

Smackdown – March 22, 2024: That Wrestlemania Lull

Smackdown

Date: March 22, 2024

Location: Fiserv Forum, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Commentators: Corey Graves, Wade Barrett

We are just over two weeks away from Wrestlemania and that means things are going to be picking up around here. In this case that means we have Roman Reigns and Cody Rhodes going face to face, which could make for a big moment even if the Rock isn't here. Other than that we have Rey Mysterio vs. Santos Escobar, which should be quite the showdown. Let's get to it.

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

Rey Mysterio vs. Santos Escobar

Their respective stables are banned from ringside. After the long recap of their relationship and split, Rey hammers away and drops Escobar with an elbow to the face. Rey slips a bit and comes up limping slightly, allowing Escobar to knock him off the top. Not that it matters as Rey hits a top rope hurricanrana into a baseball slide dropkick in the corner. Escobar is back with a running dropkick of his own, only to get headscissored out to the corner. The sliding splash connects for Rey and we take a break.

Back with Escobar hitting the running knees in the corner and tying him in the Tree of Woe. Rey breaks that up and sends him outside, setting up a dive off the post to the floor. Back in and another basement dropkick sets up a Lionsault for two on Escobar. Rey dropkicks him back to the floor for some rams into the announcers' table, followed by a running seated senton into the timekeeper's area. Escobar is thrown back in

but a man in a Mysterio mask shows up to distract Rey. That lets Escobar hit his own 619 into the Phantom Driver for the pin at 12:34. It's Dominik Mysterio, with the fans not being happy.

Rating: C+. That's a surprise way to go and gives Dominik something to do after not being the biggest star in recent weeks. The Rey vs. Escobar feud is probably not done as we need the big LWO vs. Legado showdown, but for now we might be getting more from Rey vs. Dominik. It worked well last year, but it's kind of a random twist after they haven't interacted in a long time. As for the match, it's always nice to have Rey back, but Escobar winning here should be a nice boost for him.

We look back at Bayley being beaten down by Damage CTRL, with Naomi's save not working.

Bayley (in brighter clothes) thanks Naomi for her help last week but Naomi wants to take out Iyo Sky. Bianca Belair comes in and doesn't buy what Bayley is saying after the last year plus. Belair and Bayley argue but Naomi walks off.

Post break Belair tries to convince Naomi that she's right but Naomi is going to be out there fighting Damage CTRL. She wants Belair to help her, because Belair couldn't do it on her own either.

Wrestlemania Tag Team Title Qualifying Match: Grayson Waller/Austin Theory vs. OC

Michin is here with the OC, who are now in two qualifying competitions for Tag Team Title shots over Wrestlemania weekend. Gallows and Theory start things off with Gallows launching him into the corner and hammering away. Anderson comes in and Theory/Waller are sent to the floor for a flip dive.

We take a break and come back with Gallows hitting a heck of a chokeslam on Waller, with Michin adding an armdrag on the

floor. Anderson hits a flipping neckbreaker on Theory and grabs back to back spinebusters. The middle rope neckbreaker gets two on Waller but the Magic Killer is broken up. Waller grabs a rollup with feet on the ropes to pin Gallows at 6:54.

Rating: C. Not much to see here but they went the right way by not having the OC, who have barely done anything for months, go over. Waller and Theory might not be the biggest deal around at the moment but they deserve a chance to go to Wrestlemania over the OC. That being said, it's nice to have the OC doing SOMETHING after just standing around for such a long time.

Video on Bron Breakker, including a bunch of his stats to make him look like even more of a physical freak.

Earlier today, Roman Reigns was on the Pat McAfee Show and talked about how he is the only one who didn't have to go to Hollywood because it came to him.

Naomi vs. Iyo Sky

Non-title and Damage CTRL is here with Sky...or they would be if she was here. We cut to the back to see Sky attacking Bayley until officials break it up. Naomi kicks her into the corner to start but Sky slugs her way out of trouble, setting up a middle rope hurricanrana. A middle rope spinning kick to the face drops Sky though and something like a 619 bulldog gives Naomi two.

We take a break and come back with Sky being sent into the buckle, setting up a high crossbody. Something like a splits Banzai Drop (that's a new one) gets two on Sky but she's right back with the running Meteora in the corner. Naomi is fine enough to catch her on top for a superplex and they slug it out from their knees. Sky gets knocked down again and Naomi goes up, only to be distracted by Damage CTRL. That's enough for Sky to pull her down and hit Over the Moonsault for the pin at 8:56.

