

# Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XXXIV (2019 Edition) : Last Year's Prototype

## Wrestlemania XXXIV

Date: April 8, 2018

Location: Mercedes-Benz Superdome, New Orleans, Louisiana

Attendance: 78,133

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Jonathan Coachman, Tom Phillips, Byron Saxton

America the Beautiful: Chloe x Hallie

I'm not sure if it's because I was in the stadium last year or something else, but this show was actually a bit more memorable than the previous few editions. Hopefully it's just as good watching it back but you never can tell with these things. Brock Lesnar is defending the Universal Title against Roman Reigns in the main event because of course he is so let's get to it.

## Kickoff Show: Andre The Giant Memorial Battle Royal

Titus O'Neil, Luke Gallows, Dash Wilder, Chad Gable, Curt Hawkins, Scott Dawson, Primo Colon, Kane, Curtis Axel, Apollo, Tye Dillinger, Rhyno, Aiden English, Matt Hardy, Tyler Breeze, Mike Kanellis, Karl Anderson, Mojo Rawley, R-Truth, Sin Cara, Dolph Ziggler, Viktor, Shelton Benjamin, Goldust, Bo Dallas, Zack Ryder, Baron Corbin, Heath Slater, Konnor, Fandango

JR and Jerry Lawler come out for commentary with Byron Saxton for a bit of a feel good moment. It's a brawl to start with English getting backdropped out, much to the fans' annoyance. Anderson dumps Konnor and Ziggler starts his tradition of hanging on to avoid elimination. There goes Hawkins as we still need to clear out a lot of the ring. Former partners R-

Truth and Goldust shake hands with Goldust eliminating him, cutting off JR's Bearcat Wright's references.

Primo is out next as there's almost nothing between these eliminations. Kanellis gets tossed and Ziggler hangs on again. Things settle down a bit unto Apollo knees Breeze as JR mocks Ziggler for always having to save himself. Viktor is gone too and the Revival beats on Ryder but he's right back up. The Broski Boot is loaded up on Ziggler (JR: "Ziggler in trouble. Again.") but Rawley Pounces Ryder out in a nice touch. A Liger kick from Gable eliminates Anderson and Titus gets rid of Gallows as we take a break.

Apollo getting backdropped out and Benjamin follows him...and let's look at the announcers. We come back with Rhyno and the Revival gone and Kane eliminating Axel and Dallas. And now, we look at John Cena in the crowd as a fan, because I had forgotten about that stupid story. Back with Sin Cara eliminated by Corbin and Fandango dancing at Kane, earning himself an elimination off a single uppercut.

Corbin gets rid of Slater and Kane eliminates Gable, leaving us with the big power showdown. Everyone else jumps the monsters and it's a superkick to Titus, setting a clothesline to get rid of him. We're down to Corbin, Dillinger, Goldust, Rawley, Ziggler, Hardy and Kane as Goldust loads up Shattered Dreams on Dillinger. That's broken up by Ziggler so Goldust ties him up for Shattered Dreams as well. Dillinger takes the kick but Ziggler eliminates Goldust.

That leaves us with a TEN vs. DELETE battle with a Twist of Fate and Dillinger is gone. Kane tosses Ziggler but gets eliminated by Corbin to get us down to Corbin, Hardy and Rawley. A fireman's carry faceplant drops Hardy and the villains go for the elimination...but here's the returning Bray Wyatt for Sister Abigail into an elimination for Rawley. Corbin drops Wyatt but gets backdropped out to give Matt the win at 16:36.

**Rating:** D+. It was a battle royal that got a lot of time and wasn't all that interesting. The ending was a cool moment and it's the best way to get everyone on the card, even if most of these people mean a grand total of nothing. It's not a good match or even anything memorable, but at least it got the crowd warmed up...with an hour to go before the show itself starts.

Post match Matt thanks Bray and we get a hug, which JR deems a Wrestlemania moment.

### Cruiserweight Title: Cedric Alexander vs. Mustafa Ali

Tournament final to crown a new champion after Enzo Amore was finally banished. Ali debuts his SubZero look, which he still uses a year later. They're both very happy to be there and slaps hands before getting started. Cedric scores with a shoulder block but gets headscissored down as the announcers are right there to play up the power vs. speed idea, though you don't exactly think of power when it comes to Alexander.

Ali heads to the apron and gets enziguried down, setting up the big flip dive to the floor and...actually not a break. Back in and Cedric starts in on the ribs with a waistlock, followed by a heck of a backdrop for two. Ali gets out of another waistlock and faceplants him for two as Alexander looks focused while being in pain. The running Spanish Fly drops Ali again and it takes both of them time to get up. They're doing a rather good job of showing how even these two are, which is what you should be doing in a tournament final.

Ali is up first and tries a tornado DDT but gets placed on top, where Ali catches him with a super Spanish Fly, shocking even Cena. The 054 is loaded up but Cedric knocks him off the top for a huge crash to the floor. That's not serious so let's go split screen for a Ronda Rousey ad. I mean...fair enough. Back in the Lumbar Check is countered, setting up Ali's awesome tornado DDT.

Now the 054 connects for two, the first time the move has ever only gotten a near fall. Another 054 misses and it's a pair of spinning back elbows to Ali's face. A third turns Ali inside out and the Lumbar Check makes Cedric champion at 12:21. Cedric immediately hugs the unconscious

Ali in a nice show of sportsmanship.

