

# Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XXXIII (2018): This Should Have Been It



IMG Credit: WWE

## Wrestlemania XXXIII

Date: April 2, 2017

Location: Camping World Stadium, Orlando, Florida

Attendance: 75,245

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga, Tom Phillips

This hasn't been quite a year yet but I have a feeling it's going to be a very long night. Like a few years before, I was in the stadium for this show but haven't seen it since I reviewed it last year. This is a show that was well received at the time and it could be interesting to see how it holds up a year later. Let's get to it.

The set is one of the most intricate they've ever done, with a big Wrestlemania globe (ala Universal Studios) and a roller coaster next to it (I think you get this). There's also an inflatable ring atop the structure above the regular ring, which I somehow didn't notice until about an hour and a half of being in the stadium). The theme was the Ultimate Thrill Ride and the visual certainly works. It's really cool looking and worked very well. Unfortunately the stadium isn't the best

looking in the world and it made the whole thing feel a bit out of place. Oh and the CRAZY LONG RAMP, which is something like seventy yards long.

#### Kickoff Show: Cruiserweight Title: Austin Aries vs. Neville

Aries is challenging after Neville has dominated the division for months and needs someone fresh to challenge him. The fans are behind Aries, which isn't that surprising though Neville was nothing short (ok he was always short) of awesome at this point. Aries takes him down with an armbar but Neville is right back out with a headscissors. Back up and Neville has to bail to the floor so Aries has a rest on the top rope. I know it's a Shawn Michaels spot but Aries sells the heck out of it.

Neville comes back in and eats a basement dropkick, followed by the middle rope elbow to the back for two. The suicide dive is blocked with a kick to the head though as the back and forth continues. A missile dropkick gives Neville two and we take a break. Back with Neville holding a chinlock (They even do it on the Kickoff Shows!) but taking WAY too long to glare at the crowd before trying a middle rope Phoenix splash (makes sense given his King thing).

One heck of a backdrop puts Neville on the floor and Aries is right back after him with the suicide dive. You can hear the fans getting back into this and that's a good result from these two. The main reason to put something like this on is to get the fans fired up for the real show and it's a great place to put them in.

They come back in with Aries blocking the superplex and nailing his own missile dropkick (looked awesome too) for a near fall. A snap German suplex plants Aries though and Neville takes over again. Another suplex gets another two and Neville is starting to look annoyed. With the technical stuff not working, Neville just kicks him in the face in the corner.

Aries is fine enough to reverse the Rings of Saturn attempt into a rollup and now the Discus knocks Neville hard to the floor. Back in and Aries hits a top hurricanrana and the 450 (with a really annoying crowd reaction shot) gets two. The Last Chancery goes on but Neville rips at the eye (which was recently reconstructed) to break the hold. Aries is

writhing in pain and it's the Red Arrow to retain the title at 15:40.

**Rating:** B. I remember hearing that this would be on the Kickoff Show and being very relieved as I didn't think the main show would allow it nearly the amount of time that it needed and deserved. I'm glad to see that I was right here as they had a heck of a chess match here with both guys getting in everything they could and showing how back and forth the whole thing was. Neville cheating to win in the end fit him well, as he finally had someone who could match him and had to take a shortcut. Really good stuff here as Neville continues his unbelievable roll.

If the pay per view started here, it would have been a perfect Kickoff Show. But nah, we need two more matches.

#### Kickoff Show: Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal

Killian Dain, Sin Cara, Luke Harper, Kalisto, Sami Zayn, R-Truth, Chad Gable, Konnor, Braun Strowman, Curt Hawkins, Apollo Crews, Titus O'Neil, Curtis Axel, Goldust, Jimmy Uso, Jinder Mahal, Big Show, Simon Gotch, Aiden English, Tyler Breeze, Heath Slater, Epico, Bo Dallas, Fandango, Big Show, Rhyno, Primo, Viktor, Jason Jordan, Tian Bing, Jey Uso, Dolph Ziggler, Mark Henry

Rob Gronkowski, a friend of Mojo Rawley, is in the front row. Big Show's music plays everyone but Braun Strowman to the ring. Braun tosses Primo two seconds into the match as the ring needs some serious cleaning out. Kalisto and Simon Gotch are tossed as well and Strowman eliminates Slater. Jimmy Uso and Goldust follow them out as they're not wasting time here.

There goes Konnor but it's time for the Show vs. Strowman showdown. Everyone stops to watch but Sami jumps Braun due to reasons of general stupidity. That goes nowhere so it's Strowman dumping Show. Everyone goes after Strowman but he gets rid of Viktor in the process. Strowman is eliminated, making him look like a loser/afterthought in the process (oh....just wait). Hawkins is out and Ziggler gets to do his usual false hope spot. We get into the required "everyone hits everyone but doesn't really try to win" portion as things slow down.

Ziggler low bridges Truth out as I manage to remember that Truth is employed. There goes Rhyno and Ziggler is thrown over the top, only to hang on again. There goes English, followed by American Alpha dropkicking English out. Jey Uso and Jason Jordan are tossed, followed by Chad Gable as the ring is really thinning out. Tian Bing gets rid of Fandango and Breeze, followed by Henry eliminating Sin Cara (in some sweet Wrestlemania gear). Henry is out next as there's nothing between these eliminations.

