

Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XXXI (2016 Redo): Surprise!

Wrestlemania XXXI

Date: March 29, 2015

Location: Levi's Stadium, Santa Clara, California

Attendance: 76,976

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Jerry Lawler

This is an interesting show as most people really weren't looking forward to it. The card isn't that bad on paper but the interest is still low. Reigns vs. Lesnar isn't the most exciting main event and the idea of HHH vs. Sting as a regular match is borderline terrifying. The show has surprised me before though so let's get to it.

The set is HUGE this year with a very wide stage and a big circle for the Titantron looking like a play button on the WWE Network. It's another open air stadium and since it's on the west coast, the sun is shining very brightly for a unique look.

Pre-Show: Tag Team Titles: Tyson Kidd/Cesaro vs. Los Matadores vs. Usos vs. New Day

One fall to a finish. Kidd and Cesaro, with Kidd's wife Natalya, are defending and it's Kofi Kingston/Big E. (minus the Langston) for New Day with Xavier Woods in their corner. The Usos (in San Francisco 49ers colors) have Jimmy's wife Naomi and Los Matadores still have El Torito. Cesaro and Kofi start fighting with Kingston scoring a quick dropkick but Diego tags himself in.

A ticked off Cesaro pulls Jey off the apron and whips him into the barricade, re-aggravating a shoulder injury and taking Jey out. Kofi monkey flips Diego for two and gets punched in the face as Jey is being taken to the back. Back to Cesaro for a chinlock before the Swing sends Kofi into Kidd's dropkick. Kofi gets kicked into the corner so Jimmy can

tag himself in for a superkick to Cesaro.

Kidd, Fernando, Big E. and Cesaro are all down in a corner and Jimmy nails the running Umaga hip attack to each one of them. Kofi dives onto Diego as any semblance of the tagging has been abandoned. Kidd springboards into a superkick from Jimmy, who charges into an uppercut from Cesaro. Big E. comes in and launches Kofi into a double knee to Cesaro's chest for two.

Cesaro's apron superplex takes Big E. down and Los Matadores add a powerbomb/Backstabber combo to Kofi with Kidd breaking up the pin. Kofi goes after Kidd on the floor but has to catch Torito, allowing Natalya to put the bull in a Sharpshooter to continue a stupid mini feud. Jimmy and Naomi dive onto Kidd, Kofi and Fernando. Back in and the Midnight Hour (Big Ending from Big E. (a powerslam drop) and a middle rope DDT from Kofi) plants Diego with Jimmy and Cesaro making stereo saves.

Fernando switches with Diego for a rollup on Big E. but the referee says he's not legal. If that's true, I want to buy that referee a ham sandwich. Big E. picks up Diego and Kidd at the same time but Jimmy breaks it up with a superkick. Kidd eats Trouble in Paradise but Cesaro uppercuts Kofi on top. Los Matadores go up top for a double superplex but Cesaro and Big E. make it a double Tower of Doom. JBL: "OH THE HUMANITY!" Jimmy adds a Superfly splash to Big E. but Cesaro steals the pin at retain at 9:58.

Rating: B. Total and complete insanity here (described as a car wreck by the commentators) which was all it needed to be. They didn't go with a copy of last year's match, even though a lot of the participants were the same. Kidd and Cesaro were really clicking as a team and the division as a whole was looking up until Kidd's injury in June.

Pre-Show: Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal

Adam Rose, Alex Riley, Big E., Big Show, Bo Dallas, Cesaro, Curtis Axel, Damien Mizdow, Darren Young, Diego, Erick Rowan, Fandango, Fernando, Goldust, Heath Slater, Hideo Itami, Jack Swagger, Jimmy Uso, Kane, Kofi Kingston, Konnor, Mark Henry, Ryback, Sin Cara, The Miz, Titus O'Neil, Tyson Kidd, Viktor, Xavier Woods, Zack Ryder

Rose loves to party, Riley is back from injury, Axel is dressed like Hulk Hogan in a gimmick called Axelmania after he was never officially eliminated from the 2015 Royal Rumble, Dallas is a self-obsessed motivational speaker, Mizdow is Sandow copying the Miz as his stunt double (and becoming incredibly popular due to how hard he's worked at the character), Itami is an NXT guy who won a tournament for this spot and Konnor and Viktor are a power team called the Ascension. The seven people from the opening match are surprise additions to this.