**Rating:** B. I was pulling for Ali but it felt like a title match between two guys fighting with everything they had. Cedric was the favorite in the entire tournament but Ali came off looking like a star the whole way through. This was rather good stuff and should have been the Kickoff Show main event, though I'll take a good match when I can.

#### Kickoff Show: Women's Battle Royal

Dana Brooke, Becky Lynch, Sarah Logan, Lana, Bianca Belair, Naomi, Sonya Deville, Mandy Rose, Carmella, Peyton Royce, Natalya, Dakota Kai, Mickie James, Taynara Conti, Ruby Riott, Kairi Sane, Sasha Banks, Liv Morgan, Kavita Devi, Bayley

This was going to be the Fabulous Moolah Memorial Battle Royal but history intervened and it's just a regular battle royal this time around. Paige and Beth Phoenix are on commentary and the former has some advice: don't get thrown over the top rope. Becky comes out first, everyone else comes out, followed by Sasha and Bayley to fill out the field. Miss Money in the Bank Carmella (erg) poses with the briefcase to start and everyone gangs up on her for the easy elimination.

Deville, who got the elimination, poses in the big circle of women but Dana gets thrown in the middle instead. That means trash talk from Brooke and the big beatdown is on with Mandy tossing Dana. The NXT women team up to send the main roster women outside (through the ropes rather than over, which I can't stand in battle royals) so we can get the WE ARE NXT pose.

Becky yells at Devi about orange being HER COLOR as some of the main roster women get back in. Kai eliminates Mandy as Paige declares Deville her favorite member of Absolution. We stop for the NXT women to triple team Deville, setting up Belair's 450, because THAT MAKES SENSE IN A BATTLE ROYAL! Deville is out and we take a break, coming back with Sane being tossed after hitting the Insane Elbow thanks to more

ganging up on Riott during the break.

Lana and Devi are tossed and Conti gets kicked out by the Squad. Becky and Belair have a less than thrilling slugout and the hair whip is incredibly loud. Belair misses a charge though and gets kicked out, followed by Kai kicking Naomi in the face. Banks gets rid of Kai without much effort and there goes Becky to a chorus of boos (I think Becky will be fine). Ruby knocks Mickie out and it's Royce's turn to kick people in the face.

Logan powerbombs her out as well though and we're down to Morgan, Logan, Riott, Bayley, Banks, Natalya and Naomi, who is out on the floor (oh dear). For some reason Natalya decides to pose with her back turned to the Squad but manages to suplex Ruby and Sarah at the same time.

Bayley saves Sasha from a suplex and helps get rid of Natalya. Morgan is out as well and there goes Ruby. Banks sends Logan to the apron and Bayley knocks her out, leaving us with Banks and Bayley. The fans actually get on their feet to cheer for this one and the handshake...lets Bayley throw Banks out to a big reaction but Naomi gets back in for the Rear View. That's enough for the win at 9:39.

**Rating:** F+. I had forgotten how annoying that ending was but it makes you realize just how stupid this whole thing was. Bayley and Banks would go on to have their weird semi-feud and then partnership over the year while Naomi has done NOTHING important since this match. You have something here with Bayley and the bright idea is to do the HAHA WE TRICKED YOU ending? That's been done to death in battle royals and it's not like this was anything more than a surprise ending, which was really stupid given how Bayley had been searching for anything important for the last year. This actually ticked me off again so well done.

Jojo introduces Chloe and Hallie to sing America the

Beautiful, describing them as the “future of music”. Well if Jojo says it then it must be true.

The opening video shows shots of parties in New Orleans and, just like in 2014, features a tagline of Let The Good Times Roll. They couldn't come up with anything else in four years? And the theme song is still Celebrate by Kid Rock. Ok it's a catchy song, but is there nothing else (or no one else) that they could use?

Yay pyro! And cool set with the Mardi Gras mask, which looked awesome all night long.

I was in the stadium for this show, sitting in the lower bowl and looking not quite directly at the far post on the right side opposite the hard camera.

Intercontinental Title: Seth Rollins vs. Finn Balor vs. The Miz

Miz is defending and we get the new idea this year: 3D graphics for some of the entrances, including Miz who gets the Miz logo and various words to describe him, including MOVIE STAR. Miz sends the Miztourage to the back because he wants to do this himself for his newborn daughter. The weird part is you couldn't see those in the stadium (obviously) but you could see them on the screens around the building, which made your head snap around a few times.

Balor isn't the Demon here, but instead comes out with a bunch of LGBT people in rainbow Balor Club shirts labeled FOR EVERYONE. If nothing else, it's awesome to see the stadium doing the Balor pose at once. This was set up with both guys beating Miz in one night, because Balor beating Miz after Miz had a long match with Rollins is totally the same thing.

They all go for the way too early rollups to start with Miz being sent outside. That means Rollins can miss a Stomp on Balor but a superkick to the ribs works just fine. Balor sends

Rollins outside though and it's the big running flip dive onto both of them for the first major pop of the night. Back in and basement dropkick gives Balor two on Miz but Rollins is back in with a high crossbody.

Miz finally gets to do something other than get beaten up as we look at Cena in the crowd again. Rollins grabs a double Blockbuster for two on Miz but he's right back up with a knee to the ribs (not face Cole). The chinlock goes on, which shouldn't be the case less than four minutes into a triple threat. Back up and a neckbreaker gets two on Miz as they're just trading moves until we get to the big stuff. Another chinlock seems to annoy Balor so he gets up again and hits the double stomp to Miz's ribs.

