

Monday Night Raw – February 20, 2023: The Next Long Step

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 20, 2023

Location: Canadian Tire Center, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Commentators: Kevin Patrick, Corey Graves

We're done with Elimination Chamber and that means it is time to get ready for Wrestlemania. The big story is that Roman Reigns retained the World Title over Sami Zayn, who seems promised to rejoin forces with Kevin Owens to fight the Bloodline. We might see the start of that tonight so let's get to it.

[Here is Elimination Chamber if you need a recap.](#)

We open with a long recap of Sami Zayn vs. Roman Reigns at Elimination Chamber, with Zayn coming up short and Kevin Owens saving him after the match.

Here is Sami Zayn to get things going and he looks to be a wreck. He talks about how everything has been going on for the last few days and the response he has gotten from the fans means more than they could know. After pausing to soak in a few more cheers, Sami talks about feeling guilty for letting people down by not getting the big win. What he understands though is that the story is not over, but it entering its final chapter. There is one more person he needs to talk to though, so Kevin Owens needs to get out here right now.

Cue Owens, with Zayn not being sure what to say. He starts with a thank you and an I'm sorry, but Zayn knows they're kind of beyond words at the moment. Zayn knows that Owens wants to destroy the Bloodline and that's what he wants too. That gets Owens' attention but he says he did what he did on Saturday for himself.

When Owens was getting beaten down at the Royal Rumble, Zayn sat there and watched. Owens wasn't going to make Zayn's family go through that too. He told Sami he was done with him in November and that's still true. If Zayn still needs help taking down the Bloodline, ask Jey Uso. Owens drops the mic and leaves. The reunion is still coming, but we have to wait on it just a little longer.

After we run down the card, Sami Zayn is still in the arena when Baron Corbin runs out to jump him. The beating continues throughout the break and we come back with Corbin calling Zayn pathetic. Zayn is a failure, which is enough to make him charge back into the ring, meaning it's time for a match.

Sami Zayn vs. Baron Corbin

Sami knocks him outside and then hammers away back inside as they start fast. Corbin misses a charge into the corner but dives into a chokebreaker for two. We take a break and come back with Zayn hitting a tornado DDT for two of his own. With Corbin on the floor again, Zayn butts out the running flip dive for the big crash. Back in and Corbin clotheslines his way out of trouble, setting up a Deep Six for two more. Corbin hits a running corner clothesline and loads up another, only to get caught with the Helluva Kick for the pin at 9:01.

Rating: C. This was exactly the kind of match Zayn should have had here: a slightly difficult win that gets him back on track after losing the big showdown. That's all it needed to be and he made it work well, as Corbin is still someone people like to see lose. Corbin's spiral continues, but I'm sure they'll reheat him again because they feel it must be done.

We get a sitdown interview with Rhea Ripley and Dominik Mysterio. Rhea isn't focusing on Beth Phoenix anymore because she's all in on Wrestlemania. Dominik threatens interviewer Byron Saxton with prison violence so we move on to Charlotte. Ripley knows that Charlotte is obsessed with what happened at

Wrestlemania three years ago because she knows she's in trouble this year. If Charlotte wants to put Rhea in her place at Wrestlemania then fine, because that place is Ripley as champion. She'll be at Smackdown to see Charlotte, and Dominik will tag along to see his dad.

Austin Theory is banged up but he's ready to defend his US Title against Edge tonight. What bugs him though is that John Cena is back in two weeks and no one is paying attention to the champ. The forever reign continues tonight.

Mustafa Ali vs. Dolph Ziggler

Last week, Ziggler told Ali to smile more and Ali is taking said advice very, very seriously. Ziggler takes him down to start but the threat of a superkick sends Ali bailing to the floor. Back in and Ali takes over, including a kick to the face in the corner. Ziggler plants him with a DDT for two and loads up the Fameasser, only to have Ali reverse into a crucifix for the pin at 2:15. Well that was a surprise and Ali is stunned.