Axel breaks up the brawling to start so he can rip off his shirt, earning himself an elimination from the masses. Everyone keeps fighting until Rose and Fandango eliminate each other. Miz and Mizdow double team Riley and get rid of him with Miz taking the credit. Dallas eliminates Ryder, takes a victory lap, and then gets kicked out by Itami. The fans are way into him so here's Big Show to eliminate Itami before anyone gets too excited.

Kane gets rid of Los Matadores at the same time and Cesaro does the same to Rose. Henry throws out Kidd but the ring is still WAY too full. Ascension gets rid of Henry and knocks Show down in a stupid move. Ryback dumps Ascension for their brilliance, followed by Young and Slater a few seconds after. Titus goes out too and it's all Ryback, so Big Show is RIGHT THERE to cut him off.

Show clotheslines Swagger out and takes out all three members of New Day from the apron. You WILL respect Big Show and his amazing strength whether you like it or not. We're down to Show, Rowan, Uso, Ryback, Cesaro, Goldust, Miz, Mizdow and Kane. The fans are behind Mizdow as Show dumps Rowan.

Ryback gets rid of Goldust but Kane saves Big Show for no logical reason. Miz and Mizdow take a double chokeslam from Kane, who is quickly slammed out by Cesaro. Show dumps Jimmy but gets picked up by Cesaro again, only to escape and dump Cesaro with ease. Ryback grabs a spinebuster on Show and is eliminated for trying to get any momentum.

It's Miz, Mizdow and Show for the final three but Mizdow FINALLY stands up to Miz and tells him to go do it himself. Miz gets annoyed and yells

at him for about a minute as Show just stands back and watch. Mizdow snaps and eliminates Miz and gets to fight Big Show on his own. Some clotheslines have the giant in trouble and Mizdow low bridges him halfway out. Show gets back up and shrugs off a front facelock before easily eliminating Mizdow at 18:08.

Rating: D. So yeah, all hail Big Show, may his name forever be praised, because he's big and strong and bald and was here back in 1999 so we must give him a win. On top of that, they were trying to push the idea that Big Show had never won a battle royal, ignoring the one he won on Smackdown in 2014 and the one he won on Raw in 2006.

Instead of using this to make Mizdow into someone important, they went with Big Show because he just hasn't won anything important in a long time. This was it for Mizdow as he would lose the big showdown with Miz less than a month later and pretty much disappear. Big Show on the other hand would do exactly the same thing he's done for about the last ten years: be treated like a monster and then lose to someone new. Except here of course because Mizdow winning would have been stupid.

Aloe Blacc sings America the Beautiful.

The opening video is hosted by LL Cool J and talks about how entertainment has evolved with everyone being connected. The one thing that has stayed the same though is us as we've watched moment after moment in the history of Wrestlemania. That generation at the beginning created what we see today and connects us all together. Tonight, these men and women will take the biggest stage and connect us all. This is Wrestlemania. Cool stuff here and it worked very well.

Intercontinental Title: Daniel Bryan vs. Bad News Barrett vs. Dolph Ziggler vs. Stardust vs. Luke Harper vs. R-Truth vs. Dean Ambrose

Ladder match and Barrett is defending after issuing a challenge for a bunch of people to fight him. Stardust is Cody Rhodes as an even freakier version of Goldust. Truth is scared of heights and is going to have some issues in this one. It's a huge brawl to start and Ambrose takes Harper down with a suicide dive. Stardust jumps off the middle rope and lands on a bunch of people (the Falling Star), leaving Harper to dive on everyone

but Ambrose.