Rollins is back in for a Sling Blade to Balor, setting up a suicide dive to Balor and Miz. A superkick drops Balor again but Miz comes in with a DDT for two. Miz goes with the strategy by bending Balor's knee around the ropes and slapping on the Figure Four. The frog splash from Rollins (from out of nowhere for an awesome visual) breaks it up and all three of them head outside.

Balor escapes the barricade powerbomb and dropkicks them both into the barricade instead. Back in again and 1916 gets two on Rollins but Miz breaks up the Coup de Grace. Instead of the Tower of Doom though it's the buckle bomb to Miz and a superplex into the Falcon Arrow to Balor. The Skull Crushing Finale gives Miz two on Rollins and they're all down again.

Balor does his hop over the ropes in the corner but gets crotched for trying the Coup de Grace again. It's just not working this time dude. Miz goes up top with Balor and catches a springboarding Rollins with something close to a super Skull Crushing Finale. Balor breaks it up with a Coup de Grace and hits a second on Miz but the Stomp breaks that up too. Another Stomp hits Miz to give Rollins the pin and the title at 15:37.

**Rating:** B-. This might have been a few minutes too long but Rollins winning was a fine call as he's more than over enough and kind of fits the Workrate Champion idea to perfection. Miz can come back and break the all time days record later and Balor is over no matter what. Not a great match, but a very hot opener and the fans were into everything here.

We recap the Smackdown Women's Title match, which is billed as the BIGGEST WOMEN'S MATCH IN WRESTLEMANIA HISTORY. My how times change. Anyway Charlotte is the queen of everything and Asuka won the Royal Rumble to earn this shot. It's absolutely a dream match with Charlotte being Charlotte and Asuka still being undefeated.

### Smackdown Women's Title: Charlotte vs. Asuka

Charlotte is defending and gets the full Ric Flair theme song, complete with a HHH from Wrestlemania XXX inspired entrance, meaning soldiers to help her off a throne and take her robe. Asuka on the other hand gets the CGI masks with rainbow colored lines surrounding them, which look cool on screen but live...not so much. They lock up to start and take turns flipping out of wristlocks for an early standoff.

Charlotte loads up a monkey flip but instead trips the leg for a failed Figure Eight attempt. You can feel the intensity here and it's working well so far. Some chops to the chest (and one to the face) have Asuka in trouble but she's right back with a hip attack to knock Charlotte outside. Back in and it's time to start in on the arm but Charlotte gets in a backbreaker into an STO. Charlotte uses a Backpack Stunner to get out of a sleeper and a knee to the back of the head keeps Asuka in trouble.

It's enough trouble for Charlotte to go up top for the moonsault...which is countered into a triangle for a sweet escape. Charlotte reverses into a Boston crab until Asuka makes the rope. A sliding kick to the face knocks Charlotte



backwards and it's back to the arm as Asuka continues to follow her game plan. They head to the apron with Asuka suplexing her out to the floor in a good looking crash. Sometimes you need to just go with a big spot like that and it worked very well.

Back in and they stare each other down until Asuka just erupts with strikes to the face. A missile dropkick gets two and Asuka stomps on the back. Charlotte is fine enough for the chops to catch Asuka on top and it's a super Spanish Fly for two with the fans getting much more into things in a hurry. Natural Selection is countered into something like an Octopus Hold from Asuka's back for a cool change of pace.

Charlotte tries to flip out and into the Figure Eight but Asuka kicks her in the head for a block. Well that's certainly to the point. The Asuka Lock is blocked and Charlotte hits a very good spear for two more as the fans are WAY into this. With nothing else working, Charlotte goes to the Figure Eight and bridges up with one arm...and Asuka taps at 13:05 in a shocker.

**Rating:** A-. I don't get shocked by results very often but I was actually stunned to see how this went. I would have bet money on Asuka walking out as champion here but Charlotte winning was far from a ridiculous result. Now the problem is what this did to Asuka, as she only started to recover from the loss nearly a year later. Charlotte would lose the title to Carmella two days later, bringing some dark days to the belt. This however was anything but dark, with an outstanding match between two stars.

Post match Asuka gets the mic and says Charlotte was ready for her in the ultimate sign of respect.

With Charlotte on the ramp and Asuka in the ring, a referee tells Cena something that makes him get out of his seat and run up the ramp. You really couldn't wait until the women were

gone so they could have the full moment?

US Title: Bobby Roode vs. Jinder Mahal vs. Randy Orton vs. Rusev

Orton is defending and it's one fall to a finish. Aiden English (now bald, meaning he shaved his head since the end of the battle royal when he had hair) handles Rusev's entrance and we get my favorite shot every year: a closeup of someone with the camera swinging around to show the stadium crowd in front of them. There's something so cool about seeing just how big of a stage they're really on. Anyway, Rusev is crazy over and easily the crowd favorite. Does anyone else see an issue with Orton's music saying "I hear voices in my head" while his Titantron says IN MY VEINS?

While you think about that, Orton and Mahal are sent outside, leaving Rusev to dropkick (yes dropkick) Roode to the floor. A RUSEV DAY Cannonball off the apron takes Orton and Mahal down again but Roode is back in with a Blockbuster for two on Rusev. The other two get back in and it's Mahal getting beaten up by Orton and Roode before being tossed right back to the floor. Orton hits the top rope superplex on Roode with Rusev and Mahal diving back in for the save.