Ziggler superkicks Bing out and that's about it for Tian's career accomplishments to date. Sami's Helluva Kick gets rid of Epico and we're down to nine. It's been too long since Ziggler was nearly eliminated so Harper chokes him on the apron this time around. Mojo dumps Bo and Mahal eliminates Crews, followed by Rawley tossing Ziggler. Harper is out next and we're down to Mojo, Jinder, Titus, Dain and Zayn.

A running clothesline gets rid of Titus but Dain eliminates Sami, completely sucking the life out of the crowd. Why you ask? Well we're left with Dain, Rawley and Mahal. How excited would you be? Jinder gets clotheslined down and we get a Dain vs. Mojo showdown. A Pounce drops Dain but Jinder pulls Mojo through the ropes and out to the floor. Jinder follows him out and sends Rawley into the barricade, right in front of Gronkowski.

That means a drink going into Gronkowski's face and here he comes over the barricade. This gives us the funniest part of the show as a security guard runs over to stop him, only to have a ringside guy tap her on the arm as some referees come over and allow Gronkowski to get in. Gronkowski runs Mahal over (your future WWE Champion everyone) and Mojo's running right hands get rid of Dain. Another running punch to Mahal gives Rawley the win at 14:09.

**Rating:** D-. And this just LAUNCHED Mojo to the moon right? I know the idea here was to get Gronkowski involved (possibly as a substitute for Shaquille O'Neal) but Sami Zayn was RIGHT THERE to get the big win but nah, let's go with the nothing guy winning the match. This wasn't the best result for the battle royal but at least they were trying with Rawley, who took the time to talk to an entire group of fans when I saw

him walking through Axxess that same weekend. Hopefully he gets somewhere in the future. The rest of the match was terrible with everyone being thrown out in short order and a bad ending.

#### Kickoff Show: Intercontinental Title: Baron Corbin vs. Dean Ambrose

Ambrose is defending and I have no idea why this was on the Kickoff Show. Corbin crushed Ambrose underneath a forklift to set this up, giving us the hilarious visual of the referees trying to LIFT IT UP despite the key being in the ignition. They waste no time in fighting to the floor with Dean getting the better of it and heading back inside.

That earns him a hard whip to send Ambrose's ribs into the post and give Corbin a nice big target. Or 24 of them in this case. A choke shove puts Dean down for two and Baron whips him into the barricade for good measure. We hit the chinlock for a few moments before Dean avoids a charge to send Corbin shoulder first into the post. Corbin avoids the top rope elbow and blocks Dirty Deeds for good measure. That earns him a trip to the floor but Baron knocks him out of the air on a slingshot dive.

The top rope elbow puts Corbin down again though and Dean gets two off a swinging neckbreaker. These two aren't exactly clicking so far. Deep Six gives Corbin two and works on the ribs a bit more. The Rebound Lariat runs Baron over again but he's right back with a powerbomb to stay on the ribs. That's about it for Corbin though as Dean jumps up and hits Dirty Deeds to retain at 10:44.

**Rating:** C-. I wasn't feeling this one but the bigger issue was with the ending, as Baron winning the title would have made the most sense. Making it even worse was the fact that Baron won a street fight non-title rematch two days later but none of that matters as the Superstar Shakeup changed everything a week later. The match was nothing to see either as they didn't go into the brawl that would have suited them best.

And now on the main show, which is FIVE HOURS AND TEN MINUTES LONG. Sweet goodness and they wonder why it's hard to make new fans.

Tinashe, who looks like a low rent Beyonce (still very attractive though with a great voice) sings America the Beautiful. This includes the Air

Force flyover, which will nearly knock you off your feet.

The opening video is about how everyone wants to come here, either as a fan or as a wrestler. This is the biggest show of the year and it is the ultimate thrill ride. The video turns into a roller coaster, starting with some historic moments and going into clips of wrestlers on tonight's show. It's continuing the theme and that's a good thing when so many of these shows only have a loose theme at best. Ignore the fans cheering for Miz and AJ Styles and booing the heck out of Roman Reigns of course.

Here are your hosts for the evening: the New Day, in Final Fantasy inspired gear, with Kofi riding in on their bicycle powered ice cream cart. I still have one major question: HOW DID THEY NOT HAVE ICE CREAM FOR SALE??? They teased that for weeks and NOTHING. I was looking forward to it but for some reason it just never happened. After some dancing and gyrating, Xavier says there were a lot of options to host the show. Fans: "WOO!" It was your boys the NEW DAY who got the call though and they get to tell us about all the action that we'll be seeing tonight.

It's time to officially pull their levers (making Kofi and Xavier cringe) and Big E. starts sending the smiling glances over to Woods as he freaks out. This was just after the sex tape fiasco, which was hinted at but never mentioned on WWE TV. In other words, this was a nice little inside joke for the fans while not giving away anything that would be un-PG. Well done and the way this needed to be handled. New Day's level of rock is confirmed and that's it, wrapping up this year's installment of an unnecessary addition to the Wrestlemania card.