Dean climbs a ladder and dives on the other six to put all seven of them down. Truth is the first one back in but he can't bring himself to climb. It's Barrett with the save but Bryan dropkicks a ladder into him before whipping Stardust into the ladder to crush Barrett even more. The momentum is stopped as Harper throws the ladder at Bryan but he's able to tie Harper upside down in the ladder for the YES Kicks.

That earns Bryan a superkick from Ziggle and it's Dean and Dolph going for a climb. Barrett joins them but Stardust takes out the ladder to put everyone down. The fans chant CODY to freak Stardust out so he throws a ladder at Harper. Stardust goes outside and pulls out his own ladder called the, and I quote, Exo-Atmospheric Starbird. In other words, it's a ladder covered in glitter.

Barrett will have none of that and breaks a rung off to give Stardust a beating. Dean throws the glitter ladder at Barrett and the glitter falls all over the ring. Now it's time to bring in two small ladders so Harper and Ambrose can have a duel, capped off by a boot to Dean's face. Harper lays a smaller ladder on the top rope and rams Dean into it face first. The ladder around Luke's head takes some people out but Truth drop toeholds Harper down, sending him into the ladder.

Truth sets up the big ladder but Stardust goes for the climb, only to get superplexed back down by Barrett. Bryan, Ziggle and Ambrose go up top until Dean drops down and shoves the ladder over. Dean goes up until Harper powerbombs him off the ladder and through a ladder bridged between the barricade and ring. Ziggle tries a sleeper on Harper as he climbs, followed by the Zig Zag to bring them crashing down.

Somehow Dolph is able to climb up, only to have Barrett pull him down into the Bull Hammer. Another one knocks Truth off but Bryan makes a quick climb and kicks Barrett down. Barrett is right back up though and makes a save, followed by a quick running knee from Bryan, allowing him to climb up, headbutt Ziggle off and win the title at 13:55.

Rating: B. Giving Bryan a title (the fifth different one he's fought for in five years) is a good idea as it lets the fans get it out of their

system with a feel good moment. If he hadn't won here, the fans would have probably hijacked the show with their DANIEL BRYAN chants because if Bryan isn't the featured attraction, there's no way they can possibly enjoy the show. Some fans. Anyway, this was exactly what the match should have been: Money in the Bank but for a title. Unfortunately Bryan would get hurt again and be out of action in less than a month, putting him on the shelf indefinitely.

We recap Seth Rollins vs. Randy Orton. Rollins broke up the Shield last year and became the Authority's young ace, which ticked Orton off. This led to a feud with Rollins putting Orton on the shelf (meaning onto a movie set) with a Curb Stomp onto some steps. Then Orton returned and rejoined the Authority for a few weeks, only to turn on them again and attack Rollins to set this up. After all that stupid, they went with a simpler idea: Orton as the original future of the WWE vs. Rollins as the new future.

Seth Rollins vs. Randy Orton

Rollins is Mr. Money in the Bank and has Joey Mercury and Jamie Noble as his personal stooges. Seth starts by flipping away from Orton, only to eat a dropkick and bail to the floor from the threat of an RK0. Back in and a big clothesline looks to set up the RK0 again but the Stooges offer a distraction to break it up. Orton deals with them early off a double elevated DDT from the apron.

The distraction lets Seth get in his first offense though and Orton is in trouble. A snap suplex gets two and we're in the chinlock on Orton. Back up and Orton grabs a powerslam, followed by a t-bone suplex to send Rollins to the apron. As luck would have it, he's in position for the elevated DDT but Seth pops up with an enziguri, followed by an Asai moonsault to put both guys on the floor.

Back in and Randy can't get a superplex but he'll settle for a top rope backdrop and a high cross body, only to have Seth roll through for two. A low superkick staggers Orton and Seth tries standing Sliced Bread #2, only to get caught in the RK0 for a very close two. That's a move you don't see kicked out of very often. The Stooges break up the Punt to keep

this PG, allowing Rollins to hit the Curb Stomp for two. Seth tries it again but this time Orton launches him into the air and catches him in the RK0 for the pin at 13:15.

