

Elimination Chamber 2023: Wrestling Shakespeare

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Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves

It's the last major stop on the Road To Wrestlemania and this is all going to be about Sami Zayn vs. Roman Reigns. In spite of the show's title, the Elimination Chamber matches are far, far down the ladder in importance from the main event, which should have one of the most electric atmospheres WWE has seen in years. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at the Chamber matches, before shifting to the Zayn vs. Reigns main event and treating it like the bigger deal that it is.

Women's Elimination Chamber

The winner moves on to face Bianca Belair for the Raw Women's Title at Wrestlemania and there is no word on the length of intervals. Natalya is in first and Liv Morgan is in second to get things going. A shoulder runs Morgan over to start and they trade rollups for a standoff. They go outside with Natalya being sent into the Chamber wall a few times and Morgan kissing her on the cheek.

Back up and Natalya sends her face first into the pod wall over and over with the fans approving of the violence. Morgan's head goes through one of the squares in the wall so Natalya can crank on her arms. After three minutes, Raquel Rodriguez is in third and gets to slam people around. The all away slam sends Morgan flying and there's a big boot to Natalya. With Rodriguez holding both of them up, Natalya eventually manages a sunset bomb into the wall.

Back in and all three get knocked down until Cross is in fourth. Cross sends everyone out and pushes Rodriguez's face up against the wall this time. With Carmella mocking her, Rodriguez gets sent face first into the pod, leaving Cross to climb on top for the very high crossbody onto all of them. Carmella is in fifth and gets two on Rodriguez before going to yell at Asuka. That earns her a chase back into the pod but Rodriguez drives Cross through said pod, with Carmella just escaping. Carmella then runs into another pod, with Rodriguez wisely getting rid of Cross at 11:43 for the first elimination.

One heck of a sunset bomb off the pod plants Rodriguez for two and it's Asuka in sixth to complete the field. Asuka goes right after Carmella to wreck her for a bit before squaring off with Rodriguez. An Octopus has Rodriguez in trouble but she powers Asuka up to her shoulders. Asuka slips out and superkicks her down, only to walk into Morgan's missile dropkick for two. Natalya can't powerbomb Morgan, who hits her with a Code Red. The Oblivion is broken up by Carmella and the Sharpshooter, plus an arm crank from Asuka, knock Morgan out for the elimination at 16:34.

The Sharpshooter has Asuka in trouble but Carmella breaks it up and pins Natalya at 17:33. A quick double teaming gets rid of Rodriguez at 18:18 and we're down to Carmella vs. Asuka. Carmella hits a superkick for a fast two but Asuka strikes her down. The armbar makes Carmella give up to send Asuka to Wrestlemania at 19:43.

Rating: C. You had two favorites to win and one of them did, after running through most of the field like a buzzsaw. Asuka winning isn't exactly bringing in someone new, but it's nice to see her get reheated. She absolutely has the talent, but Belair vs. Asuka feels more like a solid Money in the Bank title match rather than Wrestlemania.

We recap Brock Lesnar vs. Bobby Lashley in a rubber match.

Lashley beat Lesnar (with interference from Roman Reigns) at last year's Royal Rumble and Lesnar escaped with a win at last year's Crown Jewel. Now the roles are a bit reversed as Lashley is a bit more evil this time around. Also, the winner has to deal with Bray Wyatt, who has said he is waiting on whoever comes out on top.

Brock Lesnar vs. Bobby Lashley

Lesnar wastes no time in taking him into the corner for the shoulders to the ribs. Lashley gets knocked outside but comes back in with a pair of spears. The Hurt Lock is countered into the F5 for two as we're not even two minutes into this yet. Another F5 gets another two but Lashley is back up with the spear. The Hurt Lock goes on and Lesnar is in trouble...so he kicks Lashley low for the DQ at 4:33.

Rating: B-. It was fun while it lasted but these fast paced, finisher spamming matches are only so interesting. Lesnar came off like a total villain in the end but that isn't how things are likely to be presented. You can pencil in the big, violent, no holds barred brawl of some sort for WrestleMania, though I wonder where that leaves Wyatt. Entertaining sprint, but it's nothing new from Lesnar.