We recap AJ Styles babysitting Shane McMahon. AJ lost the Smackdown World Title to John Cena at the Royal Rumble and Daniel Bryan/Shane put him in the Elimination Chamber instead of giving him a one on one rematch for the title. That's not cool with AJ, so he beat up Shane to set up this year's "Shane can totally wrestle if you give him one of the best performers in the world" match. They've attacked each other a few times each since with Shane's punches somehow getting a little worse since last year.

Shane McMahon vs. AJ Styles

Shane's kids are at ringside because what would Wrestlemania be without them? AJ isn't interested in throwing punches so a quick standing switch sends Shane into the ropes. A headlock and snapmare have Shane down as AJ is toying with him to start. Shane gets in some armdrags and takes Styles down for a rollup, giving us some frustration to send AJ outside.

Back in and AJ punches him in the face as it turns into a boxing match. You know you don't have to ask Shane to do that twice so we let the suck fly, followed by an elbow to AJ's face. One heck of a baseball slide sends Shane over the announcers' table as control goes hard to Styles. Back in and a knee drop rocks Shane again but of course he can shake off the Phenomenal Blitz.

The Phenomenal Forearm is broken up and Shane starts his dance that was stupid back in the 90s so today it's awesome (like everything in the Attitude Era). An Angle Slam gets two on AJ but he's right back with the Calf Crusher. Shane reverses into a rear naked choke, a cross armbreaker and something like the Rings of Saturn. He trains MMA you see. AJ shrugs them off and drops Shane again but the springboard 450 is countered into a triangle choke. That's reversed into a one armed Styles Clash, and of course Shane is up at two.

They slug it out and the fans are entirely behind AJ, even more than you might have expected them to be. I know he's going to be the favorite coming in but this star treatment of Shane is making it even worse. The ref gets bumped (well duh) and it's trashcan time. AJ loads up his own Coast to Coast but Shane throws the can at him (with AJ having to pull up on the dive, making it look horrible). Phillips: "AJ has stepped into Shane's world now!" You mean high flying wrestling?

Shane's Coast to Coast gets two and it's time to load up the announcers' table. The big elbow misses but of course Shane is fine enough to counter the Phenomenal Forearm into a Maiavia Hurricane. That's not enough from Shane though as he gets to try the shooting star, which only hits mat. The Phenomenal Forearm connects to finally put Shane away at 20:31.

**Rating:** B. Well that was Shane, with some Shane on the side and then more Shane to wrap it up. AJ looked awesome but that's all he supposed to be.

This was all about Shane getting to counter and hang with AJ, which doesn't do Styles any good. A 40+ year old who doesn't wrestle shouldn't be hanging with a guy who was World Champion less than three months ago. But hey, Shane, right?

James Ellsworth is having issues working out so Ric Flair comes in to give him a Snickers. Then Ellsworth becomes Charlotte. Uh, yeah.

We recap Chris Jericho vs. Kevin Owens. Their friendship had been having some issues of late so Jericho put together the Festival of Friendship, an over the top celebration of all things Owens and Jericho. At the end of it, Owens turns on Jericho and beat the heck out of him. Jericho came back and cost him the Universal Title at Fastlane so Owens is coming for Jericho's Universal Title. The question became could Owens win without Jericho and now we get the chance to find out.

#### US Title: Chris Jericho vs. Kevin Owens

Owens is challenging. Jericho's entrance brings back the countdown for a nice touch. Throw in the light up scarf and a big List of Jericho on the stage and this is advantage Chris. They slug it out to start with the Walls going on less than thirty seconds in. That sends Owens bailing to the floor and a top rope forearm to the head drops Owens back inside. Owens kicks him in the face and hammers away to take over.

We hit the chinlock, with some horribly obvious spot calling, followed by the backsplash for two. They head outside for the third time with Jericho backdropping his way out of the apron powerbomb. Jericho chops away and gets two off a super hurricanrana but gets clotheslined down. The frog splash misses, the Lionsault hits knees, and the Swanton hits knees as well to give us a slow down stretch.

Now the Lionsault connects for a delayed two but Owens gets in his own Walls of Jericho. A rope is grabbed so Owens tries the Cannonball, only to be reversed into the Walls. Kevin grabs the rope for the break and is right back with the Pop Up Powerbomb for two. Another Pop Up Powerbomb is countered into the Codebreaker but Owens touches the rope with one finger for the save. That's a sweet heel touch. Owens rolls outside and superkicks the knee, setting up the apron powerbomb to give him the pin



and the title at 16:46.

**Rating:** C+. Not bad but they never cranked up the violence that you would have expected after seeing the Festival of Friendship. These two should have been ready to destroy each other and instead it's just a match with Owens working the ribs and looking for a powerbomb. They accomplished the goal of making Owens look like he can win on his own, but this isn't the way they should have gone about it.

We recap the Raw Women's Title match. Charlotte and Sasha Banks had raised the women's division to entirely new levels and Charlotte needed a new challenger. Enter Bayley, who won the title on Raw in a big surprise, completely defeating the purpose of her character and leaving her with nothing to do. This problem would plague her for the next year and still does to this day. Nia Jax was added to the other three because you need to have as many people in Wrestlemania matches as possible.