Rating: B. Good but not great here with the near falls off the false finishes not having the best heat in the world. That ending is more than worth it though and looked awesome with Orton being able to catch that thing from almost anywhere. Orton is the kind of guy that you can throw in there whenever you need a spot like this and the fans are going to freak out over the RK0 every time, especially when it's something like that. Good stuff.

Ronda Rousey is here.

We recap HHH vs. Sting, which started back at Survivor Series but Sting disappeared for a few months, as is his custom. Sting stood up against the Authority's corruption so the Authority talked down to him for never being in the big pond before, because WCW's legacy exists for WWE to stomp on it and beat their chest over the battle that ended fourteen years ago. This turned into a big thing about the Monday Night Wars with Sting being the last soldier from WCW that had to be vanquished.

As a side note, here's a great example of why Stephanie gets on people's nerves. On one of the last shows before this match, Sting came out to say that this shouldn't be about the Monday Night Wars because that would be totally ridiculous. This brought out Stephanie, to insist that it WAS about the Monday Night Wars and barely letting Sting get in another word, because she had spoken and that's all that mattered.

HHH vs. Sting

No DQ or countout. Sting is played to the ring by some kind of Japanese band with drums and a gong. As you might expect, HHH completely upstages him with a full on Terminator commercial with the robots rising from the stage, a clip from the movie, HHH dressed as a Terminator and Arnold Schwarzenegger himself appearing on screen for the introduction. It might be time to call in Robocop.

They lock up after forty five seconds and a shoulder drops HHH for more

stalling. A hiptoss and dropkick put HHH in the corner and Sting is looking better than he has in years. Fans: "YOU STILL GOT IT!" HHH's right hands and facebuster have little effect as Sting goes for the Scorpion Deathlock (basically a Sharpshooter), sending HHH bailing to the floor. HHH comes back in but gets whipped over the corner as this has been one sided for the first five minutes.

Sting goes to the floor though and the Stinger Splash hits the barricade by mistake, as it's done all but roughly twice in his career. Back in and HHH whips him across the ring several times until Sting collapses. We hit the chinlock to slow things down again before HHH goes to the middle rope for some reason. He dives into the Scorpion and here's DX (X-Pac and the New Age Outlaws) for the save.

Sting fights them off with ease and backdrops HHH onto them, setting up a dive off the top (remember that Sting is 56 here) to take them all out. Back in and a Pedigree gets two so HHH gets the sledgehammer (one of at least two under the ring). This brings out the NWO (Hall, Nash and Hogan) to save Sting (SO much wrong with that statement, not even counting trying to remember if the Kliq exists in storylines or not). They take their sweet time and eventually clean house, allowing Sting to hit the Scorpion Death Drop (reverse DDT) for two.

Now the Deathlock goes on and Hogan pulls the sledgehammer away. Gunn takes Nash down and Nash is holding his leg in what almost has to be a rib. Sting tries to put the hold back on but Shawn Michaels runs in for Sweet Chin Music (well the area a few inches in front of the chin that is). HHH only gets two and both guys are done. Shawn hands HHH the hammer but Hall gives Sting a bat for the awesome duel. HHH's hammer is broken over the bat and Sting pounds away in the corner, only to dive into the sledgehammer to the face for the pin at 18:35.

Rating: B-. This was a blast until the ending which I really didn't want to see. Of course the quality here was bad but they were never going to get a good match out there so why not just go for the big circus act? I know the logic is that you can't have Sting come in and beat HHH because he was WCW, but again, IT WAS FOURTEEN YEARS AGO.

Why does anything about the other company matter anymore? Sting came in as a big, fun moment and then it's HAHA HHH WINS AGAIN! To be fair though, this was his first Wrestlemania win in five years so it's not like it happens often. Still though, fun stuff but the ending was a punch to the stomach.

