

Quick Live Thoughts From Wrestlemania XXXVIII Night One

I took in the first night of Wrestlemania XXXVIII and it was about as Wrestlemania as you can get. Your mileage may vary as you can imagine.

After parking in the adjacent Walmart parking lot for free and walking through the absolute maze that is the stadium to get to my seat, one thing became obvious: WWE has forgotten how to warm up a crowd. I got there about an hour into the Kickoff Show and for the most part was treated to a steady shot of the DJ playing music on the huge video screen. No package, no Kickoff Show, no hype videos, no MATCHES IN THE RING.

It's the same way it went at the Royal Rumble but now I have to listen to bad music. WWE can't find any two people and throw them out there for ten minutes on the biggest stage of their career? You can't put Drew Gulak and R-Truth out there for a comedy match? Just ANYTHING but looking around for the better part of two hours? Titus O'Neil coming out for a charity deal was a breath of air and it was something that belonged on a bumper for Peacock. I don't get this new philosophy but, again, WWE doesn't think much of entertaining the people once they get in the building.

Smackdown Tag Team Titles: Usos(c) vs. Shinsuke Nakamura/Rick Boogs

It's really hard to comment on this one as Boogs blew out his knee and there is only so much that can be done as a result. Odds are that changed the finish as Nakamura and Bogs winning the titles seemed like a foregone conclusion. It wasn't a great match in the first place, but my goodness it is sad to see someone as charismatic as Boogs put on the shelf when he

is getting this much out of Nakamura.

Drew McIntyre vs. Happy Corbin

McIntyre won, as he should have, and then sliced up the top rope with his sword. The biggest question I have is why an explosion went off when he cut the ropes. Secondary question: why did he cut the rope? What did that rope do to him? He'll cut that but not cut himself out of the feud with Corbin and Moss? Come on already, by which I mean come on and give McIntyre ANYTHING else to do.

Miz/Logan Paul vs. Rey Mysterio/Dominik Mysterio

So I was sitting with these two guys (father and son) watching the show and one of them had no idea who Paul was. I can't imagine he was alone, which makes Paul quite the odd celebrity to bring in as he isn't exactly a household name. Anyway, the villains win because this is Celebrity Mania, but then Miz turns on Paul because....stop me before I go any further. Throw in a bunch of required Eddie Guerrero tributes because he must be tributed and we move on.

Raw Women's Title: Becky Lynch(c) vs. Bianca Belair

First things first: they both looked great. I don't mean attractive (not that they weren't) but they both had on special gear and looked like they were coming in for the big fight. That is what I want out of Wrestlemania and the two of them delivered. The match itself was also a showdown with both of them working hard, but what I loved was the ending. After Belair won, Lynch fell out of the ring and hit the ground, because she had nothing left and had been defeated. There is something about the visual of Belair celebrating over the fallen champion that makes it feel like what we're seeing is special and it worked. Great stuff.

Cody Rhodes vs. Seth Rollins

The match itself was immaterial here because of one reason: I got the Wrestlemania feeling. This was my fifth Wrestlemania and it is rare to get that feeling that you are in a moment. From the time the lights went out to the time the opening bell rang, it was goosebumps as Rhodes returning was important. I wasn't crazy about the match as it went on too long, but they nailed every bit of the atmosphere with this and that is what is going to be remembered. I have no idea what Rhodes is going to do, but the debut was excellent and that is what matters.

Undertaker's entrance live is still a sight to behold and always will be.

Smackdown Women's Title: Charlotte(c) vs. Ronda Rousey

Oh where to begin. Well first of all, is ANYONE surprised that Charlotte is the first person to pin Rousey in a singles match? If you are, pay more attention, because Charlotte must have the accolades. The match itself wasn't great, but Rousey's comebacks got the fans into it more and more. That being said, I'm a Rousey fan but it's not there in this run and that is becoming more and more obvious. I don't know where this is going, though if she doesn't crank up the intensity (a heel turn could be fascinating), this isn't going to work.

And then the moment we've all been waiting for (Including New Day, Sheamus and Ridge Holland who actually didn't make it onto this 4+ hour show. If WWE can't put them on the Kickoff Show and give the DJ a break for five minutes, I'll lose a good bit of the respect I have left for the company. Get them on there somehow, even if it's a two minute match.): the return of Steve Austin. After some talking with Kevin Owens, we got this, and I was a bit shocked.

Steve Austin vs. Kevin Owens

Yes, this really happened and while it was No Holds Barred, it was an actual match, as Austin did his usual stuff, took bumps (including a suplex on the floor) and then pinned Owens with

the Stunner. Austin didn't have the explosiveness, but he'll be sixty in three years and hasn't wrestled in nearly twenty years so give him a break. What mattered is Austin could have gone out there and juggled kittens to a positive reaction but this was an actual match.

In a word (which has already been used more than once) though, this was special. It was a moment to hear that glass shatter again and know what was coming. I'm not an Austin fan (though I completely respect what he did in wrestling) but I knew what I was seeing live and it made me smile. Oddly enough, at least to date, Austin and the Rock's final matches have both been impromptu matches taking place in the same building. That's kind of fascinating.

Overall Thoughts

While I still want Wrestlemania to be one night again (and shortened), I had a pretty good time overall. It needed to be shorter, but the Belair vs. Lynch match, Cody's return and Austin made the whole thing worthwhile. Now if they can make the second show work as well, we'll be in a better place, but this was a solid success for the first night.

Full review hopefully going up Sunday, but I can't promise anything.

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