Post match Lesnar takes out the referee and F5's Lashley through the announcers' table, much to the fans' delight. The referee gets F5'd onto the remains of the table.

The Wrestlemania movie parody trailers are back! We start with Seth Rollins as the Joker (makes sense), doing the dance down the stairs. Then Becky Lynch, as an unmasked Batman, grabs him to ask what that was. Rollins asks what's up with her voice, then she puts on her glasses, declares herself the Man, and leaves. Rollins: "She is the Man."

We recap Edge/Beth Phoenix vs. Rhea Ripley/Finn Balor. Edge vs. Judgment Day has been going on since last summer and Phoenix is stepping in to help deal with Ripley so Edge can go

for his revenge again.

Edge/Beth Phoenix vs. Rhea Ripley/Finn Balor

Dominik Mysterio is here with Ripley and Balor. Edge runs Balor over to start and hits a big boot before handing it off to Beth (with her Bull Nakano inspired face paint. Ripley comes in as well for the yelling staredown They trade clotheslines until Beth hits a slightly weird looking running elbow to the face. We hit the test of strength as the fans are all over Dominik.

They fight outside with Ripley being sent into the steps but a Balor distraction lets Dominik crotch Beth on top. Dominik gets chased off but comes back, much to the fans' annoyance. Beth knocks Balor down and DDTs Ripley but Balor slides under the ring and pulls Edge off the apron. Riptide and the Glam Slam are blocked, as is Rhea's attempt at a super Glam Slam.

Instead Beth reverses into a top rope superplex for a heck of a double crash and they're both down. Beth kicks Ripley into Balor and the hot tag brings in Edge to clean house. The Edgecator has Balor in trouble and Beth puts Rhea in the same. Dominik interferes and throws something in, with Beth letting go to chase him off. Ripley headbutts Beth down and hits Edge with what looks to be brass knuckles.

Beth makes the save and heads outside with Ripley. After Balor gets crotched on top, the women powerbomb the men down but Ripley misses a Conchairto on the steps. The Glam Slam plants Ripley on the floor and there's an Edgecution to Balor. Edge dives onto Dominik but the spear is countered into the Coup de Grace. The shotgun dropkick is cut off with a spear though and a Shatter Machine finishes Balor at 13:48.

Rating: B. I'm a bit surprised by the result here but this did a good job of making Beth feel like a huge star. She was showing off with the power and all of her stuff looked good. At the same time, Edge pins Balor in what should be the big

finale for the feud. Then again they seem destined for one more match at Wrestlemania so the result here is a little odd.

US Title: Men's Elimination Chamber

Austin Theory is defending and Johnny Gargano is in first with Seth Rollins in second. They go with the grappling to start with neither being able to get very far. Gargano misses the rolling kick to the face and the slingshot spear is cut off. The Pedigree attempt is countered with a backdrop onto the outside and Gargano takes him down again for a double knockdown. Theory is in third (before we even reach three minutes this time) and goes right after Gargano.

It's off to Theory vs. Rollins, with the former getting pingponged back and forth between the other two. Theory thinks that means it's time to bring back The Way from NXT, but Gargano decks him instead. With that not working for the champ, he tries to hide in the pod but gets double teamed in there as well. Damian Priest is in fourth and gets to beat up both good guys.

A bulldog driver plants Rollins and a lifting Downward Spiral gets two on Gargano. Priest busts out a Killswitch of all things on Rollins before kicking Theory in the head. A running flip dive over the ropes crushes Theory again and Priest knocks down everyone else to stand tall. Priest goes up top but Rollins catches him with the superplex into the Falcon Arrow for two.

Bronson Reed is in fifth and the fans seem to approve. Reed Rock Bottoms Gargano onto Rollins (who was standing as well) and hits a running splash in the corner for the bonus. The double Samoan drop hits Rollins and Gargano at the same time, leaving Montez Ford looking a bit worried in the pod. Reed sends Priest into the Chamber and then splashes him against the pod as the dominance continues.