Raw Women's Title: Charlotte vs. Sasha Banks vs. Nia Jax vs. Bayley

Bayley is defending under elimination rules. The tube men are at ringside for a special change of pace. Sasha rides in on the back of a chauffeured car because that's what Sasha does. Charlotte gets a crazy amount of pyro, making her look even more like a star than usual. Everyone goes after Nia to start but she wrecks them in increasingly short order. A Banzai Drop crushes Bayley and Nia throws Charlotte off the apron onto both Bayley and Sasha. There's something about people being thrown around like weapons.

All three get together to go after Nia with Sasha wisely grabbing the leg to keep her in place. Charlotte boots Nia in the face for a double German suplex for two in a painful looking crash. Nia is back up and tries a second Banzai, only to get TripleBombed out of the corner for the elimination at 4:08.

As usual, Nia chokes in the big match because that's just how she rolls. Charlotte pulls Bayley to the floor and it's Sasha hitting a flip dive to take the champ down. As you might expect, it's the corkscrew moonsault from the top to take Bayley and Sasha down again in a huge crash.

Back in and Natural Selection is countered into a failed Bank Statement attempt. Instead Charlotte gets two off a backbreaker and rips off a turnbuckle pad in frustration. Sasha's top rope double knees are good for two of her own and the Bank Statement goes on. Sasha goes with a rollup and the kickout sends her face first into the buckle for the elimination at 8:10.

Bayley comes back in and gets her knee rammed into the exposed buckle. The moonsault, with the wind blowing Charlotte's hair around, only hits mat to give Bayley a near fall. Charlotte is fine enough to go after the knee and grab the Figure Eight. Bayley gets to the rope so Charlotte takes her into the Tree of Woe, only to get backdropped from the top in a big crash. The big elbow is enough to retain the title at 12:04.

**Rating:** D. Why can't they get these big matches right? This was completely backwards with Nia being thrown in there at the last minute and lasting all of four minutes. Then it's Bayley not really overcoming the odds and just pinning Charlotte after shrugging off some of the offense. It's not some come from behind win or a big moment, but really just a match where Charlotte happened to lose.

Video on the Hall of Fame induction ceremony. Hearing Jim Cornette's voice in WWE is just wrong.

Diamond Dallas Page. Nice reaction and WELL deserved just for his stuff with Hall and Roberts alone.

Rock N Roll Express. WAY overdue.

Rick Rude. See the Rock N Roll Express.

Teddy Long. I defy you to not smile at this.

Eric LeGrand. Warrior Award and that's fine.

Beth Phoenix. Fine enough if a female entrant is required.

Kurt Angle. Yep. Moving on.

Support the Boys and Girls Club! Fair request actually.

## Raw Tag Team Titles: Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs. Anderson and Gallows vs. Sheamus/Cesaro

No real story here as this is they've just been feuding and it's time for a title match. Anderson and Gallows are defending and this is a ladder match because we have to have one. Enzo and Cass' speech is short this time as they say they're climbing every rung to win the titles. We're ready to go....and here's New Day. Yeah remember them?

Anyway they're in wrestling gear here but first, an announcement. This is now a FATAL FOUR WAY with one more team to be added. That would be the HARDY BOYZ, making a shocking return and giving us a legitimate Wrestlemania moment. Before the music hit, I stood up and said "they wouldn't", which was aided as I couldn't see that New Day was in ring gear. Amazing moment here and the twenty six million YouTube views suggest that it's quite the popular idea. Cole says thinks are about to be BROKEN and Matt does the DELETE pose.

It's a brawl to start (as it should be) and the Hardys waste no time with Poetry in Motion to Gallows. Enzo and Cass are taken down as well as the fans are entire enamored with the Hardys all over again. A Whisper in the Wind takes both Sheamus and Cesaro down and it's time for the first ladder. Jeff goes up but it's Gallows making a pretty easy save. Cesaro comes back in and climbs onto Gallows' shoulders for a double stomp onto Anderson's ribs. Well that worked.

This time it's Enzo and Cass coming in, just to make sure that everyone gets their turn in you see. That goes nowhere so the Hardys bridge the ladders between the ring and the apron but Cesaro and Sheamus slam them together. With a little too much Sheamus on offense, Cass launches Enzo over the ladders like a cannonball to take him down.

Back in and Sheamus hits the ten forearms to Gallows while Cesaro Swings Anderson. Despite what Cole thinks, that's not exactly working together. We hear about the Tag Team Titles not changing hands at Wrestlemania in SIXTEEN YEARS (that's inexcusable) until Sheamus Brogue Kicks the heck out of Cass. Enzo shoves the ladder over to drop Gallows and Sheamus and goes up, sending Graves into hysterics over the horrible possibilities.

Sheamus and Gallows come back in for the save but don't bother to knock him off the ladder. Instead it's Anderson climbing the ladder and knocking Cesaro into the ladder. There's a Magic Killer to Cesaro but Matt hits them both with a Twist of Fate, including a big one off of the ladder to Anderson. Jeff hits the required Swanton off the ladder to drive Cesaro through a bridged ladder, leaving Matt to pull the titles down at 11:05.

