

Wrestlemania XXXVIII (Night One): They're Back

Wrestlemania XXXVIII Night One

Date: April 2, 2022

Location: AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas

Attendance: 77,899

Commentators: Jimmy Smith, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton, Michael Cole, Pat McAfee

America the Beautiful: Brantley Gilbert

We have arrived at the biggest weekend in wrestling and this time it is back in the full capacity stadium. Again, this year's show is split in two and again it feels like there is a good one night in between the two shows. That was the case last year though and the first night went well so maybe history can repeat itself. Let's get to it.

Note that I was in attendance for this show, sitting in the third level off the floor in the end zone corner with the stage on my right.

Brantley Gilbert sings America the Beautiful.

Mark Wahlberg stars in the opening video and talks about how these people have a chance for a Texas sized helping of greatness. That is easier said than done though, as it is not easy to reach that level. Everyone has a chance though, so go catch greatness on the Wrestlemania stage. Nothing exactly profound here but having a star do the video is nice.

A lot of fireworks go off.

Here are the Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders for an unannounced dance routine. I'm a Cowboys fan and I get the idea here, but does this add anything other than Texas flavor? It isn't like anyone comes out or gets hyped up here.

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

The Usos are defending here but first, Pat McAfee has to lose his freaking mind dancing to Boogs' guitar intro. You could see him on the announcers' table from the seats and my goodness his voice makes it all the more over the top/better. We get a quick recap of Boogs faking an injury to help win a #1 contenders match so there is a bit of a backstory here. The Big Match Intros make this all the sweeter in something you don't often see outside of the main event.

Nakamura starts fast by kicking Jimmy down and it's already Good Vibrations in the corner. The running knee to the ribs gets two on Jimmy but Jey gets in a cheap shot to take over. A shot from the apron keeps Nakamura down and an enziguri gives Jimmy two. We hit the chinlock for a bit, only to have Nakamura fight up and hit the spinning kick to the head. The double tag brings in Boogs and Jey, with Boogs grabbing him in a bearhug.

That doesn't last long as Boogs switches to the kneeling vertical suplex for two. A double Samoan drop...goes very badly for Boogs, as his knee buckles under the weight (apparently legitimately, putting him on the shelf for a LONG time). That leaves Nakamura to get the tag and dive onto both champs before striking away at Jey inside. The sliding German suplex looks to set up Kinshasa but Jey hits a superkick. Jimmy adds the Superfly Splash for two and it's another superkick into the 1D to retain the titles at 6:55.

Rating: C. It's kind of hard to grade something like this as the injury changed everything. The last two minutes or so were a handicap match and there is a strong chance that they had to come up with something on the fly, so we'll go with right in the middle to play it safe. The match wasn't great, but what are you expecting given the circumstances?

Video on Johnny Knoxville vs. Sami Zayn in an anything goes match tomorrow.

We recap Happy Corbin vs. Drew McIntyre. Corbin lost everything in one of the most entertaining stories in a long time, but then gambled his way back to financial security. Then he and Madcap Moss injured McIntyre, setting up a FAR too long feud to get us here. For some reason, Corbin and Moss stole McIntyre's sword, named after his mother. Corbin: "What do McIntyre's mother and sword have in common? Drew lost both of them." Of course you know this means war, which started with McIntyre getting the sword back on Smackdown.

Drew McIntyre vs. Happy Corbin

Madcap Moss is here with Corbin, who is billed as UNDEFEATED, because we now keep track of wins and losses since a name change. McIntyre is wearing some dark gray trunks here for a change of pace. Corbin starts fast but gets clotheslined over the top for his efforts. A posting cuts McIntyre off and Smackdown rol...wrong show, never mind.

Back in and a whip into the corner gives Corbin two as McAfee recaps the Corbin saga. A belly to back suplex drops McIntyre for one but Moss gets on the apron for an inadvertent distraction, allowing McIntyre to grab a spinebuster. The overhead belly to belly into the neckbreaker lets McIntyre nip up as things get a bit more intense.

Corbin is right back with a quick Deep Six for two more but McIntyre knocks him down again. The threat of the Claymore sends Corbin outside so McIntyre hits the big flip dive to the floor (that's not normal for his size). Back in and Corbin hits End of Days out of nowhere for two, with Cole trying to make that a lot bigger than it really is. The Futureshock gives McIntyre two but the Claymore gives him the pin at 8:42.