That's enough for Mahal to ask Rusev for a partnership but Rusev doesn't even bother waiting before hitting Mahal with a spinning belly to back suplex for two. Roode makes it worse by busting Mahal's spine and hitting the GLORIOUS pose, only to have Orton make a save this time.

That leaves Orton alone in the ring and it's the hanging DDT on Rusev. The RKO hits English, Rusev and Mahal so it's Roode making a save of his own. Roode blocks the RKO and plants Orton with the Glorious DDT as Mahal saves. The Machka Kick drops Mahal but Sunil Singh offers a distraction, letting Mahal hit the Khallas for the pin on Rusev at 8:14. You could literally feel the energy go out of the crowd.

**Rating:** D+. There was some hard work in there but this was the definition of Vince saying screw the audience because it's all about what I want. Rusev was one of the most popular guys in the company and had been for months but instead we get Mahal, who was an all time bomb as WWE Champion getting to pin Rusev.

It's not like there was even a long term plan as Mahal would lose the title a mere eight days later. Rusev would indeed get the title nearly nine months later, after his popularity had fallen way down, meaning it was acceptable to give the fans what they want. This really hurt the show and it's going to be hard to recover.

We recap Ronda Rousey/Kurt Angle vs. HHH/Stephanie McMahon and yeah I think this might help the recovery process. After being at Wrestlemania XXXI and attacking Stephanie, Rousey made her official WWE debut at the Royal Rumble earlier in the year. She wanted to go to Wrestlemania and since she was (at the time) the most dominant female UFC fighter of all time, Stephanie wanted to mold her into a WWE star.

Angle, who had been screwed over by Stephanie and HHH before, warned Ronda that they would mess with her too. That didn't sit well with Rousey, who beat both of them up on the way to this mixed tag match. Naturally we got a lot of Stephanie workout videos because she's STEPHANIE and that makes her some wrestling legend. It's sickening, and I was waiting on her to survive the armbar in the match. It was clear that this was going to be full of smoke and mirrors, but the question is how well Rousey is going to do in her debut. This is one of the main events of the show and something a lot of people really wanted to see.

#### Ronda Rousey/Kurt Angle vs. HHH/Stephanie McMahon

HHH and Stephanie come out on matching motorcycles (flanked by four women on their own motorcycles), with Stephanie's biker look (including the leather pants) making me a lot less annoyed at her. Cole: "Even though Stephanie is a former Women's Champion, this is her Wrestlemania in-ring debut!" WWE pretending that Stephanie was a wrestler is one of their more interesting character tweaks. Rousey gets a huge reaction and of course smiles at the crowd, as is her custom. Cole talks about two people

starting in UFC and coming to WWE: Ken Shamrock and now Rousey. So they're not Dan Severn fans either?

The fans are WAY behind Rousey as they stare each other down in the middle. Stephanie shoves Rousey in the face because Stephanie just never learns. A hair pull doesn't prove to be the brightest idea either so Stephanie bails to the apron so the guys can start us off. Angle (very badly) punches at HHH and the beating is on in the corner. A hammerlock keeps HHH does as we're just waiting for this to explode as it should be doing.

Stephanie manages to lure Rousey in though and Angle gets low bridged to the floor. Cole calls this "that McMahon instinct" as the worship is already a lot to take. Angle gets sent into the steps and Rousey is about to lose it because she can't intervene. Some more cheap shots from Stephanie keep Rousey angry and a spinebuster gives HHH two. A front facelock keeps Angle down but he gets a boot up in the corner.

Stephanie chokes Angle and HHH nearly hits her by mistake but it's still too early for the hot tag. A suplex drops HHH again but Stephanie runs around and pulls Rousey off the apron. HHH gets whipped over the corner for the real crash and you can see the panic in Stephanie. The hot tag brings in Rousey (Graves: "CALL THE COPS!!!") who SPRINTS over to Stephanie and throws her down with a suplex. After the required tug of the shorts, Rousey unloads with rights and lefts in the corner as the fans are already losing it. The release throw sends Stephanie back into the corner and Graves is terrified.

The fans want and receive the armbar...but Stephanie blocks it. Yes the hold that UFC fighters were powerless against is a simple block for Stephanie as the crowd's soul is slapped down again. Stephanie blocks it a second time and rakes the eyes (Cole: "Complete manipulation of the rules!" Ignore the complete manipulation of reality and focus on those rules man."), setting up a double arm crank as the fans try to process that they're really doing this.

Stephanie even mocks Rousey, who grabs her by the throat and hits the swinging Samoan drop for two with HHH pulling the referee. Rousey: "I'm

going to continue beating up your wife ok?" HHH pulls her out as well, apparently not a fan of such chatty opponents. Angle is back up and sends HHH over the announcers' table but gets thrown onto the Spanish table. After a slow crawl, HHH is back in and sees Rousey, who is ready to fight. HHH puts the referee in the corner and sizes Rousey up and the beating is on in the corner.

A legsweep looks to set up the swinging Samoan drop but Stephanie makes a save. I know I'm not a big HHH fan a lot of the time but he just made Rousey look like the biggest star in the history of the division. Rousey chases Stephanie outside though and has to adjust the gear again, allowing Stephanie to post her. Angle is back in for some belly to belly suplexes and the rolling Germans but the ankle lock is countered. The Pedigree is countered as well and HHH gets catapulted into the corner, setting up the Angle Slam for two with no one making a save.