**Rating:** C+. There's only so much you can get out of a ladder match like this with almost nothing to it other than the big Hardys return. That being said, they absolutely got the ending right as there was no other way to go here. Enzo and Cass weren't going to work after something as special as the Hardys showing up so don't even try. There wasn't much to this in the way of high spots either, but this was ALL about Matt and Jeff, as it should have been.

Jimmy Fallon is here.

We recap the Miz/Maryse vs. John Cena/Nikki Bella, which is mostly about Nikki and Cena teaming together for the first time ever. The idea is that Cena won't marry Nikki so Miz and Maryse are better, meaning we're just waiting on Cena to pop the question here. In the show stealing moment of the year though, Miz and Maryse did some parody videos of Cena and Nikki and Total Divas/Bellas, giving us some of the funniest things WWE has ever done.

They nailed the ridiculous nature of the shows to perfection and made Miz look like the guy who should be ready to break through every ceiling above her. Oh and Maryse as Nikki Bella: sweet GOODNESS that worked on about a million levels. Finally though, a year later with Miz and Maryse now as parents, Cena's jokes about Miz "firing blanks" are pretty much dead.

Jerry Lawler is on commentary.

Nikki Bella/John Cena vs. Maryse/The Miz

Al Roker is guest ring announcer for absolutely no reason whatsoever other than having a celebrity appearance. This is Maryse's first match

nearly six years and she doesn't look like she's lost a step. Cena and Nikki run down the ramp and we see a wide shot for a cool visual. Cena's mom is in the front row and he seems shocked to see her, which would be a heck of a surprise.

The women start and there's no contact for a minute so let's bring in the guys instead. Miz poses on the ropes and then bails to the floor to start a chase. Back in and Miz finally stomps away as we finally make contact nearly two minutes in. Maryse gets in a poke to the eye so Miz can fire off a left hand. Cena and Nikki have had no offense so far. The fans are very pleased with Miz's beating of Cena, mainly because they realize how awesome those Total Bellas parodies were.

Miz misses the running clothesline in the corner but Maryse breaks up the hot tag attempt by pulling Nikki off the apron. A DDT gives Miz two and he slowly does Daniel Bryan's pose (How amazing is it that the match could ACTUALLY HAPPEN?). The YES Kicks keep Cena rocked but Miz makes the mistake of telling Nikki that she can't see him.

A big slap puts Miz on the floor and a diving tag brings in Nikki. Some bad forearms to Maryse's arms (Shane could do better than that) don't do much damage so Nikki runs Miz over instead. Back in and Nikki's big forearm sets up stereo Five Knuckle Shuffles. The AA and a Rack Attack 2.0 give us a double pin at 9:38.

**Rating:** D-. What in the world was that? Miz beat Cena up for about eight minutes and then it was hot tag Nikki to put the villains away Hogan style. After all the work and amazing promos, this is Miz's Wrestlemania reward. I'm so glad this is what they went with instead of Cena vs. Undertaker, which was likely possible at this show. But hey, Total Divas and Total Bellas got a plot out of it.

Post match Cena says this is what Nikki wanted when she was rehabbing her neck. He tells a downright creepy story about Nikki being groggy before going in for surgery. Apparently Cena asked if Nikki knew he would marry her one day. She said yes, and today is that day. Cena proposes and we get the big moment as she says yes. I'm SO glad this is what Cena, in the final few years that he has in WWE, is spending one of them doing this.

It's a sweet moment, but my goodness do this on Total Bellas where the fans want to see it.

We recap Seth Rollins vs. HHH, in another dumb story. So Rollins was HHH's big ace in the hole a few years back and everything was all evil and great. Then Rollins tore his ACL and had to vacate the World Title, which HHH took as not being good enough to be the top guy. Let me repeat that: HHH said that leg issues were signs that someone wasn't good enough to be the man in WWE. HHH then cost the returning Rollins the title to turn him face but now it's time for revenge with a fired up Rollins wanting to burn the place down to destroy HHH.

### Seth Rollins vs. HHH

Anything goes and, as usual, HHH gets the coolest entrance of the night with a big motorcycle and a police escort, plus Stephanie as a CRAZY HOT biker chick. Seriously, I know she can be irritating but she can rock the heck out of some leather pants. He gets the biggest entrance every year and it takes up a bunch of the spotlight but I can live with it if she's in outfits like that.

Rollins' entrance involves holding up a torch and touching it to the ground, sending digital flames down the ramp. I get the burn it down thing but it's rather lame, along with coming after the really cool entrance. Well done again HHH, as he continues to be smarter than most wrestlers today.

They waste no time in slugging it out with Rollins getting the better of it (therefore I must remind you: HHH once won a slugout with modern day Brock Lesnar) to knock HHH outside. A dragon screw legwhip takes Rollins down by the knee that wasn't hurt in the first place. Rollins shrugs it off and punches him away, followed by an enziguri back inside. The suicide dive sends HHH into the barricade and it's already time for the announcers' table. As usual, Rollins tries a Pedigree onto the table but gets countered with a DDT which doesn't break the table.