Rating: C. This could have been on any given of Smackdown and absolutely should have, as this feud was barely good enough

for one pay per view match, let alone a months long feud. McIntyre should be ready to move back to the World Title scene and he needed to run these two over to do so. Maybe this leads to the team splitting, but I don't know what Moss can do with this gimmick going forward.

Post match McIntyre loads up Angela and swings at Moss, hitting the ropes instead. The ropes are sliced in two, but I wonder why it caused an explosion. The Gordian Knot wasn't that in your face.

We recap the Mysterios vs. Miz/Logan Paul. Miz has been feuding with the two of them and got Paul to help him out, because that's the best Miz can do. Then Rey had his mask stolen, setting up a feud over respect that feels like it was chosen at random for Paul's involvement.

Rey Mysterio/Dominik Mysterio vs. Miz/Logan Paul

The bottom rope is out of sync with the others after the replacements were put in. Paul has a Pokemon card in a lanyard around his neck, which I'm assuming is something expensive. Miz takes Rey into the corner to start so Paul comes in pretty early. Some leapfrogs let Paul start well but he drops into the splits, allowing Rey to kick him in the head. That's enough for Paul so it's off to Dominik vs. Miz, with the former hitting a Lionsault for two. A dive to the floor takes Miz out but Paul gets in a cheap shot from behind to put Dominik down.

Back in and a pretty nice running powerslam gets two on Dominik, setting up some alternating YES Kicks. Dominik fights out of a chinlock and gets two off a backslide. That's not enough for a tag though as Paul comes back in with a Blockbuster for two more. Dominik finally manages a tornado DDT to drop Miz and there's the hot tag to bring in Rey. The big kick to the face gets two on Miz but Paul comes back in to load up a double superplex.

Dominik makes the save so Rey rolls Miz up for two, followed by another spinning DDT for two more. Rey hits some Amigos but gets sent into the post, allowing Paul to hit Three Amigos of his own to some serious booing as that is too far. To make it worse, Paul goes up, does something close to the Eddie dance, and hits the frog splash for a very near fall. Dominik is back in and it's a double 619 to set up back to back frog splashes but Miz makes the save. The Skull Crushing Finale finishes Rey at 11:16.

Rating: C. The match was ok enough and Paul had clearly put in the effort to make this work out. He did very well with the limited spots he did and the athleticism is there. I'm not sure how well he would work long term, but there have been some far worse celebrity appearances at Wrestlemania (or anywhere for that matter).

Post match Miz and Paul pose...and Miz lays him out with a Skull Crushing Finale. Miz laughs at him and blows a kiss, making me wonder why I'd want to see Miz vs. Paul and what the green thing on Miz's forehead is.

Video on Edge vs. AJ Styles as we get more and more filler.

Here is Stephanie McMahon to talk about what Wrestlemania means to her. She brings out Gable Steveson and...that's the segment.

We recap Becky Lynch vs. Bianca Belair for the Raw Women's Title. Belair won the Smackdown Women's Title last year but then Lynch returned from a year plus away to win the title (completely fairly) at Summerslam. Lynch has since gone full villain and Belair wants the title back. They have traded throat injuries and Belair cut off a bunch of Lynch's hair to make this even more personal.

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

Lynch is defending and gets a special intro (similar to the

WWE TV intro as we look at moments from her career)...but Belair one ups her with the Texas Southern University marching band playing her to the ring. They both have special gear, with Lynch coming out in a kind of skirt/jacket combination and Belair in black and red with her top made to look like her lips logo. They both look like they're on the big stage and it's an awesome addition.

They both take the time to soak it in a bit but Lynch would rather punch than shake hands. The very early Manhandle Slam gets two and Lynch can't believe the Summerslam plan didn't work. Belair goes to the ropes to avoid the Disarm-Her so some covers give Lynch two. They trade rollups for two each and Lynch reverses a suplex into a DDT for two more. Belair tries...something but can't get Lynch onto her shoulders so she switches to a rollup instead.

