

Smackdown – March 31, 2023: The Final Talk

Smackdown

Date: March 31, 2023

Location: Crypto.com Arena, Los Angeles, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, Wade Barrett

It's the go home show for Wrestlemania and that means we could be in for a night that is a little different than normal. The featured attractions are one more Roman Reigns vs. Cody Rhodes showdown plus the Andre The Giant Memorial Battle Royal. This show has a tendency to be a little weaker but maybe they can change it this time. Let's get to it.

[Here are last week's results if you need a recap.](#)

Here are the Usos to get things going. They are ready for Wrestlemania but here are Kevin Owens and Sami Zayn to cut them off. Zayn doesn't want anything left unsaid before Wrestlemania so let's get it all out there. Owens says no one welcomed him to WWE like the Usos did, even to the point of playing with his son. Then they started doing Roman Reigns' bidding (Owens: "Look at me when I'm talking to you.") and then they tried to take away his livelihood.

Zayn is the reason Owens is standing here today and they better look at him now, because he can't wait to do what he has to do tomorrow night. It ain't paranoia, because they're taking the titles. The Usos say they have no love for either of them because this is the real family. Zayn says blood isn't the only thing that makes you family, because family is loyal. Jey: "WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT LOYALTY SAMI???"

Zayn talks about being loyal to Jey and the Bloodline from day one but the Usos chose Reigns over loyalty. Zayn can't wait to get rid of the Bloodline so the two of them can get back to

being the guys Owens remembers. The Usos don't buy it and say Owens/Zayn are going to lose the big match, when Owens stabs Zayn in the back again. The Bloodline isn't going to fall because this is BloodlineMania. They brought the emotion here and all four can sell that like few others. This almost has to headline Night One because it is blowing away everything but the main event.

The Usos go to leave and run into the Street Profits coming out for the first match.

Montez Ford vs. Ricochet vs. Chad Gable vs. Erik

All of the respective partners are here. They circle each other to start until Ford and Ricochet are left alone, with Ford flipping to his feet and dancing a bit. Gable comes in and dances a bit as well, earning himself a double dropkick right back to the floor. Now it's Erik back inside but a double dropkick puts him outside too. Ricochet and Ford head outside and get caught with stereo suplexes to put Gable and Erik in control. Back in and Erik runs them over again, only to get clotheslined by Erik as we take a break.

We take a break and come back with Gable belly to belly superplexing Ricochet to leave all four down. It's Ford up first to start the comeback and knock all three down in a row. Gable is back with a German suplex for two but Erik plants him hard onto Ford. Back up and Ford hits a huge flip dive to the floor, followed by a frog splash to Gable back inside. Ricochet isn't about to be outdone and nails a shooting star press to put Gable away at 9:35.

Rating: C+. This was the kind of all action car crash match that you want to see. The win actually does build a bit of momentum on the way to Wrestlemania, even if I can't imagine Ricochet and Braun Strowman actually winning. For now though, good match and a fun match on the go home show.

Video on Rhea Ripley.

Andre The Giant Memorial Battle Royal

Baron Corbin, Top Dolla, Xavier Woods, Karrion Kross, Humberto, Butch, Ivar, Ashante Adonis, Angel, Angelo Dawkins, Ridge Holland, Otis, Cruz Del Toro, Santos Escobar, Joaquin Wilde, Doc Gallows, Karl Anderson, Dexter Lumis, Elias, Rick Boogs, Dolph Ziggler, Madcap Moss, Johnny Gargano, Shelton Benjamin, Mustafa Ali, Mace, Mansoor, Bobby Lashley, LA Knight, Braun Strowman, Bronson Reed, Cedric Alexander

Barrett: "Alright Cole, who's going to win this?" Cole: "Top Dolla. He can't go over the top rope." That's kind of vicious. Funny but vicious. Corbin is out seconds in as Lumis is standing still in the corner. Cole actually name drops Cesaro as a former winner as Lashley gets rid of Adonis and Dolla. There goes Wilde, followed by Dawkins and Erik thanks to the Maximum Male Models. They try to toss Otis but Mace is eliminated by Lumis instead.

Gargano superkicks Mace out as the ring is clearing a bit. Anderson and Gallows are both tossed and Boogs muscles Otis out (that was a big one. Los Lotharios get rid of Elias and Boogs tosses both of them to even things up. We take a break and come back with Woods and Lumis both being tossed out as the ring is much thinner now. Knight dumps Ali (I think) but gets caught in the Krossjacket. Lashley Hurt Locks Ziggler but lets go for a showdown with Kross.

Lashley dumps Kross and Moss is gone as well. We get a Reed vs. Strowman match but Lashley interrupts them to get rid of Ziggler. The big guys knock each other down and Gargano counters the Bitter End into a DDT on Butch. Knight goes after Gargano (the fans REALLY approve) but it's time for almost everyone to hit something.