The top rope shoulder drops Theory as well until Ford is in,

giving us an ultra rare all six entrance in the match at once. Ford gets to beat up Theory and loads up a People's Elbow of all things, only to have Reed make the save. Reed puts Gargano in an electric chair and a springboard clothesline turns it into a poisonrana, with Gargano coming DANGEROUSLY close to landing on his head.

Ford climbs up the wall...and then winds up hanging upside down from the roof. A flip dive onto everyone else leaves everybody down and the fans are VERY happy. Reed is back up so a bunch of people hit him with superkicks, followed by One Final Beat, a Stomp before a frog splash gives Ford the pin to eliminate Reed at 17:55.

Everyone starts climbing the wall, with Gargano and Rollins sitting on top of a pod. The other three get knocked down so Rollins chops the heck of Gargano, triggering a fight. Rollins loads up the super powerbomb but Gargano reverses it into a hurricanrana onto the pile for the HUGE crash, leaving Gargano holding his face. Gargano is fine enough to superkick Priest and Ford, setting up One Final Beat to Theory on the outside. Priest breaks up one back inside though and the Razor's Edge gets rid of Gargano at 22:54.

Priest chases Ford to the top but Rollins pulls Priest into a powerbomb, with Ford adding a top rope Blockbuster for the pin at 24:44. So we're down to Rollins vs. Theory vs. Ford and everyone needs a breather. Ford wins a slugout with Rollins and starts busting out the flip dives on the outside. A Rock Bottom hits Theory inside but the frog splash hits knees. Rollins adds a Stomp onto the steel and Ford is out at 27:39.

Rollins wastes no time in superkicking him into a sitout powerbomb for tow, as Ford is still down in the ring. The referee needs some help for Ford (his limbs are moving) and medics have to help get him to his feet. Ford is helped outside but actually falls on the steps (he is on another planet right now). Rollins hits a Pedigree on Theory...and here

is Logan Paul to hit Rollins with a Buckshot Lariat. Paul stomps Rollins as well and A Town Down retains Theory's title at 31:24.

Rating: A-. Some of those spots were insane and they had the place rocking more than once. Paul coming in to cost Rollins is a great way to set up their Wrestlemania match and Theory winds up getting a big win to keep his title reign going. Also, quite the star making performances here for Reed, Priest and Ford, who was knocked completely loopy there near the end. In theory (no pun intended) that could have been a way for Paul to get inside, but I would hope they wouldn't tease what looked like a rather horrible injury when Paul could have snuck in when anyone was leaving.

We recap Roman Reigns vs. Sami Zayn for the Undisputed WWE Universal Title. Zayn tried to get into the Bloodline and eventually proved to be a valuable member of the team. Then Reigns slowly changed his mind on Zayn, accusing him of trying to steal the spotlight. Reigns gave him a chance to prove himself but Zayn cracked Reigns with a chair to one of the loudest reactions ever. Now Zayn wants to take the title from Reigns while Reigns just wants to destroy Zayn in Zayn's hometown. This is one of the best built matches in years around here and the heat is going to be off the charts.

Undisputed WWE Universal Title: Roman Reigns vs. Sami Zayn

Reigns, with only Paul Heyman, is defending and WOW the reactions are off the chart, with Reigns being booed out of the building and Zayn getting an all time ovation (Worlds Apart always helps with that). The bell rings and we get a nearly four minute staredown with Reigns not leaving his corner. Reigns starts walking around the ring and the OLE chants seem to be getting on his nerves.

They finally lock up and Reigns runs him down with a shoulder. Sami's headlock gets a huge reaction and they go back to

circling as we're nearly seven minutes into this. A low bridge sends Reigns outside and Sami nails the big flip dive. Back in and Zayn rains down some right hands in the corner as Reigns seems to be favoring his ear. A big right hand gets Reigns out of trouble and the apron dropkick has Zayn rocked.