They head outside with Lynch slipping off the shoulders to send Belair into the steps to take over. Some Bexploders connect back inside and we hit the chinlock to slow things down a bit. With that broken up, Lynch switches to a cross armbreaker but Belair powers up and dumps her outside for the double crash. Back in and Belair drives some shoulders into the ribs in the corner, setting up a gutbuster for two. The handspring moonsault gets two more but Lynch catches her on top.

Belair gets creative with a Chicago Skyline of all things and a middle rope 450 gets another near fall. Lynch is back up with a Molly Go Round, with her feet hitting Belair in the face (OUCH) for two of her own. Belair is back with a spinebuster and a cradle but the kickout sends her into the corner.

The KOD is broken up but Belair KOD's her to the floor. That doesn't work for Belair so she tries to come back inside, only to have Lynch hit the Manhandle Slam onto the steps. Belair dives back in at nine and then kicks out at two, sending Lynch

even further into hysteria. Another Bexploder is loaded up but Belair gets to the middle rope, moonsaults over Lynch, and hits the KOD for the pin and the title at 19:09.

Rating: B+. The action was good to great, but what mattered here was the feeling. This felt like the rise of a new champion, with Belair surviving what Lynch threw at her and then winning in the end, showing that she was the better woman when things were even. It came off like the Wrestlemania showdown with the special entrances and gear and I had a great time with the whole deal. Best thing on the show by a mile so far.

Post match Lynch falls out to the floor and collapses as Belair celebrates, giving us a great visual of the fallen former champion and the new queen.

Video on Sasha Banks to fill in more time.

We recap Seth Rollins vs. a mystery opponent. Rollins kept missing opportunities to get to Wrestlemania, which apparently is more important than what you actually do on the show. Finally the solution was "ask Vince McMahon", who gave him a match against an opponent of Vince's choosing, making about a month of stupid stories all the more pointless.

Seth Rollins vs. ???

Rollins comes out with a weirdly dressed choir singing his music for a rather Rollins style entrance. We get the big wait until.....it's Cody Rhodes, which was expected but MY GOODNESS the reaction. Rhodes rises up through the stage and comes to the ring as this is where they got me. Your feelings on Cody aside, that wait where I wanted to see who was coming out was the Wrestlemania Moment and it was outstanding.

They stare each other down for a bit and the energy is all back, even with some CODY chants. Feeling out process to start with Rollins grabbing a headlock and shouldering him down.

Cody is fine enough to hit the drop down uppercut but neither can hit a finisher. A suplex over the top sends them both crashing to the floor (that's always a scary one) and Cody pulls him into the post. Back in and Cody grabs the armbars, setting up a short arm scissors.

That's broken up so Rollins hits an enziguri and dropkicks Cody out of the air. There's a gutbuster to stay on the ribs (Rollins: "Welcome back to the big leagues b****.") Rollins grabs a bearhug, which looks as out of place as you might expect it to. Cody breaks that up like it's a bearhug from a guy who isn't known for his strength and hits the powerslam. With Rollins down on the floor, Cody hits a suicide dive but the Disaster Kick off the steps is countered into a powerbomb into the barricade.

Back in and the Falcon Arrow gives Rollins two but the Stomp is countered into Cross Rhodes for two (because a returning star's finisher should always only get a near fall). Cody goes up but gets caught in a reverse superplex into D-Von's lifting reverse DDT for two of his own. The Phoenix Splash misses so they both tease Pedigrees before Rhodes hits a tiger bomb for two.

The Cody Cutter gets the same as the fans are WAY into this. Rollins' Pedigree gets its own near fall and some Kawada Kicks set up the forearm to the back of the head. Cody isn't having that so he hits back to back Cross Rhodes...for no cover. Instead it's the Bionic Elbow into a fourth Cross Rhodes for the pin at 21:34.

Rating: B+. Yeah this was WAY better here than it was watching it live as they had a more modern style match of trading big moves. Cody winning was the only way to go, if nothing else for the sake of not scaring off other AEW stars who might want to come over. I'm not sure what Cody's ceiling is in WWE, but they absolutely stuck the landing with his return. Great match, after an even better reveal.

Cody gets to soak in some well deserved cheers and kisses the mat because he's back.

We look at last night's Hall of Fame ceremony, which featured a cool idea of walking through the wrestlers on the way to the ring. The wrestlers looking scared at the idea of Scott Steiner on a live mic is great, but not as great as Shad Gaspard's wife telling her son how great Shad was. Vince McMahon introducing Undertaker as Mark Calaway is...just wrong to hear.