Maryse gives Miz an envelope with something inside it and he's VERY happy. We'll see what's in there next week, but tonight he has to face Seth Rollins. Miz isn't worried about Rollins, who is too worried about Logan Paul, who Miz made in the first place. The envelope has made Miz's dreams come true though.

Here is Cody Rhodes for a chat but Paul Heyman, in a neck brace, cuts him off from the Titantron. Rhodes wants him out here right now but Heyman says that isn't happening. He is banged up after Elimination Chamber and isn't going to risk it out there. Elimination Chamber should have been special but it was a rough night.

Heyman gets to the point: Rhodes can't beat Roman Reigns at Wrestlemania. However, let's do some hypothetical thinking. Let's say Rhodes does the impossible and wins the title. Rhodes, without the wise man backing him up, will spend 200

days defending the titles, 50 days at various at charity events, 30 days promoting the events, and even meetings at home. As Dustin Rhodes said, even when Dusty Rhodes was at home, he wasn't at home.

Is that what Cody wants to do to his family? Heyman isn't going to say something vile like Roman Reigns will keep Cody's wife warm because Reigns is a happily married man. Heyman: "But I'm not!" If Rhodes wins, he'll find out that his Wrestlemania dream will become his own personal nightmare. Cody looks like he's about to erupt but says he'll finish the story at Wrestlemania. Heyman playing games is great and Rhodes is selling it like a master as well.

Asuka vs. Nikki Cross

The bell rings and here is Bianca Belair to watch. Once she has a seat, Cross strikes away to no avail, only to miss a running clothesline. Asuka misses a big kick though and gets dropped on the apron as we take a break. Back with Asuka dropping Cross to send her to the apron and then catching her on top. A super DDT gets two (again: if you're going to introduce a big move like that, don't just have it be another regular near fall) so Asuka grabs the double armbar to make (the smiling) Cross give up at 9:23.

Rating: C+. The Asuka push continues as she racks up another win. This is a bit of a weird one as Asuka is more than a made star in the division, but she is in such a different presentation that she has to be rebuilt in a way. The new version is working well enough, even as Cross continues to be little more than a bump in a lot of people's roads.

Post match Belair gets in the ring for the staredown and sign pointing. Asuka chokes on her own blue mist before laughing, which has Belair shaken.

Carmella isn't thinking about her Road To Wrestlemania but she is thinking about Asuka, so she's about to make Wrestlemania a

lot easier for Bianca Belair. With Carmella gone, Seth Rollins pops in to take issue with Logan Paul messing with his Wrestlemania plans. The joke's on Paul because pain is coming. Paul isn't here tonight though, so Rollins will beat up Miz instead.

We look back at Brock Lesnar getting himself disqualified against Bobby Lashley at Elimination Chamber.

MVP calls Lesnar a coward and issues a challenge to Lesnar for Wrestlemania....on Omos' behalf. Lesnar can come answer next week.

Miz vs. Seth Rollins

They go straight to the floor to start with Rollins getting the better of it. A baseball slide sends Miz over the announcers' table but he's right back in with a DDT as we take a break. Back with Miz sending Rollins chest first into the corner but getting caught with a running clothesline. Miz's running knee out of the corner gets two more but he makes the mistake of mouthing the words LOGAN PAUL. Rollins hammers away, hits the Stomp, hits another, and then hits a third for the referee stoppage at 11:03.

Rating: C. So this was more or less Rollins as Asuka, as he got to destroy Miz, who won't be hurt by the loss in the slightest. Rollins vs. Paul has been all but announced for weeks now so there was nothing noteworthy new there. Other than that, you have Miz with that envelope, which is probably him getting to host Wrestlemania or something else that suits him well.

Adam Pearce gives Carmella her match with Asuka next week. Chelsea Green calls Pearce to complain about her travel arrangements. Pearce's phone suddenly messes up and he just can't hear here. We pan over to see the Alpha Academy training for their modeling career but Bronson Reed comes in to glare at them. Reed tells Gable to get ready to model a full body

cast.