Rating: B-. It's always a good sign when a match ends and I want to see them do more, which was the case here. They were having a good match and Naomi was doing the more unique offense that makes her stand out. She's been lacking that kind of a match since she returned to the company and it's good to see her doing it again. On the other hand, Sky gets a nice win on the way to Wrestlemania, where Bayley is pretty clearly going to need some friends.

Post match the beatdown is on, including the mist, but Bianca Belair runs in for the save. The numbers game takes Belair down though and the villains stand tall.

Jade Cargill is officially on Smackdown with her first official

Post break Naomi is getting her eyes cleaned out when Tiffany Stratton comes in to say that's a good look for her.

Kevin Owens is yelling at Nick Aldis when Pretty Deadly interrupts. Owens doesn't like the interruption and wants a tag match next week, with Randy Orton popping up to be the partner (Pretty Deadly jumping when he appeared was great). Aldis makes the match and Owens punches both of Pretty Deadly at once to continue his running joke (Owens: "Hey Randy look I did it!").

We see a video from AJ Styles' house when LA Knight showed up for a brawl. The cops arrived and Knight was arrested, complete with footage from the police car as he's taken away. Styles declined to press charges and Knight has been released.

Wrestlemania Tag Team Title Qualifying Match: Street Profits vs. AOP

The winners face Grayson Waller/Austin Theory next week for a spot in the Wrestlemania ladder match. All of their respective associates come out with them but only Paul Ellering sticks around. Dawkins goes after them to start but gets caught in

the wrong corner. Akam fires off some knees but Dawkins is up with a dropkick to the floor. Ford tries a big flip dive but gets pulled out of the air and powerbombed into Dawkins as we take a break.

Back with Rezar hammering on Ford with some double stomping in the corner making it worse. Rezar comes back in but gets enzigured, allowing the diving tag off to Dawkins. The pace picks way up and the Silencer hits Akam but he slips out of a Doomsday Device. The Final Chapter connects but Dawkins makes the save. Ford gets out of the powerbomb/neckbreaker combination and small packages Rezar for the pin at 8:33.

Rating: C+. It wasn't quite power vs. speed but the Profits had to keep things moving to take out the monsters. I'm a bit surprised that the AOP took a clean loss so soon after their return but the Profits are hardly some makeshift team. Ice match here and I wasn't sure who was going to win, which is always a nice feeling.

Here's what's coming next week.

Here is Roman Reigns, with Paul Heyman, for his big showdown with Cody Rhodes, with promises that everyone else will leave them alone. Reigns reiterates said promises, has the fans acknowledge him, and then brings out Rhodes, albeit after a break. With Rhodes here, Reigns gets right to the point by calling Rhodes a fool for aligning himself with various people.

Reigns talks about how Seth Rollins promised to be Rhodes' shield, but they were in the Shield together. They might not have done good guy things, but they had a bond. Rhodes asks if Reigns remembers the first team to beat the Shield, offering a hint of their last names (he says Rhodes, which is a weird way of saying "Orton, Kane and Bryan"). Rhodes gets to the point and asks if he can trust Rollins. Instead though, he asks if Reigns can trust the Rock. Is the Tribal Chief in charge, or

is it the Final Boss?

Reigns says Rhodes asked Rock the same thing because it's all he has. Rhodes may be great but he's the greatest #2 of all time, while Reigns is #1. Rhodes talks about how Reigns was raised in this business, just like him, and Reigns probably grew up wanting to be the next big star. Even if he's the best #2, Rhodes is the one, so good luck at Wrestlemania.

Reigns isn't going to accept a handshake and goes to leave, but snaps his fingers. Cue the Bloodline but before they get in the ring, here are Jey Uso and Seth Rollins to cut them off. A big staredown ends the show. They're in a weird place with this feud as the story is ready to go and they have to fill in two more weeks before we get there. That doesn't leave them much to do other than have these big talking segments. While it worked, we're at the point where they need to have the match, which could make for some tricky matches over the next two weeks.

Overall Rating: B-. This show was about the big talking segment, plus a few other things, which went well enough. Most of the focus was on the Women's Title match plus the double Damage CTRL stories. Those stories needed the time, but this wasn't a show you really needed to see. It kept the stories moving forward but lacked any big, important moment. We're in that weird lull before Wrestlemania where you know what you are going to see at the show and we just have to get there. That can lead to some slightly lesser shows, but it could have been a lot worse.

Results

Santos Escobar b. Rey Mysterio – Phantom Driver

Grayson Waller/Austin Theory b. OC – Rollup with feet on the ropes to Gallows

Iyo Sky b. Naomi – Over The Moonsault

Street Profits b. AOP – Small package to Rezar

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