Reigns laughs off some LET'S GO SAMI chants (Reigns: "That's all you got? A couple of SAMI chants???") before Reigns goes outside to yell at Zayn's wife. Zayn gets put on the barricade in front of his wife as Reigns keeps yelling, followed by more shots to keep Zayn in trouble. Back in and a heck of a clothesline drops Reigns and the fans are back into it. A running clothesline sends Reigns outside and Zayn beats him up in front of his wife, who gets a quick kiss for a bonus.

A sunset bomb gives Zayn two but the Blue Thunder Bomb is countered into a release Rock Bottom for two more. The Superman Punch is loaded up but Zayn counters into the exploder into the corner. The Helluva Kick is cut off by the Superman Punch for two and they're both down again. Reigns' spear only hits corner though and Zayn exploder him into the corner again.

Zayn hits his own Superman Punch into the Helluva Kick for a VERY close two and Montreal has a city wide heart attack. The threat of another Helluva Kick sends Reigns bailing to the floor, where Zayn's diving DDT is cut off by an uppercut. Zayn manages to send him through the barricade though and the Blue Thunder Bomb gets another white hot near fall back inside.

Another Blue Thunder Bomb is blocked and the referee gets bumped in the corner. Zayn hits another Helluva Kick but there's no referee for the visual seven or so count. Cue Jimmy Uso (the waiver must have gone through) for three superkicks to Zayn and a Superfly Splash to give Reigns two from a second referee. They slug it out from their knees with Zayn getting the better of things and stomping Reigns out to the floor (after seemingly missing a ref bump).

Zayn takes Jimmy off the apron and the spear hits...for two. Now THAT brings the fans back into it and Reigns yells about how he was trying to help Zayn. A loud slap hits Reigns and a Superman Punch hits the referee (that seems to be what they were trying to do a few moments ago) so Heyman throws in a chair.

Cue Jey Uso to stand between Reigns and Zayn so Reigns holds the chair out to Jey (like he did to Zayn at the Royal Rumble). There's no swing though as Jey drops the chair, earning a yelling from Reigns. Zayn spears Jey by mistake, so Reigns unloads on Zayn with the chair. The spear connects for Reigns and a referee comes back to life to count the pin at 32:19.

Rating: A-. This is a match where the emotions are going to play such a big role because that's what the match was based on. What we got was great and felt epic, but man alive that was a punch to the gut to see Zayn come so close and gets speared down at the end. No matter how you look at it, Zayn was never likely to win as the featured spot at Wrestlemania is going to Cody Rhodes. For now though, this is the next step in the Bloodline Saga, as Reigns gets to move past Zayn, but the Usos might not be so lucky. Heck of a main event with some hot near falls, but the energy and reactions are what mattered.

Post match Jimmy goes after Zayn again but Kevin Owens comes out for the save (...uh...) and beats Jimmy and Reigns down. Jimmy gets put through the announcers' table and Owens grabs a chair, so Heyman gets in and pounds on Owens' back. Zayn gets back up and hits the Helluva Kick on Reigns. Zayn looks at Owens as he leaves and then soaks in one last round of cheers to wrap it up. Owens and Zayn never touched or did anything but look at each other.

Overall Rating: A-. This show looked great coming in and then it delivered even more than that, as they had a pretty

outstanding night. The opener is the closest thing to not good and even that was perfectly acceptable. The men's Chamber and main event carried the show though and it was a pretty incredible show overall. Zayn vs. Reigns was a very good match boosted up to great by the crowd reactions, which can be a very powerful thing. Awesome show and if they can make it feel like this for Wrestlemania, we're in for something very, very special.

Results

Asuka won the Women's Elimination Chamber match last eliminating Carmella

Bobby Lashley b. Brock Lesnar via DQ when Lesnar kicked Lashley low

Edge/Beth Phoenix b. Finn Balor/Rhea Ripley – Shatter Machine to Balor

Austin Theory won the Men's Elimination Chamber last eliminating Seth Rollins

Roman Reigns b. Sami Zayn – Spear

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