Lashley finally tosses Gargano and Strowman gets rid of Escobar. Reed eliminates Holland, who catches Butch to prevent an elimination. Reed gets rid of Brute, getting us down to

Reed, Knight, Strowman and Lashley. Knight (getting crazy positive reactions) tries to eliminate Reed but can't overcome the power of physics. Instead Reed dumps Knight, becoming the biggest villain in the company (even commentary has to acknowledge it).

Lashley fires off running clotheslines to Reed and Strowman but gets powerslammed for his efforts. Reed sends Strowman to the apron and shoulders him out (that's an upset) to get us down to two. The Tsunami misses though and Lashley hits the spear but Reed sends him to the apron. Back in and Lashley tosses him out for the win at 14:31.

Rating: C+. While it would have been better for Lashley to do something at Wrestlemania, this is enough of a consolation prize. Lashley is also suddenly a good guy again, which might even suit him better. Other than that, Boogs and Reed looked good here, but the story is going to be Knight. Those reactions aren't going away and there is no way to ignore them much longer. Commentary hearing them is an interesting sign and a face turn next week wouldn't shock me.

Long video on Cody Rhodes, from the start of his career to the main event of Wrestlemania. There's a long gap of about 6 years in the middle but close enough.

Natalya vs. Raquel Rodriguez vs. Shayna Baszler vs. Sonya Deville

The respective partners are here too. Rodriguez and Natalya go after Baszler to start before throwing her and Deville outside. Natalya Sharpshooters Deville until Baszler makes the save. Rodriguez fireman's carries Natalya and Baszler at the same time before kicking Natalya in the face. Deville posts Rodriguez, who is right back with a big boot to Baszler and a Tejana Bomb to Deville for the pin at 2:52. That was quick.

Legado del Fantasma comes to see Rey Mysterio, who is getting ready for his Hall of Fame speech. They want to see him give

Dominik a lesson and will have his back to deal with Judgment Day. Rey likes the idea, but they're going to do it in style. They all get shirts....because the LWO (Latino World Order for you non WCW fans) is back! Cole actually remembers that Rey didn't join the original version willingly in a nice bit of continuity.

Sheamus/Drew McIntyre vs. Imperium

Drew's music cuts off Sheamus' intro, which doesn't sit well. To make it worse, Drew says Sheamus can start and then starts instead by hammering on Vinci. A cheap shot from the apron slows McIntyre down but Sheamus tags himself in. A top rope show to the head drops Kaiser, setting up the forearms to the chest (Drew is not impressed). Sheamus and Drew glare at each other so Imperium jumps them, only to be sent to the floor.

We take a break and come back with Sheamus in trouble in the corner as Kaiser cranks on a chinlock. Sheamus Irish Curses his way to freedom though and it's Drew coming back in to clean house. Sheamus tags himself back in though and wrecks both of them, setting up the Brogue Kick (as McIntyre hits the Claymore) for the pin on Vinci at 8:19.

Rating: C+. This was mainly a story building match as they already both can't stand Gunther and now they can't stand each other. There needs to be more of a story than they both want to go after Gunther so this is the personal touch that it might need. Not a bad match, but the action here absolutely was not the point.

Wrestlemania rundown.

Here is Cody Rhodes for the big final showdown with Roman Reigns. Before Reigns comes out though, Cody talks about how all of the roads have led here and the extra attention is on him. He is working harder than ever trying to deal with the media and getting his workouts and nutrition in, but he has

never been more ready. Right now though, he feels wildly unprepared.

When he asked what the people want to talk about, we could talk about anything, because the fighting needs to start. He could do anything here, including reciting California Love by Tupac (which he does) but he'll cut himself off before he gets too adult for FOX. Maybe we could talk about gratitude, because he is so thankful for getting here. The reality is that Roman Reigns is a ten year project that only started taking off in year eight. Cody: "Oh we're shooting here cowboy."

Reigns has talked about meeting the guy so allow Cody to introduce himself. He isn't Dusty's boy or dashing or Dust, but rather the next Undisputed WWE Universal Champion. Before he can say he finishes the story, cue Reigns and Paul Heyman to interrupt. Reigns loads up the ACKNOWLEDGE ME but tells Cody to do it instead, because it's his turn. They get face to face and Reigns holds up the title to end the show. This feels like a Wrestlemania main event so they have done very well with this whole thing. Now just do the match right.

Overall Rating: B-. This was the "just talk, don't screw it up" show for the most part and that's what it should be less than twenty four hours before Wrestlemania. WWE has done a great job with the buildup and this show has me actually wanting to see what happens. They didn't do anything dumb in the last week and while this show was absolutely not wrestling heavy, it did what it needed to do on the last stop before Wrestlemania.

Results

Ricochet b. Montez Ford, Erik and Chad Gable – Shooting star press to Gable

Bobby Lashley won the Andre The Giant Memorial Battle Royal last eliminating Bronson Reed

Raquel Rodriguez b. Shanya Baszler, Sonya Deville and Natalya

– Tejana Bomb to Deville

Sheamus/Drew McIntyre b. Imperium – Brogue Kick to Vince

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