Stephanie breaks up the ankle lock and yells at Angle, who catches the boot to the ribs. HHH has to save his wife and Pedigrees Angle for two with Rousey making her own save this time. With Angle down, HHH loads Rousey up for a powerbomb but gets hurricanranaed (!) into the armbar on HHH (I completely bought that as the finish live) until Stephanie grabs a choke.

That's reversed into an armbar and Stephanie has the gall to block it AGAIN. Angle ankle locks HHH, who rolls Angle into Rousey for the real save. Rousey and Angle get posted and it's time for stereo Pedigrees, both of which are broken up. The armbar is slapped on again and this time Rousey uses the leverage to pull back and Stephanie finally taps at 20:37.

**Rating:** A. That's not even on a sliding scale because Rousey knocked that out harder than she knocked out Alexis Davis. She looked like she's been doing this for ten years and had one of the best debut matches I've ever seen. Everyone else was nailing it too and I got completely sucked into it both live and watching it back because all of the stuff was that good. Don't have Stephanie block the armbar so often and this is an A+ easy.

That was the only downgrade, even though you knew full well it was

coming. To be fair though, Stephanie did tap out clean in the end so it wasn't the most ridiculous thing ever. Well the first part was but not the finish. After this, how can you now see Rousey as the star that she already was?

Stephanie has to be helped out, as she should. She would get armbarred again the next night for a bonus.

### Smackdown Tag Team Titles: New Day vs. Bludgeon Brothers vs. Usos

The Usos are defending after the Bludgeon Brothers destroyed both other teams last month at Fastlane. Woods plays the trombone (using the same tune that would summon the Dragonzord on Mighty Morphin Power Rangers)...to bring out a fleet of small people dressed as stacks of pancakes, some of whom do the Worm. I still don't get why pancakes are supposed to be funny, but anyone who plays a trombone like the Dragon Dagger (that thing was IMPOSSIBLE to find back in the day) is cool with me.

Kofi wastes no time in hitting Trouble in Paradise on Jey but Harper pulls him outside before the count. Jimmy gets sent into the steps and Harper crashes against Big E. against the barricade. With no one else to beat up, Woods gets powerbombed against the post, leaving Rowan to splash Kofi and Jey back inside. The mostly done Jey is thrown outside and Big E. gets knocked off the apron. Jimmy comes back in for a pair of superkicks and Jey is back up for stereo kicks to Harper's head in the corner.

A jumping enziguri hits Harper and a superkick knocks Rowan to the floor, setting up a double suplex on the outside. Harper catches Kofi with a swinging release Boss Man Slam but gets caught with a double superkick on top. Rowan breaks up the Tower of Doom so Kofi charges at Harper, only to get powerbombed by Rowan. An assisted super sitout powerbomb finishes Kofi to give Harper and Rowan the titles at 5:55.

**Rating:** C-. The time cuts aside, this wasn't the worst match in the world with the Usos and the New Day giving it all they had against the monsters but not being able to stop them. The Bludgeon Brothers were the first time a team other than the Usos or New Day had held the belts in over a year so this was long, long overdue and the right call.

Here's what's coming to the Network, most of which actually happened for a change.

Here's a fired up John Cena for his match with Undertaker. This comes after weeks of Cena calling out Undertaker for Wrestlemania because Undertaker seemingly retired after last year's show. Cena came off as the biggest jerk in this feud and acting like Undertaker owed him something. There was no confirmation that Undertaker was going to be here, hence him sitting in the crowd earlier.

That's the other stupid part of the whole thing: Cena kept talking about how he had no path to Wrestlemania, because JOHN CENA couldn't get a match. He gave some lame excuse about how this was the only match that mattered and it didn't do a thing to make up for the consistently annoying lines from commentary about Cena possibly being left out of Wrestlemania. I get what they were going for, but come on already.

Anyway Cena is ready to go but here's a referee to say not so fast. Cena is disappointed and the lights go out. It's only Elias though and Cena heads back to his seat as Elias sings about it being his night. That's enough for Cena who runs in and beats Elias up before looking disappointed again. Cole: "I guess that would be a Wrestlemania moment right?" He goes up the ramp but stops...and the lights go out again. A spotlight hits the ring with Undertaker's hat, coat and boots, which are hit by lighting (looks awful on the Network, looked great when you didn't see it coming in the stadium. They're gone, and the gong strikes.

### Undertaker vs. John Cena

I know he's been old for ten years, but that entrance live, especially in the stadium, is chilling. Cole of course can't SHUT UP, saying everything he can think of, including calling them the two greatest performers of all time. Undertaker goes straight at him in the corner to start and hits the jumping clothesline. Old School connects and Undertaker hits some running clotheslines in the corner. Snake Eyes into the big boot into the big leg have Cena rocked but the chokeslam is escaped.

Cena's belly to back connects but Undertaker sits up before the Shuffle, making Cena fall down in fear. The chokeslam into the Tombstone finishes

Cena at 2:48. The more I think of this one, the more I like it. Cena ran his mouth for so long and Undertaker annihilated him here, just as he should have. While a lot of people will be annoyed at not getting a full form match between these two, I'd rather they do this than have Undertaker look back in a fifteen minute match.

Video on the Hall of Fame ceremony.

Here's the Hall of Fame Class, which really doesn't need to air on the show. They already get a whole evening to themselves. Do we really need ten minutes on Wrestlemania too?