Post match HHH shakes Sting's hand. As in the guy he hit in the face with a hammer two minutes ago. This doesn't make any sense as HHH is still the corrupt villain, meaning Sting's original mission should be ongoing. Forget all that though as this was one more rehash of the Monday Night Wars because people still care about that.

Ads for new shows coming to the WWE Network, including the new Divas Search.

Maria Menunos, in a Bushwhackers shirt, brings in Daniel Bryan. First ever Intercontinental Champion Pat Patterson comes in to congratulate him, as do Roddy Piper, Ricky Steamboat, Ric Flair (of course) and Bret Hart, who starts a YES chant. Ron Simmons comes in and scares them all before hitting his catchphrase.

Skylar Grey, Kid Ink and Travis Barker perform the theme songs. Thankfully it wasn't a full on medley.

AJ Lee/Paige vs. Bella Twins

Real people vs. reality stars (from Total Divas), even though Paige had already become a cast member. Nikki is Divas Champion and in the middle of her reign of doom. Paige debuted at the Raw after Wrestlemania last year and has formed a dream team with AJ to take on the sisters.

Nikki and Paige have a catfight to start with the champ getting the better of it and knocking AJ off the apron. An Alabama Slam gets two on off an Alabama Slam. Brie comes in with a middle rope missile dropkick as the announcers debate the importance of the women not on Total Divas. AJ gets knocked off the apron again and Brie's running knee to Paige gets two.

Back to Nikki who drops AJ for the third time, followed by the Rack

Attack for two on Paige. They're even kicking out of the finishers in midcard matches now. Paige superkicks Nikki down and both Bellas wind up on the floor, setting up Paige's flip dive off the apron. The hot tag FINALLY brings in AJ who is quickly slammed down for two but Brie has to save Nikki from the Black Widow. Nikki forearms AJ for two more, only to get caught in the Black Widow for the submission at 6:42.

Rating: C-. This was a handicap match for the first half with Paige cleaning house, which was made even weirder when AJ came in anyway. Not that it mattered though as the Bellas were going to be pushed as the stars as long as they wanted to because of that stupid reality show. In theory this should have set up AJ as the next challenger but she retired later in the week and left the company for good.

We get a tale of the tape for Lesnar vs. Reigns, which Cole says is the result of a computer analysis. The stats include height, weight and career accomplishments. Did this computer analysis take place in the Korean War?

Hall of Fame video, with highlights of Lanny Poffo reading a poem to induct his brother Randy Savage and Connor Michalek receiving the first Warrior Award.

The Class of 2015 includes Rikishi, Larry Zbyszko (mainly famous in the 80s), Alundra Blayze, Connor Michalek, the Bushwhackers (with Butch on crutches but still doing the strut), Tatsumi Fujinami (a legendary Japanese wrestler), Randy Savage (represented by his brother), Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Kevin Nash (for the required Kliq member, though I wonder why he can go in under his real name and not Hall).

We recap John Cena vs. Rusev for the US Title. Rusev, an evil Bulgarian/Russian, won the title late last year and is undefeated. He's run through all kinds of American stars and even beat Cena via knockout at Fast Lane 2015. Tonight is the big rematch (as granted by Rusev's manager Lana to plant the seeds for their split) and showdown for the title. This is one of those stories that worked for years and is still working now because it's such a simple idea.

US Title: Rusev vs. John Cena

Cena is challenging. Rusev's entrance trumps everything tonight as the Russian military accompanies Lana to the ring before Rusev rolls out IN A TANK. This is so Rocky IV. Cena has a video montage of Presidents of the United States talking about American exceptionalism until Cena walks out. The fans do the always awesome JOHN CENA SUCKS chant to the tune of his music.

The champ spinwheel kicks the American down to start and dives at Cena for a gutwrench suplex (from Rusev in a cool move) for two. A Cannonball in the corner gets the same but Rusev stops to wave the Russian flag. You don't do that to a real American so Cena kicks him in the face and starts his way too early finishing sequence. The top rope Fameasser gets two but the fans are too busy cheering for Lana to care.