It's time for Ding Dong Hello, with Damage Ctrl as the special guests. Bayley praises her friends, with Dakota Kai praising her right back. They have dominated the tag division for 100 days and will keep doing it forever, 100 days at a time. Cue Becky Lynch to interrupt, saying those titles haven't been defended in forever. She does have an idea for a partner to come after the titles though, so here is Lita to leave Damage Ctrl more than a bit worried. Bayley: "YOU BETTER USE THE DOOR!"

Bayley brings up Lita and Becky's issues last week but Becky has already apologized. Lita wants another title reign and likes the idea of walking into Wrestlemania as champion. Cowardice is accused but Bayley accepts the challenge on their behalf. Becky and Lita take the belts away and then throw them back, with Damage Ctrl not looking sure about this.

Candice LeRae is talking about Johnny Gargano's injury status when Nikki Cross pops up again. LeRae is tired of Cross following her and asks why this is going on. Cross whispers something, which is apparently "all her friends are gone and she's alone".

Chad Gable vs. Bronson Reed

Otis is here too. Reed sends Gable outside for the shoulder off the apron and stops to stare at Otis. Back in and Gable manages a quick ankle lock but Reed powers him off. Gable ax handles him down and hits a Swan Dive for two...as Maxxine Dupri is here. Otis gets distracted, allowing Reed to run Gable over again. The Tsunami finishes for Reed at 3:09.

Rating: C. As much as I could go with never seeing Alpha Academy again, they are at least trying something different here and that is a nice thing to see. At the same time you have Reed, who has the coolest looking splash in a very long time. I'd like to see him getting to do something important,

but just having him around is a good thing.

Here is Elias to slightly praise Rick Boogs before making something of an open challenge. Cue Bobby Lashley to wreck Elias with the usual. Lashley says no one can survive him, from Brock Lesnar to Bray Wyatt.

Here's what's coming next week.

Edge is glad he's done with Judgment Day and wants to see what Austin Theory has. Theory is someone who can shake the next twenty years in this company, but does he have what it takes? He wants to hold a title one more time and walking into Wrestlemania as US Champion sounds good. Never say never.

US Title: Edge vs. Austin Theory

Edge is challenging and, after the Big Match Intros, takes Theory outside to start. Back in and a Russian legsweep gives Edge two as we take a break. We come back with Edge hitting a clothesline off the apron but Theory takes him into the corner. The chinlock goes on for a bit, followed by the rolling dropkick for two on Edge as we take a break.

Back again with Edge slugging away and hitting a high crossbody to Theory's back for two. The Edge-0-Matic gets the same and a sitout powerbomb gets two more. Edge grabs the Crossface, sending Theory straight to the rope. The spear is loaded up but here is Finn Balor for a kick to the head, setting up A Town Down to retain Theory's title at 18:14.

Rating: B. They were having a good match here and the ending took away a lot of the fun. The Edge vs. Balor match is another that has felt locked in for Wrestlemania for a very long time now but my goodness I'm tired of seeing these guys fight. Edge has had some LONG feuds since he has been back and it makes me wonder what else he could do instead of fighting the same handful of people over and over. For now though, nice main event style match with Theory getting another big win to

add to his resume.

Post match Balor hits three Coup de Graces to crush Edge and end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. The best thing that can be said about this show is that it feels like we are in Wrestlemania mode. You can only get so far with that feeling with Elimination Chamber still around so at least now we can get on to the REALLY important stuff. They are also doing a goo job with making you want to come back next week and now we have a better idea of where some things are going to go. The Wrestlemania card is mostly visible from here, but now we wait for everything to be set up. Solid show this week, as they are putting things together like they should.

Results

Sami Zayn b. Baron Corbin – Helluva Kick

Mustafa Ali b. Dolph Ziggler – Crucifix

Asuka b. Nikki Cross – Double armbar

Seth Rollins b. Miz via referee stoppage

Bronson Reed b. Chad Gable – Tsunami

Austin Theory b. Edge – A Town Down

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