Jeff Jarrett (eh sure, though it's still weird to see him here)

Mark Henry (still not sure on him, though his documentary was great)

Hillbilly Jim (I'm a Kentucky boy but come on)

Ivory (she looks better now than she did during her career)

Jarius JJ Robertson (Warrior Award)

Dudley Boyz (yep)

Goldberg (yep, though I'd call the Dudleys more appropriate headliners)

Oh and Kid Rock, this year's celebrity inductee, wasn't there because he had a concert.

We recap Daniel Bryan/Shane McMahon vs. Sami Zayn/Kevin Owens. Bryan somehow overcame his injuries and returned to the ring in something I still can barely believe. Owens and Zayn had tormented Smackdown boss Shane for months and then attacked Bryan for firing them the night he was announced as being cleared. Therefore it's a tag match with Owens and Zayn fighting for their jobs. Yeah that's all well and good. The point here is Bryan actually getting back in the ring, which is almost impossible to imagine.

Sami Zayn/Kevin Owens vs. Daniel Bryan/Shane McMahon

Owens and Zayn beat McMahon up on Smackdown to cover for Shane's



legitimate medical issues. Chris Jericho was apparently on red phone alert for this show with a plan to have him fly in from a Fozzy show on the corporate jet in case Shane couldn't make the show. Bryan gets a special entrance with a weird military/Terminator themed video showing a target on the Superdome before looking at the YES Movement spreading throughout the world in a cool moment. You can feel the emotions in Bryan as he comes down the aisle and it's an amazing sight to behold.

Owens and Zayn jump the good guys from behind and Shane gets thrown over the barricade. Bryan takes a Helluva kick and the apron powerbomb to leave him laying. Medics come out to check on Bryan as yes, they actually are trying to stretch this out even further. Shane is willing to fight on his own and unloads with the really bad punches to Owens in the corner.

There's the jumping back elbow but Shane grabs his stomach due to the diverticulitis (the same thing that ruined Lesnar's UFC career). A DDT drops Sami but Owens gets in a shot to the stomach to cut Shane off. We settle down into a regular match with Sami elbowing the ribs and going for one cover after another. Owens steps on the ribs and applauds Bryan for such a great return. A t-bone suplex gives Sami two and a superkick into the Blue Thunder Bomb is good for the same. The fans don't care about this whatsoever and there's no reason for them to.

With Bryan STILL being tended to at ringside, it's just a big waiting game until Bryan gets back up and makes the hot tag. The Helluva Kick misses in the corner and Sami gets tied in the Tree of Woe. Coast to Coast hits but Shane can't follow up because of the stomach. Owens drops the frog splash on Shane but Bryan dives in for the save to bring the fans back to life. The hot tag is cut off though and we hit the chinlock to make the fans wait a little longer. A belly to back suplex gets Shane out of trouble though and there's the tag, with Bryan taking his time before getting in for an awesome moment.

House is cleaned and it's the moonsault over Sami into the running clothesline. Owens comes back in and Bryan gets them in opposite corners for alternating running dropkicks. Sami is back with a Helluva Kick for two on Bryan and Owens superkicks Shane to the floor. The Pop Up Powerbomb gets two more and Owens is shocked at the knockout. Shane dives

onto Owens, leaving Sami to yell at Bryan for coming back and punch him in the face. That's enough for Bryan and the fight is on, including the YES Kicks. The running knee sets up the YES Lock to make Sami tap at 15:24.

**Rating:** C+. This was two matches in one with the rather boring beatdown of Shane for the first half before Bryan came in and gave the fans exactly what they wanted for the second half. It was all about Bryan and that's all it was supposed to be. The idea that he actually made it back to the ring is amazing and one of the most surprising stories you'll ever see in wrestling. He deserved a big moment like this and that's what we got here, albeit after Shane got in his own time of course.

Attendance announcement, with pyro because it's Wrestlemania.

We recap Nia Jax vs. Alexa Bliss. They were friends, but Jax found out that Bliss was making fun of her behind her back. Jax went into monster mode and chased after Bliss and her friend Mickie James, setting up this match. Now there's no reason this shouldn't be about thirty seconds long, but it's Wrestlemania and what matters is getting on the card and having a long match instead of doing what makes sense.

#### Raw Women's Title: Alexa Bliss vs. Nia Jax

Bliss, with James in her corner, is defending and is lowered down to the stage on a platform for a nice touch. We get the Big Match Intros and Bliss immediately backs up as she should. Jax gets smart and runs Mickie over before the bell rings to send her outside for a heck of a beatdown. Bliss tries to intervene and gets glared back to the ring, leaving James to take a Samoan drop on the floor.

We get back inside for the opening bell and Bliss slaps her in the face. That earns a scream from Nia so Bliss screams back in true scream queen fashion. A gorilla press slam has Bliss bailing to the floor and it's time to leave, only to have Nia run her over again. Back in and Bliss pokes her in the eye before going after the knee in a smart move.

What's not a smart move is this match already going nearly three minutes with Bliss getting in any significant offense. A basement dropkick keeps

Jax in trouble but a guillotine choke is easily countered via an overhead belly to belly suplex. Jax goes shoulder first into the post as the fans are quiet all over again. Twisted Bliss to a standing Nia on the floor gives Bliss another knockdown, setting up the short DDT for two back inside.

Bliss yells at her so Nia tells her to shut up already and the destruction begins. Another poke to the eye is no sold and Bliss gets whipped hard into the buckles. Bliss goes to the eye again to get out of the Samoan drop but Jax drives her into the corner and then drops her. That's not enough as it's a super Samoan drop to give Jax the pin and the title at 9:02.