The AA is broken up and a jumping superkick drops Cena cold. Rusev argues with the referee though and Cena hooks a tornado DDT for two more. A quick Alabama Slam (that's how you do it Nikki) looks to set up the Accolade (Rusev's camel clutch finisher) but Cena pulls him down into the STF. As Cena does some of the loudest instructing I've ever heard (telling Rusev to keep his head up), Lana throws in a shoe for a distraction so Rusev can make the ropes. Seriously, a shoe? You couldn't like, go yell at him or something? At least it was rather heelish.

Rusev throws him down with a fall away slam, followed by a top rope headbutt of all things for two. He can't quite get the Accolade though, allowing Cena to kick him away and debut the springboard Stunner for two of his own. Another jumping superkick and a wheelbarrow slam set up the Accolade and the fans are THRILLED. This time Cena powers out and grabs the STF. Lana offers another distraction but Rusev rams into her by mistake, setting up the AA to give Cena the title at 14:43.

Rating: C+. It's cool to see Cena drop down the card like this as he's been in the main event for so long now that it's hard to get into seeing him win the World Title again. The match was good enough even if there was an obvious ending but the Accolade could have stayed on longer. Rusev was built up to lose at a match like this and there's nothing wrong with that. It would have been interesting to see Rusev escape again here though and have Cena chase him over the summer.

Rusev blames Lana for the loss.

Wrestlemania XXXII is in Dallas.

The pre-show panel talks about the Tag Team Title match and Big Show winning the battle royal. Thanks for reminding me.

Here are HHH and Stephanie to brag about the new attendance record and desperately fill in some time as we have two matches left and nearly an hour and a half to go. Stephanie talks about watching Wrestlemania I live and seeing her friend Andre the Giant (This was a thing for her around this time as she would mention this whenever she could. For some reason this was her justification for not letting Cena be in the Andre battle royal.).

Wrestlemania has grown exponentially since then and it's all because of the Authority's leadership. HHH says it's like he beat everyone here tonight, just like he beat Sting (Buy a ticket, get a hammer to the face!). They own everyone here because the Authority wins. That means they own the people and that means it's time for the Rock. Cole says Rock has headlined five Wrestlemanias. Are they really still going with the idea that Rock vs. Hogan wasn't the headliner?

The fans keep cheering until Stephanie asks them to be quiet because we get the idea. Rock tells Stephanie that she doesn't own the people here, including himself because he was born right around here. As for HHH, he can either go dress up as the Terminator again or they can make a Wrestlemania moment right here and right now. HHH doesn't seem interested so, just like Rock left his heart in San Francisco, HHH clearly left something back in Connecticut.

Stephanie gets in Rock's face and says he knows there's no Rock without the McMahons. Rock's dad Rocky Johnson would be nowhere without Vince Sr., Vince Jr. and Stephanie. That starts a chant for Shane, which even Cole acknowledges. Rock says that Stephanie would be nowhere without Vince so she slaps him. Stephanie keeps ranting as Rock goes outside.....and stands next to Ronda Rousey. Fans: "RONDA'S GONNA KILL YOU!" Rock introduces her to Stephanie but Stephanie says they're friends already.

Stephanie KEEPS GOING and says this is her ring. Ronda says any ring she steps into is hers so Stephanie can make her leave. Stephanie smiles at her but Rousey gives her a look, which Rock sums up as meaning "she's going to reach down your throat, pull out your insides and play jump rope with your Fallopian tubes." HHH tries to interrupt and gets beaten down, including a hiptoss from Rousey. Stephanie loads up the slap but gets her arm bent back with as little force as possible, likely due to UFC contract stipulations. Rousey and Rock stand tall.

There's no time to recap Bray Wyatt vs. Undertaker but it's what you would expect: Bray wants to be the new evil monster and Undertaker stands in his way. The interesting note here is Bray sprained the heck out of his ankle earlier in the day so he's nowhere near 100%.