HHH cranks up the violence with a chair to the knee before bridging Rollins' knee between the ring and the table so he can drive his own knee into Rollins'. Back in and the slow knee work continues, because that's

how HHH loves to work on a show this big. Rollins tries the sunset bomb but hurts his knee all over again. It's fine enough to hit the Buckle Bomb and a hard whip sends HHH over the corner to the floor. With HHH staggered, Rollins goes up top (Graves: "He's screwed if he hits this or not.") and scores with a high crossbody to the floor.

Since it's an anything goes match, Rollins loads up a pair of chairs and a table on the floor instead of just bashing HHH with the chair. A frog splash to the back keeps HHH down but he kicks the knee out to cut Rollins off again. HHH takes forever to get up top though and gets a chair pelted at his head, setting up the superplex into the Falcon Arrow for two. You know, on the bad knee.

Stephanie breaks up the Phoenix Splash by pulling the knee onto the ropes and we hit a reverse Figure Four. That's reversed into a Gargano Escape of all things but HHH goes smart by punching him in the knee. The reverse Figure Four goes on outside so Rollins reaches underneath the ring to find weapons. Naturally this includes the sledgehammer but HHH lets the hold go.

Back in and Rollins' knee is fine enough for a low superkick to the face, followed by an enziguri to really hammer the point home. Stephanie takes the hammer away from Rollins though and a Pedigree gives HHH two. The fans barely even reacted to that one and I can't say I blame them.

HHH channels his inner CM Punk and loads up a super Pedigree but gets backdropped down (already done by Bayley earlier). Now the Phoenix Splash gets two but neither can hit a Pedigree. Instead HHH hits him in the knee but walks into a superkick, which knocks Stephanie off the apron and through a table. That wakes the fans WAY up just in time for the Pedigree to give Rollins the pin at 25:25.

**Rating:** B-. This is an interesting one I was bored out of my mind watching it live but it flies by watching it back. That being said, the constant knee work got very dull, especially when it wasn't even Rollins' bad knee. As usual, the Stephanie bump got by far the strongest reaction of the night because it's something you don't see very often. It's not a bad match at all but you EASILY could have chopped off ten minutes and no

one would have missed a thing.

Pitbull performs the theme song and eats up way too much time.

We recap Randy Orton vs. Bray Wyatt for the Smackdown World Title. Orton joined the Wyatt Family after becoming tired of being beaten down by the team. Then he won the Royal Rumble and promised to never cash in the title shot on new champion Wyatt. It wound up being a ruse though and Orton used his newfound access to the Wyatt Family compound to destroy the whole place. Then Bray poured Sister Abigail's ashes over himself and gained her powers as this story got REALLY stupid. There was also something about Luke Harper nearly becoming #1 contender that went nowhere but warrants a quick mention.

#### Smackdown World Title: Bray Wyatt vs. Randy Orton

Orton is challenging and has a viper go down the ramp, which he himself called stupid. We get the Big Match Intros and Orton takes him down with a Thesz press and some right hands. They head to the floor for more right hands but Bray goes caveman with a running headbutt back inside. And then the lights go out (which I thought was a blackout) until the mat is covered with a projection of maggots. We're about two minutes into the match and this is already in the pantheon of dumbest ideas ever.

Bray runs him over again and this time it's worms on the mat. The referee jumps out of the ring, possibly because he wants to go work for a sensible company like TNA. A Rock Bottom into a backsplash gives Bray two but Sister Abigail is countered into a rollup for two. I mean, it doesn't matter as they've completely lost the fans after that stupid, STUPID idea but never let that stop WWE.

They head outside again with Bray diving off the apron and straight into a dropkick. Sister Abigail into the barricade drops Orton again but he's back up with an RK0 to knock Bray silly on the floor. That's only good for two back inside and Sister Abigail is countered into the backbreaker. Orton's hanging DDT looks to set up the RK0 but this time Sister Abigail connects for two. But hang on because let's hit those roaches to complete the trio of stupid! Orton is finally done with all this nonsense and hits the RK0 for the pin and the title at 10:13.



**Rating:** F. You are the winter, fall and spring. You are the sun that summertime brings. You are the stars in the nighttime sky. You are my girl and I'm your guy. You got me all tied up in knots and I'm lovin' you lots and lots. I'm just lovin' you lots and lots. I'm lovin' you lots and lots.

That doesn't make sense? Neither does what we just saw. Moving on.

The pilots from the flyover are here. That's kind of cool.

We recap the Universal Title match, which all started because of a video game. Goldberg came back at Survivor Series to face Brock Lesnar in a rematch of the nightmare that was Wrestlemania XX. In a shocker, Goldberg won in about a minute and a half. Then it was decided that Goldberg could win the title again. He went on to eliminate Brock from the Royal Rumble and then won the Universal Title in about thirty seconds at Fastlane. Lesnar needed to defeat Goldberg once and for all so we're having the match for the title tonight. This is all narrated by Paul Heyman, who talks about fantasies coming to an end in a nice touch.