**Rating:** D-. What were they thinking here? The whole story was that Bliss was all talk and survived because of Nia but then she hangs with Nia for the better part of ten minutes? This should have been thirty seconds long with Bliss getting the title back later on (as she did in June) after coming back from getting squashed. Just a bad idea all around here, save for Jax FINALLY winning the title.

We recap AJ Styles defending the Smackdown World Title against Shinsuke Nakamura. They had a classic match in Japan and a lot of fans wanted to see it again in WWE. Nakamura won the Royal Rumble and the match was on, with both guys trying to get in the other's head on the way to New Orleans. So yeah, they're just going with "it's a dream match" for the build, which works just fine.

### Smackdown World Title: AJ Styles vs. Shinsuke Nakamura

Nakamura is challenging and gets played to the ring by Nita Strauss (awesome guitar player and rather gorgeous at the same time). The army of violinists and drummers help too. Since WWE can't go more than five minutes without making some kind of a mistake, AJ is billed as Universal Champion. They lock up to start with Nakamura getting the better of it with some knees to the ribs.

Good Vibrations is blocked and AJ gets in his own knee before starting in on the back. Styles grabs a chinlock for a bit before dropkicking him to the floor. That's not the best idea though as it's a kick to the head to

stagger Styles and the champ is in trouble for the first time. Nakamura's middle rope kick to the face gets two and that's a COME ON to set up the strikes to the face.

The running knee to the ribs in the corner gets two but AJ is right back with a belly to back faceplant. A sliding forearm into the pumphandle gutbuster gets two on Nakamura as they're trading big spots. AJ's springboard is countered into the Landslide (Samoan driver) for two but Nakamura needs a minute before following up. With nothing else working, Nakamura goes with the kicks, which are countered into the Calf Crusher.

Since it's Nakamura, that's reversed into a triangle choke, which AJ powers into something like a fisherman's buster for another double knockdown. It's Nakamura up first and trying a running knee in the corner but the bad knee hit the buckle instead. AJ is right back with a Phenomenal Forearm for two in the required kickout of the first finisher.

The springboard 450 hits knees and Nakamura grabs a small package for two of his own. They slug it out until AJ nails the Pele but can't follow up, allowing Nakamura to knee him in the back of the head for a much nearer fall. The reverse exploder looks to set up the Kinshasa but AJ rolls through into the Styles Clash for the pin to retain at 20:21.

**Rating:** B+. This was close to being a classic but it's really just a very good match instead. Part of the problem here is how late the match came in the show. The fans were starting to get worn down and there was only so much energy left in the people. Also it never quite got to the epic level that they were shooting for with Nakamura never really getting the close near falls that he needed to take it to another level. Still that, very good and worthy of a Wrestlemania title match.

Post match they hug in a copy of the earlier match where the Japanese winner of the Royal Rumble was defeated in the title match. Nakamura kneels to him and presents AJ with the title...before hitting him low for a heel turn which should have led to him winning the title. It kind of did, but the US Title instead of the World Title, which is why Nakamura is nowhere near as big a deal just a year later. Also, why should I want to see AJ face Nakamura again when he just beat him clean? Nakamura hits him

with two Kinshasas before leaving.

We recap the Kickoff Show. This is another few minutes that could be cut off.

### Raw Tag Team Titles: The Bar vs. Braun Strowman/???

The Bar is defending after Strowman won a battle royal to become #1 contenders despite not having a partner. Therefore the big question for over a month is who would the partner be. The Bar comes out on a Mardi Gras float, complete with people in large headed costumes for a cool visual. There's no partner for Strowman, who breaks up the float before coming to the ring.

We get the Big Match Intros and Strowman takes the mic to introduce the partner. It's not someone in the locker room...because it's one of the fans. Strowman looks around, looks around some more, and then points at someone in the crowd. He walks into the crowd, walks around some more...and picks a ten year old. They walk back to the ring to burn up even more time because SURE THIS SHOW CAN JUST KEEP GOING.

Strowman and the kid get in the ring where the kid is introduced as Nicholas (the son of referee John Cone). Cole: "This is really happening." He's never been more right. Oh and the search for a partner and introduction took about four and a half minutes, again because this show can just keep going. Strowman takes Sheamus into the corner with no problem to start before beating up Cesaro as well.

Nicholas is terrified (as he should be) as Cesaro dropkicks Strowman in the knee. A double suplex lets Sheamus drop a top rope knee, setting up an assisted swanton from Sheamus' shoulders. Strowman comes back with a double crossbody and backdrops Sheamus over the top, bouncing him off the post in the process. To cap it off, Strowman tags Nicholas in. The kid is terrified and tags Strowman back in for the powerslam to Cesaro for the pin and the titles at 3:58.

**Rating:** F. I...what do you want from me here? This was an idea that completely failed because WWE had no idea what to do here and this is all they could do. Put Heath Slater or someone in there, or have Strowman do

a rendition of Me And My Shadow and have him win it by himself. It was a joke that was literally forgotten the next night and stretched the show out even more because they couldn't just cut this and put Strowman ANYWHERE else. I'm sure Matt Hardy had to win the battle royal right?

Wrestlemania 35 is in New York/Jersey. You don't hear New Jersey mentioned here, but I guess it's just implied.

We recap Brock Lesnar vs. Roman Reigns for the Universal Title. It's the latest attempt to make Reigns feel like the mega star because the first few times didn't take. Therefore he won the Elimination Chamber (beating Strowman after Strowman eliminated everyone else), THIS TIME FOR SURE! Lesnar has been champion for a year and barely ever defends the title, because that was so successful the first few times. Their fights over the last few weeks get the music video treatment.