Bray Wyatt vs. Undertaker

The awesome entrances continue (well as awesome as a guy holding a lantern when it's still daylight can be) as Bray walks down the ramp and passes a string of zombies who come to life as he goes by. Undertaker has grown some hair back and looks like he did in 2002. Bray charges into a boot before the bell, though that might be all that ankle can handle for the match.

Some driving shoulders set up Old School (notice that Undertaker's offense here keeps Bray from having to stand alone) but a running clothesline puts Undertaker on the floor. He lands on his feet though and pulls Bray out to keep up the beating. The apron legdrop staggers Bray even more but he breaks up the big boot with his running cross body. Bray takes his time pounding Undertaker down which makes sense coming from him.

The ankle is fine enough for a running splash in the corner but Bray drops down and puts on a chinlock. For someone as banged up as he is, this is a solid performance from Wyatt. Undertaker's head is rammed into the post but Bray goes down and holds his ankle. I don't know why they didn't do a quick angle during the match to explain the injury. Back in and Bray can't stand at first.

Undertaker grabs Hell's Gate but Bray punches his way out before it goes

on full. A release Rock Bottom sets up the backslash for two on Undertaker. Sister Abigail is countered into a chokeslam followed by a Tombstone for two. These near falls are WAY past overdone so far tonight. Another Tombstone is countered into Sister Abigail to freak Bray out even more. Bray does his spider bridge up but Undertaker sits up and glares into Wyatt's eyes, sending Bray wilting to the mat in a perfect reaction. Bray actually wins a slugout but Sister Abigail is countered into a second Tombstone to give Undertaker the pin at 15:06.

Rating: C+. This match told me a few things. First and foremost, last year's match was so bad because of the injury. Undertaker looked like his old (emphasis on that word) self here and was nowhere near as off as he was last year. Unfortunately it also tells me that Bray isn't going to move up the card any time soon.

With the Streak over there's no real reason for Undertaker to win here, other than to give the fans a feel good moment. Bray was trying as hard as he could on one leg but he could only get so far. Finally, Undertaker is missing something now that the Streak is gone. 21-1 still sounds impressive but it's just not the same.

Ad for Extreme Rules.

We recap Roman Reigns vs. Brock Lesnar. Brock has been unstoppable lately after squashing Cena to win the title at Summerslam 2014. Reigns won the Royal Rumble to earn the shot, despite being LOATHED by the crowd at this point. The idea became about him trying to honor his family's history and legacy which worked to a degree, but no matter what they did, it was still Brock Lesnar on the other side and people wanted to see him massacre Reigns in every way he could think of.

The other problem for Reigns is he hasn't really earned the spot. Aside from the Rumble, his only major win was last month over Daniel Bryan. This really wasn't the strongest build in the world and is boiling down to Brock suplexes a lot and Reigns hits him a lot. Roman has been told he can't beat Brock and his motivation is to prove him wrong. That's the extent of his motivation and that's not enough for the main event of Wrestlemania.

WWE World Title: Brock Lesnar vs. Roman Reigns

Brock is defending of course. We do the big match intros and Reigns is booed out of the building, following by the fans to quote Heyman's intro along with him. Roman goes right at Brock to start but gets driven into the corner, setting up the first German suplex. Brock is already bleeding but he hits the F5 inside of thirty seconds. A release fisherman's suplex sends Reigns flying but he elbows out of a German, drawing incredible booing from the crowd.

Brock no sells a clothesline and now the German sends Reigns across the ring again. Reigns smiles at Brock, earning himself a belly to back suplex and Brock debuting the "SUPLEX CITY" line. Right hands don't bother Brock either as another German drops Reigns again. Roman keeps smiling so Brock breaks it up with a release German. The fans think this is awesome as Brock forearm's Reigns off the apron and into the barricade. As he gets back in, Reigns scores with a knee to the ribs, followed by some kicks to the face but Brock catches a foot and knocks Reigns silly with a clothesline.