Here is the class in person:

Steiner Brothers (they were up there with Demolition for most overdue tag team)

Shad Gaspard (that was a hard one to sit through)

Queen Sharmell (harmless enough)

Vader (how was he not in before)

Undertaker (I've seen that Wrestlemania entrance a few times and it will never be anything less than awe inspiring, even with Undertaker in a suit and looking emotional as he thanks the fans)

Video on Pat McAfee vs. Austin Theory. The fact that I went to the restroom after it started and it was still going when I got back says this went on too long.

Rick Boogs has wrecked his knee and had to be carried out of the stadium. Apparently he has torn his quadricep patella and will need surgery.

The attendance is 77,899. Assuming reports were correct, that means they sold about 20,000 tickets in three days. I'm sure.

Long video on Ronda Rousey vs. Charlotte for the Smackdown Women's Title. The video compares their successes in their main sports before showing the two of them being ready to clash here.

Smackdown Women's Title: Charlotte vs. Ronda Rousey

Rousey is challenging and strikes her way out of the corner to put Charlotte in the ropes. A cheap shot has Rousey in trouble but she grabs a rollup for two. That means it's time for Rousey to adjust her shorts before she sends Charlotte into the corner. Charlotte lands on the apron so Rousey knees her in the face and chokes a bit. The ankle lock goes on with Charlotte still on the apron so she pulls Rousey outside for the break. A posting gives Charlotte two and we hit the front facelock.

Charlotte hits a forearm/clothesline (the replay looked nasty) for two more and the neck crank goes on. That's broken up so Rousey hits a knee for two of her own, followed by...something mistimed out of the corner. Rousey's middle rope bulldog gets two but Charlotte is back with a spear for the same. A belly to back suplex gives us a double knockdown but it's Charlotte up first. The double moonsault kind of connects for two so Charlotte ties her in the Tree of Woe.

That means a Boston crab in the ropes of all things but Rousey escapes and judo throws her down. Piper's Pit can't connect so they trade some shots to the face for another breather. Another Piper's Pit is countered but Rousey grabs the ankle lock. That's reversed into one from Charlotte, who gets rolled into the corner for the escape. The armbar is countered into a powerbomb for two on Rousey but she's right back with the ankle lock, complete with the grapevine.

Charlotte escapes that as well and we hit the Figure Eight, which is turned over for the escape before they both roll into the ropes. They go outside so Charlotte can hit a fall away slam into the barricade and it's time for a slugout back inside. Piper's Pit gives Rousey three but the referee waves it off because of the foot on the ropes. Natural Selection gives Charlotte a very close two but her spear hits the referee. The armbar goes on and Charlotte taps to no referee.

Naturally the referee pops up as Rousey yells at him, allowing Charlotte to hit a big boot for the pin at 18:32.

Rating: B-. That was longer than it needed to be and are you surprised that Charlotte was the one to get the first singles win over Rousey? I'm not sure what this means for Rousey but I could go for seeing her turn heel. The smiling stuff just feels fake so let her bring back the Death Stare and be the Rousey that got her here in the first place. The match was a good, back and forth fight but there were some botches in there and Charlotte getting this latest honor made me roll my eyes pretty hard.

Video on Bobby Lashley.

We run down Night Two.

Video on Brock Lesnar vs. Roman Reigns.

Wrestlemania XXXIX will be in Los Angeles on April 1 and 2, 2023. This is the new normal isn't it?

We recap Kevin Owens vs. Steve Austin, which isn't a match but that's more or less what we're seeing here. Owens spent weeks insulting Texas before realizing he needed a path to Wrestlemania. Therefore he invited Austin onto the KO Show, with Austin accepting and promising a fight.

Here is Kevin Owens for the KO Show and yeah the fans don't seem too happy with him. Owens wastes no time in insulting Texas again, saying that if America was a person, Texas would be the a**. However, he does apologize...for speaking the honest truth about Texas. Owens knows the fans are wanting him to bring Austin out there but it's going to be on his time. Austin is the worst role model and Owens knows this because he used to look up to him. When Austin comes out here, Owens is going to insult him and if Austin doesn't like it, it'll be a Stunner and beer poured over him.