#### Raw World Title: Brock Lesnar vs. Roman Reigns

Reigns is challenging and WOW the fans are not happy to see him. To make it a little better, Brock drives him into the corner for the shoulders to the ribs, followed by the German suplexes. Reigns pops up with a Superman Punch to send Brock to the floor as they're starting fast again. Back in and a clothesline knocks Lesnar over the top and out to the floor as the fans chant things to amuse themselves.

Lesnar catches him with a belly to belly on the floor and another one drops Reigns on his head. There's the required CM PUNK chant and a third belly to belly sends Reigns face first into the announcers' table because Brock didn't realize how much room he had. Back in and Lesnar throws another German suplex, declaring it SUPLEX CITY B\*\*\*\*. More suplexes ensue because that's what Lesnar does in a big time match. Brock gets tired of that and loads up the announcers' table but Reigns posts him for a much needed breather.

A spear puts Lesnar onto (not through) another table as the fans boo the heck out of this. Or maybe they're mad about losing a beach ball. The Superman Punch into a pair of spears gets two and now the fans are definitely happy with a beach ball. Brock blocks a spear with a knee to the face that brings Graves out of his chair.

The first F5 gets two and virtually no reaction from the crowd. Another F5 gets another two and Lesnar seems to be getting angrier. To switch it up, another F5 gets another two and Lesnar seems to be getting angrier. The fans declare it boring so Lesnar takes him outside for the fourth F5 through the announcers' table. Lesnar takes it back inside and stands there as the fans do something else in the crowd that goes from cheering to booing during the same closeup.

The fifth F5 gets two so Lesnar takes the gloves off at Heyman's orders. The fans call it awful as Lesnar hammers away to bust Reigns open. It's quite the gusher but Reigns slips out of the F5 and hits a pair of spears for two. Another spear is countered into the sixth F5 to retain the title at 15:51.

**Rating:** D+. Well of course he does. The problem here is that there is good action in the match but it's too much of the same stuff and the fans having none of it that took away its value. Couple that with knowing that we're just waiting on even more Reigns title shots and promos about needing to be champion and there was no way this was going to work. The fans (including myself) were done with this WAY before the match started and that's all there was to it.

Reigns gets cleaned up and we get the long video package. Back in the stadium, Reigns leaves and the show ends. I stood around for a long time while this was going on because the video doesn't play in the stadium and it wasn't clear if the show was over or not.

**Overall Rating:** C-. I know I (and a lot of other people) say it over and over but it's just too long. There is a limit to how long you can sit watching wrestling in person or at home and Wrestlemania has blown past that for years now. At some point you just stop caring and there's very little that can be done to fix such a problem. They need to do something because this isn't going to work no matter what they do. Cut out a lot of stuff and it's a great show, but the whole package didn't work.

There's a lot of good stuff in here, such as the opener, AJ vs. Nakamura, Charlotte vs. Asuka, the mixed tag and a few other moments here and there. The problem is there's so much other stuff that either doesn't

work (the main event, the Raw Women's Title match and the Raw Tag Team Titles are great places to start) that it really doesn't work. Get rid of some of that and the show is that much better.

Overall, it comes down to the problem of WWE not listening to the fans. They can throw out as much good content as they want, but if you do it to annoy the fans (the US Title match) or to stretch things out even further past its expiration point (the Universal Title), it's going to come back to mess things up. There is so much on here that fans don't want to see and WWE just won't fix it.

That doesn't help the length either. If you have a show where the final match is something the fans do not want to see, you're going to have them sitting there, already annoyed at other things in the show, for hours waiting to see something that only WWE seems interested in. How is that supposed to be appealing for over seven hours? Cut it down, give us something else to cheer for, and remember that Wrestlemania is supposed to be about the best of the best, not everyone on the roster.

### Ratings Comparison

Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal

Original: D-

Redo: D+

Mustafa Ali vs. Cedric Alexander

Original: B-

Redo: B

Wrestlemania Women's Battle Royal

Original: D+

Redo: F+

Seth Rollins vs. The Miz vs. Finn Balor



Original: B

Redo: B-

Charlotte vs. Asuka

Original: A-

Redo: A

Jinder Mahal vs. Rusev vs. Randy Orton vs. Bobby Roode

Original: D

Redo: D+

Stephanie McMahon/HHH vs. Kurt Angle/Ronda Rousey

Original: A-

Redo: A

New Day vs. Bludgeon Brothers vs. Usos

Original: D+

Redo: C-

Undertaker vs. John Cena

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

Daniel Bryan/Shane McMahon vs. Sami Zayn/Kevin Owens

Original: C+

Redo: C+

Nia Jax vs. Alexa Bliss

Original: D+

Redo: D-

Shinsuke Nakamura vs. AJ Styles

Original: B

Redo: B+

Braun Strowman/Nicholas vs. The Bar

Original: F

Redo: F

Roman Reigns vs. Brock Lesnar

Original: D

Redo: D+

Overall Rating

Original: B-

Redo: C-

This is an interesting one as most of the matches are within the same ballpark but I liked the show a lot better the first time around. Maybe the good was more fun just after the show, but this really didn't do it for me nearly as well on another viewing. It's watchable, but definitely not a very good show.

Here's the original if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2018/04/14/wrestlemania-xxxiv-the-same-old-story/>

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