to break before realizing that wasn't the case and letting the hold continue. That's good, as the fans were yelling at him over the flaw in logic.

Intercontinental Title: Seth Rollins(c) b. Dean Ambrose – Rollins escaped the cage (18:53, B).

Both got great reactions but the hometown Ambrose's was a little bit better, despite him playing a full on heel and sneering at the crowd. They beat each other up rather well with the only weapon being a kendo stick brought in before the match started. There was a long slugout which got the fans even more into the match and some good near escapes. That being said, there were multiple instances of both guys doing slow climbs when there was nothing stopping them from going through the door, including when Dean had him tied up in the Tree of Woe. They eventually fought on top but Ambrose came down and went for the door, which Rollins kicked into his head to escape and retain.

Overall, it was a very fun show that was a combination tribute to Flair and Rhodes and a really strong house show. Other than the B Team vs. Revival, this all felt important and big and I was half expecting a title change with Mysterio vs. Nakamura. It was a cool moment and the Starrcade graphic was very nice to see again. I'm not sure why they aren't airing the full thing on the Network, but the one hour version should be fun.

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