

Best Of 2019: Match Of The Year



IMG Credit: WWE

We might as well get one of the bigger ones out of the way. Wrestling is a lot of things but at the end of the day, it revolves around what happens in the ring. You can do all the promos and segments you want, but somewhere in there you have to have a big match (don't tell Vince Russo). That was the case in a lot of places this year and some of them were outstanding.

WWE Championship: Men's Elimination Chamber

I'm putting this one first because a good chunk of the match doesn't matter. It wasn't until it became clear that Kofi Kingston could actually pull this off that it got really, REALLY good, with one of the best sections of a match I've seen WWE put together in years. This was different than Kingston just being the last victim.

There was a feeling that Kofi could win and all of a sudden, you began to realize how much you wanted to see him actually be WWE Champion. The big thing was how real the whole possibility felt and that isn't something you get more often than not. I bought into more than one of these near falls and by the end of it, I was spent, which is as big of a success as you can get.

Men's Survivor Series

This is another one where the atmosphere helped things out incredibly well and I was wondering how it was going to end (granted me being in the audience that day helped a lot). This was the triple threat format with NXT included and that was what everyone wanted to see. I downgrade this one a bit due to some of the booking choices (Walter being eliminated in two minutes was inexcusable) but the end with Lee pinning Rollins and then having the showdown with Reigns was top notch.

What mattered here was how big it felt. I wasn't sure who was going to win this and they gave it enough time to build things up rather than rushing through everything. It's what I wanted from a Survivor Series match and the reason I had been trying to go to a show for so many years. Couple that with Lee getting the clean pin on Rollins and this was a joy to watch.

United Kingdom Title: Pete Dunne vs. Walter (Takeover: New York)

We'll still with NXT for a match that you knew you wanted to see from the second Walter debuted at Takeover: Blackpool. Dunne's title reign seemed like it would never end because no one could actually beat him. That's where Walter came in, as it became a question of who could possibly defeat Dunne after everyone else had failed. That's a heck of an atmosphere and they set it up to perfection.

Then there was the actual match and sweet goodness what a fight. This was Dunne going out on his shield as Walter just could not be stopped. They beat the fire out of each other and it nearly stole the weekend, with some of the hardest hitting shots you'll ever see. It became a question of who could survive and ultimately Walter took the title in an instant classic. Incredible stuff, as British Strong Style tends to be.

WWE Championship: Daniel Bryan vs. Kofi Kingston (Wrestlemania

XXXV)

And now we have a sequel to the Elimination Chamber. This is a great example of what putting in the effort over the years can get you. Kingston had been in WWE since 2006 and somehow had never had a one on one match for the WWE Championship. It was very similar to the Jeff Hardy vs. Randy Orton feeling at the 2008 Royal Rumble and now we were finally getting the chance. It felt special and that's what it wound up being.

What mattered here was the very end. It wasn't clear until Kingston actually won that he might pull it off, because it was hard to believe that they would actually pull the trigger. After Kingston won the title though, the magic really began. New Day unveiled the classic title and Kofi's kids came in to celebrate with him. You don't get a special feeling like that very often but when it's real, you can feel it. That's what Kofi gave us and it was one of the best in years.

NXT Title: Johnny Gargano vs. Adam Cole (Takeover: New York

Dang it was a great Wrestlemania weekend. This one was both a case of what might have been and a case of what we wound up getting. There isn't much of a secret that this was supposed to be the final blowoff between Johnny Gargano and Tommaso Ciampa's all time classic feud, but alas Ciampa's neck flared up and he had to be pulled. This is what we got instead and it happened to be great.

What we got was a heck of a fight with both guys making you believe that they could win at any given time. Some of the near falls were outstanding and while there were times where it went beyond the realm of being believable, it was the kind of moment that everyone had been waiting to see. Gargano FINALLY won the title that he had been chasing for years and it came after a great match.

So we have emotion and great action, but not both at a high level throughout. This changes that.

United Kingdom Title: Walter vs. Tyler Bate (Takeover: Cardiff)

I was excited for this one coming in after seeing the two of them tear the house down at a Progress show the year before. What we had here was a David vs. Goliath story with the much smaller (yet incredibly strong) Bate fighting the unstoppable monster. They took that simple story and knocked it out of the park with one of the best fights I've seen in a long time.

What made this work was how they made Walter look desperate. Walter comes off as someone who never gets shaken but this time around he could not finish Bate no matter what he did. The fans got behind Bate because he would not stay down until Walter FINALLY hit him with everything he had in a heck of a clothesline to retain the title. There was something so raw about Walter just having to unload on him like that to win and it was a great moment to end the Match of the Year.

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