Cue Glass Shatter and WOW that is a reaction. Austin is as over as free beer in a frat house and takes some extra time to soak all of this in, as he should. Hold on though as Austin goes to the back and brings out his ATV to ride to the ring, as he tends to do. The set is promptly destroyed, leaving the two of them and two chairs. Owens says cut the music, leaving Austin to fix his knee brace. This is Owens' show, so take a seat.

Austin doesn't like Owens talking trash about Texas, but Owens asks what is so great about this place. Owens rants on Texas clothes and says if he lived here, he would have moved to Mexico (Owens: "It's right there."). Austin: "In five seconds, you're going to have 70,000 people calling you an a*****." That's fine with Owens, who says he lied to get Austin here. Instead, he doesn't want to talk, but because he is looking for a fight. Really, Owens is here to challenge Austin to a match. Yeah it has been 19 years and Austin's knees, back and neck were shot back then and must be even worse here.

Owens is challenging him to a No Holds Barred match right now, which has Austin thinking about it. Austin's facials here are outstanding as you can see him thinking about going to that place one more time. Owens says either get ready or get on the golf cart and ride out again. Austin says his first match was here in Dallas, and now his last match might be too. He leaves it to the fans and says bring him a referee out here, because this is actually happening.

Steve Austin vs. Kevin Owens

No Holds Barred and my goodness I can't believe I'm seeing this. They talk trash and the slugout is on, with Austin naturally getting the better of things. A bunch of stomps in the corner have something mudhole related going on and Austin does it again for good measure. They head outside where Austin has a beer, followed by a clothesline and a drop onto the barricade. Owens is back with a posting though and he beats on

Austin with a tripod.

It's table time (that feels so wrong in an Austin match...because Austin is actually having a match) but Owens is sent through it instead. They fight into the crowd, where Owens actually hits a suplex onto the concrete (egads). Back to ringside and Austin is able to slam him off the barricade and onto (not through) the announcers' table. More beer is consumed and Austin hammers away on the table, followed by more beer.

Owens manages a neck snap across the top but makes the mistake of going over to Austin's ATV. Austin isn't having that and jumps him before driving the ATV (with Owens on it) up the ramp. A pair of suplexes on the stage (one per side) have Owens in trouble and Austin throws him back down the ramp. Back in and Austin has some more beer but Owens grabs a Stunner for two. Owens gets a chair but the swing hits the rope and bounces back onto his own head, setting up the real Stunner to give Austin the pin at 13:52.

Rating: B. This is a weird situation as Austin could have come out there and juggled kittens to the biggest reaction of the night. What made this work was the fact that Austin wound up looking good, all things considered. He didn't have the same explosiveness but that is to be expected after so long away. This was an actual match, albeit a garbage one, but it let Austin have one more moment and that is not something that is easy to pull off whatsoever. Above all else, this was a special moment and I still can't believe it actually happened.

Post match Austin drinks even more beer and gives Owens another Stunner, leaving Owens to be taken out by some cops. Austin throws a beer to a guy in the crowd, who fumbles it for a funny moment. Austin is glad to be back in Texas...and for some reason Byron Saxton gets in the ring to celebrate with him. Corey Graves is downright giddy, knowing that Saxton is about to get Stunned, which is of course what happens (that

was funny). Austin's brother gets in the ring for a beer with him and Austin celebrates some more to end the show.

After the show was over, Austin celebrated some more and took some laps on his ATV before finally leaving.

Overall Rating: B+. This show took its time getting started but then got on a roll in a hurry by the second half. The last four matches are all good to great and they nailed the three important moments, with Cody's return, Belair's win (the whole match really) and then Austin to cap it all off. As usual, WWE knows how to make things work when they're trying and that was the case here, though the first half was just ok. That being said, this was a pretty solid smash and night two has its work cut out.

Results

Usos b. Shinsuke Nakamura/Rick Boogs – 1D to Nakamura
Drew McIntyre b. Happy Corbin – Claymore
Miz/Logan Paul b. Mysterios – Skull Crushing Finale to Rey
Bianca Belair b. Becky Lynch – KOD
Cody Rhodes b. Seth Rollins – Cross Rhodes
Charlotte b. Ronda Rousey – Big boot
Steve Austin b. Kevin Owens – Stunner

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