Here's the thing: you could do this same story without the title. Have Lesnar put up his career to get one more shot at Goldberg (it's not like there was any doubt on the winner here anyway) so let us have the original plan: Owens dropping the title to Jericho (who never won the World Title as a face) and then Lesnar winning it the next month. Nah. We need GOLDBERG winning the title in a nostalgia moment for whatever reason.

#### Universal Title: Goldberg vs. Brock Lesnar

Goldberg is defending and gets the long walk to the ring which might as well be the long walk to the gallows. Lesnar wastes no time and hits three German suplexes in nineteen seconds. In a great visual, the camera is on Lesnar when Goldberg cuts him down with a spear. A second spear sends Lesnar bailing and the third spear takes Lesnar through the barricade. That's the first MINUTE of this match as they're certainly starting fast.

Back in and both finishers are escaped, setting up another spear to

Lesnar. The Jackhammer gets two, making Lesnar the second person to ever kick out (the other being Hogan, who only did it because of a missed cue). That means another spear (Heyman: "HE'S IN POSITION AGAIN!") but this time Lesnar leapfrogs him and Goldberg hits the buckles. More suplexes (make it ten total) set up the F5 to officially conquer Goldberg at 4:47.

**Rating:** B. This was PERFECT for what they had to work with. Goldberg wasn't going to be out there for a long match (he didn't in his prime either) and they went with the right path. This was as action packed of a nearly five minute match as all you could have done. That first spear looked awesome and Goldberg gets to go out on his big moment. I'm pleased, though not as much as Goldberg, who probably made a ton of money for less than ten minutes combined of wrestling time in his comeback.

Smackdown Women's Title: Alexa Bliss vs. Naomi vs. Becky Lynch vs. Carmella vs. Mickie James vs. Natalya

Alexa is defending and this is the most thrown together match that I can remember in a good while. They're also rushing through the entrances due to the time issues. You know, because NOW they care about time issues. Naomi is the hometown girl and MY GOODNESS the Glow entrance is a sight to behold in a stadium. There are no tags of course so it's a big brawl to start.

Naomi gets sent to the floor for a double suplex from Natalya and Carmella. Back in and Becky kicks the two of them down but James Ellsworth (Remember that?) grabs Becky's foot to take over. Bliss breaks up a cover and screams at Carmella to get out of her ring. The DDT gets two on Natalya but Becky breaks it up this time, only to have Ellsworth come in. No Chin Music is countered into a Bexploder and it's Naomi coming back in this time.

Naomi slingshots in to sunset flip Natalya, who German suplexes Becky at the same time. Speaking of the same time, Natalya tries a double Sharpshooter on Carmella and Naomi but can't get the legs up. Well, not surprising, but it's so bad that the camera cuts to her back. Naomi comes back in for a Rear View to Bliss and a big dive to take everyone out.

Back in and Naomi's reverse Rings of Saturn makes Bliss tap for the title at 5:33.

**Rating:** D. The timing issues KILLED this and there's no way around it. Much like the ladder match earlier, there's nothing you can do when you have five minutes and six people in a match. Naomi winning the title back is cool, but I still have no idea why her winning it back in her hometown is supposed to be some huge deal. Yeah it's cool, but it's not like this is some great moment.

Wrestlemania XXXIV is in New Orleans. Those songs will drive you crazy by the end of the weekend.

New Day comes out to thank the fans for the record attendance of 75,245. The team is still funny but egads they could have been cut out of this whole thing and not been missed.

We recap Roman Reigns vs. Undertaker. Reigns eliminated him from the Rumble and now we have a match to determine who is the real Big Dog.

Jim Ross is out to do commentary for the main event. That's even more impressive when you consider his wife died days before this show.

### Undertaker vs. Roman Reigns

No holds barred, first announced before the entrances. Reigns is booed out of the stadium, as has become a custom. In a smart move, Undertaker rises from the middle of the ramp (with a cool visual of smoke building up and clearing to reveal him standing there). I completely missed this as I was looking at the stage and then glanced down to the ring and saw him climbing the steps.

Undertaker slugs away in the corner to start and knocks Reigns to the floor. Back in and Reigns knocks him over the top as well, with Undertaker landing on his feet. Reigns hammers him down to take over and they head outside so this can be more of a brawl, which is the only way to go. The apron dropkick (to a standing Undertaker) puts Undertaker down again but he wins a slugout back inside. Reigns hits him in the face and Undertaker just looks mad.

Snake Eyes and the big boot set up the legdrop for two. The threat of a chokeslam sends Reigns outside again and this time the apron dropkick is punched out of the air. Another dropkick staggers Undertaker but it's a chokeslam onto the announcers' table. They climb onto the other tables and it's a spear to drive Undertaker through (almost in a running spinebuster) for the double knockout.

Reigns is the only one back in...and Undertaker sits up. Back in and Reigns does the corner clotheslines into the corner right hands, meaning the Last Ride (an AWFUL one at that with little impact and more Undertaker dropping Reigns than slamming him down). It's chair time but Undertaker takes it away and beats him down instead. A quick Superman Punch knocks Undertaker into the ropes but another is countered into a chokeslam onto the chair.