A belly to belly overhead brings Reigns back in over the top rope but Reigns shakes his head at Brock again. Another F5 gets two and now Brock take the gloves off. Some hard slaps put Reigns down but he tells Brock to bring it on. Another German earns him another bring it on so Brock gives him suplex number ten. The third F5 gets two more, putting Reigns past Undertaker last year. Brock takes Roman outside but Reigns posts him, drawing some real blood from Lesnar.

Back in and Brock is wobbly so Roman its two straight Superman Punches. That gets him to a knee but Reigns has to elbow out of another German. The third Superman Punch puts Brock down and there's the spear. Brock is up though so a second spear gets a VERY close two. Heyman is on his knees praying as the fans are booing Roman even more. A fourth Superman Punch is countered into a fourth F5.....AND HERE COMES SETH ROLLINS TO CASH IN MONEY IN THE BANK!

WWE World Title: Brock Lesnar vs. Roman Reigns vs. Seth Rollins

The Curb Stomp puts Brock down but Reigns has to spear Brock down to save

Seth from an F5. Another Curb Stomp (and a whisper of “thank you so much” to Reigns) gives Seth the title at 16:43!

Rating: A-. They went in a TOTALLY different direction here and it was the best thing they possibly could have done. Reigns vs. Lesnar had little interest as a match but as a one sided war with Reigns giving it everything he had near the end, they turned it into one of the most dramatic spectacles you could find. They had me on the near fall after that second spear and I lost it when Rollins came out.

That ending was a stroke of brilliance as they didn’t want to job Lesnar but they didn’t want to give Reigns the title yet. Rollins had been the wrestler of the year in 2014 and it made much better sense to give him the credit that he deserved for it here. Great drama, great action, and a way better match that it had any right to be.

Fireworks and posing take us out.

Overall Rating: B+. I actually liked this show a lot more live, which probably had a lot to do with the expectations being so low coming in. With more time to think about it and the shock of the cash in being gone, it’s still a really strong show that FAR exceeded expectations. The main event was great and most of the other stuff was good. Aside from the main event there really isn’t a big blow away match though and that hurts things a bit.

The entire show was set up differently this year as there were very few backstage segments and the show was able to fly by otherwise. However, there was that big twenty plus minute segment with Rock/HHH/Stephanie and that’s what caused a big part of this show’s problem: it’s too long.

Counting the two hour pre-show and it’s nearly thirty minutes of wrestling, this show runs nearly six hours. It doesn’t matter if it’s the greatest show you’ve ever watched; that’s too long. There had to be something that could be cut in here (hint: it was the long part that didn’t involve a match), even though none of the matches broke twenty minutes. Between the big talking segment and the live performance, which still adds nothing to the show, there’s too much in here and it makes for a very long sit.

Overall though, this was a major surprise and a better show than it had any right to be. The low expectations helped it a lot, but this was looking like one of the worst Wrestlemanias in history and wound up being a lot of fun. Nothing on it really stands out above the rest (save for maybe the main event) so the whole is greater than the sum of all its parts. Really fun show here.

Ratings Comparison

New Day vs. Los Matadores vs. Usos vs. Cesaro/Tyson Kidd

Original: C+

Redo: B

Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal

Original: D+

Redo: D

Intercontinental Title Ladder Match

Original: B

Redo: B

Seth Rollins vs. Randy Orton

Original: B

Redo: B

Sting vs. HHH

Original: B

Redo: B-

Paige/AJ Lee vs. Bella Twins

Original: C+

Redo: C-

Rusev vs. John Cena

Original: B-

Redo: C+

Bray Wyatt vs. Undertaker

Original: B

Redo: C+

Roman Reigns vs. Brock Lesnar

Original: B+

Redo: A-

Overall Rating

Original: A

Redo: B+

Yeah the shock had a lot to do with it but there was good stuff throughout.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2015/03/29/wrestlemania-xxxi-shock-and-awe-shock-and-awe/>

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