The Tombstone gets two and the fans, who are supposed to be smart at Wrestlemania, seem shocked at the kickout. Off the first Tombstone. In a Wrestlemania match. Who's the smart one here? Another Tombstone is loaded up but this time Reigns backflips...and just can't lift Undertaker for the counter. They try a few more times but just stop for the sake of embarrassment with Reigns trying a Superman Punch instead.

The spear connects but Undertaker is fine enough to put on Hell's Gate. The rope is reached for a break (erg) and Reigns unloads with the chair. Another spear gets another two and another spear gets another two and another Superman Punch (Undertaker sits up and falls over) sets up another spear to give Undertaker his second Wrestlemania loss at 22:57. That last sequence took nearly five minutes.

**Rating:** D+. It's not terrible, but Undertaker looked like an old man who should have hung it up a few years ago. The problem here was the crowd being completely dead and it showed really badly. There's only so much energy you can have in an academic match at the end of a seven hour show. Reigns winning makes complete sense but it was a bad match (the botches and CRAZY amount of time spent standing around didn't do it any favors) and there's no way around that.

Reigns gets the big pyro display behind him as he stands on the ramp

(great shot) but we're not done yet. Undertaker slowly sits up and we go to a bunch of replays. Back to live and it's Undertaker standing in the ring with the hat and coat on. I use that term loosely as it looks like Mark Callaway standing there dressed as Undertaker. For the first time, it seems like we're seeing the real person instead of the character, which is a MAJOR change for him.

He looks around to the crowd, takes off his gloves, coat and hat and folds them up in the ring. With the fans applauding, he goes outside, kisses Michelle McCool, and walks up the ramp. Undertaker stops, looks back one more time, raises the fist, and lowers down through the ramp, fist still in the air, to end the show with the gong sounding one more time. There was no commentary for the last ten minutes, without even a goodbye (appropriate here).

That's about as perfect of a sendoff as WWE has ever done. It was emotional, it felt special, and it came off like the real thing. Undertaker is the last vestige of that older generation and him breaking character for the first time ever and leaving is incredible to see. It's why I don't want to see him wrestle again and why it makes me sad to think that he will. Incredible stuff, and Thank You Taker.

**Overall Rating:** C+. There's no way around it: this show is way way way way way way way WAY too long. I got through an hour of the show a few days back (you know I'm not watching this in one sitting) and looked down at the bar in near horror of how little space I had covered. Five hours, plus TWO HOURS of a Kickoff Show is just too much, especially when there's stuff to be cut. What could be cut? Well off the top of my head:

AJ vs. Shane (move AJ to ANYTHING else and drop Shane) entirely or at least cut it down by about eight minutes

Corbin vs. Ambrose (I know it's the Intercontinental Title but on a show this huge, it's understandable)

Smackdown Women's Title (it's just nothing and felt like total filler)

Five to ten minutes each off of Reigns vs. Undertaker and HHH vs. Rollins (those combine for nearly fifty minutes total)

Pitbull

AT LEAST get this down to four and a half hours of main show. That can't be too much to ask, right?

Other than the timing issues though, the show is mostly solid. There's a ton of good stuff up until the mixed tag and then things start to fall apart. The Universal Title match was as perfect as it was going to be get but there's just so much bad around it (Bray vs. Orton, Reigns vs. Undertaker, HHH vs. Rollins in that match that is still going on somewhere, with HHH still working the knee) that the good is dragged down.

At the end of the day, it all comes back to the timing issues as there's almost no way to make a show this long work. It's too much to sit through and it becomes a chore at the end. Just cut this down by a good hour (or two) and things are much better, but bigger is better for WWE and that's not changing anytime soon. As it is, the show works more than it misses but it's still not a classic by any means.

### Ratings Comparison

Neville vs. Austin Aries

Original: A-

2018 Redo: B

Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal

Original: D

2018 Redo: D-

Dean Ambrose vs. Baron Corbin

Original: C+

2018 Redo: C-

Shane McMahon vs. AJ Styles

Original: B

2018 Redo: B

Kevin Owens vs. Chris Jericho

Original: B

2018 Redo: C+

Sasha Banks vs. Bayley vs. Charlotte vs. Nia Jax

Original: C-

2018 Redo: D

Hardy Boyz vs. Anderson and Gallows vs. Enzo Amore/Big Cass vs.  
Sheamus/Cesaro

Original: B

2018 Redo: C+

John Cena/Nikki Bella vs. The Miz/Maryse

Original: D

2018 Redo: D-

HHH vs. Seth Rollins

Original: C+

2018 Redo: B-

Bray Wyatt vs. Randy Orton

Original: F

2018 Redo: F

Brock Lesnar vs. Goldberg

Original: B

2018 Redo: B

Naomi vs. Alexa Bliss vs. Becky Lynch vs. Carmella vs. Mickie James vs. Natalya

Original: D-

2018 Redo: D

Undertaker vs. Roman Reigns

Original: D+

2018 Redo: D+

Overall Rating

Original: B

2018 Redo: C+

Yeah I overrated a lot of this the first time around. It's good, but not that good.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2017/04/07/wrestlemania-xxxiii-a-long-wait-for-a-long-show-with-a-long-ramp/>

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