

2015 Awards: Worst Major Show of the Year

This is always an interesting one.

We'll go chronologically with the nominees here and start with the Royal Rumble. I actually didn't mind this show at first but the more I think about it the worse it seems. The problem here is very simple: the Rumble itself sucked. I mean it totally sucked. It's not so much that it's bad but it was just so freaking boring. There was no secret about the fact that Reigns was winning and then they go out of their way to give him Big Show and Kane at the end (plus the real finish with Rusev). The triple threat was amazing but other than that there's just nothing on here. When a third of the show bombs, there's little saving it.

Continuing with the Reigns run, we have Fastlane. The thing is, I really kind of liked this show. The key to remember is that Fastlane was a two match show and both of those matches more than delivered. You couple that with a good Tag Team Title match and a nice six man opener and the show really wasn't that bad. Completely unnecessary yes, but far from bad.

Now we get to something that really deserves a mention with Slammiversary. Much like Fastlane it really didn't need to exist, but in this case the show was nothing. The big draw was Jeff Jarrett returning to win the old TV Title to help set up that stupid GFW invasion which didn't go anywhere because it was a lame idea. The rest of the show was nothing interesting either because TNA was worried about spoiling their precious TV show. Instead, screw the fans that are willing to pay for your big show because that's going to keep money rolling in. Typical TNA though, which is what makes it even worse.

Next up we'll go to another country for AAA TripleMania XXIII. This is another tricky one as the action itself is overshadowed by the horrible production and technical issues. There's no way around this as you could barely hear the show half the time due to the persistent buzzing, as well as the ending of the show being cut off. It didn't help that Matt Striker

was on commentary because he's on EVERY PAY PER VIEW EVER anymore. These things were such major problems and it's really hard to overlook them.

The other thing though is the show really wasn't very good. There are definitely worse shows and the double main event was solid enough to keep it from being a runaway disaster but the rest of the show just bombed. It felt like a tribute to wrestlers and feuds from twenty years ago and that doesn't make for an entertaining three hours, at least not for outside fans. When you have bad technical issues and bad wrestling, it's really hard to defend a show.

Then there's TNA's other pay per view: Bound For Glory. Just like last year's FAR worse show from Japan, this show had almost no time to set anything up because of the screwy taping schedule and that still stupid GFW invasion. Other than that though, the former Brodus Clay won one of the worst matches in years in a 25 minute gauntlet match, Kurt Angle got another big win because he needs it so badly and then Matt Hardy won the World Title. Why? BECAUSE HE'S MATT FREAKING HARDY AND A LEGEND THAT YOU ALL CARE ABOUT!

Bound For Glory didn't need to exist, was thrown together, and then wound up meaning nothing because the World Title was vacated less than two days later for the sake of setting up the World Title Series. How annoyed do you think the fans who actually paid for this show were when they found out that none of this actually mattered? TNA isn't in a place to cater to its live audience this much but they do it time after time no matter what.

Finally we have Survivor Series, where WWE also had the chance to reshape things with a tournament. This went well enough with two watchable matches and then a bad main event. Sheamus cashing in Money in the Bank made things even worse because, just like the Bound For Glory main event, whatever you saw on the show wound up meaning nothing. At least WWE didn't really hide the fact that the cash-in was coming, though it didn't make it much better.

The show had another big draw though in the Undertaker/Kane vs. the Wyatt Family. This was also everything the fans were expecting: a dull match, a

predictable ending, and another big waste of time that could have led somewhere but wound up being another way to praise some older guys who are only so interesting in the first place. After that all you had was a pretty boring midcard and that made for a horrible show.

Overall....I think I'll take Survivor Series over TripleMania here. Survivor Series at least had the potential to be something while the AAA show really felt like it was just there and if it happened to be good then so be it. One of the major WWE shows should be worth watching though and when you take away any of the impact, some good to pretty good wrestling just isn't worth it.

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2015 Awards: Most Improved

This is another with a limited number of options but could have some interesting results.

We'll start down in NXT with Baron Corbin. What started off appearing to be spent squashing more jobbers, Corbin turned into quite the heel character as he accentuated his athletic background started treating everyone as if they were beneath him. The year was capped off by pinning Apollo Crews in London, which should set him up as #1 contender.

Over on the main roster, we have someone who seems like he's always on this list in Ryback. He comes off as someone who actually wants to try to improve by either expanding his moveset or trying to become a better talker. The Intercontinental Title run was starting to get somewhere when WWE pulled the plug (as they always do on Ryback), which is much more on the company than on Ryback himself. He was trying, which at least warrants a mention.

Now we get to one of the best options with Roman Reigns. Think back to the beginning of the year when Reigns was being pushed as the top guy no matter what the fans thought. To say this wasn't exactly popular would be the understatement of the year but they never actually pulled the trigger.

Now flash forward to the end of the year with Reigns winning the title and being accepted as a top guy. Reigns showed that he could be more than just a catchphrase spewing corporate shill and actually had something interesting underneath. He's not exactly the second coming of the Rock, but he's leaps and bounds ahead of the man that won the Royal Rumble and was booed out of the building.

Finally we have the name that is likely to get some rather odd looks: Nikki Bella. I know she's hit or miss to put it mildly, but there are moments where she comes off as one of the most hateable characters on the roster. Now unfortunately WWE keeps flipping her from heel to face at the drop of a hat because they have no idea how to book a Divas division. Nikki has more hatred from the fans than any woman not named Stephanie in years and really has started to figure out how to make people want to see her get what's coming to her. That's impressive.

Overall though, as good as Nikki was, I have to go with Reigns. He went from absolutely hated to being pretty well received, which trumps Nikki's rise from hatred to hit and miss. Both are good but to have the fans go along with the original plan that they hated shows that Reigns really is getting better.

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2015 Awards: Best Angle of the Year

We'll go in reverse on this one.

Let's get this out of the way first: the best angle of the year was John Cena's US Title Open Challenges. These things were the highlight of the week almost every time one took place as you were wondering who was going to come through that curtain and have one of the best matches of their career. Nothing is really close to this and I'm not going to waste your time suggesting otherwise.

However, there are some other good stories that are worth looking at.

We'll start in Ring of Honor actually with the battle of the Jay's. The company's big story over the summer was a pretty quick title feud between TV Champion Jay Lethal and World Champion Jay Briscoe for the Undisputed Title. The match itself worked really well too as the announcers made sure to build up the fact that these two just don't lose. It's an idea that has worked forever in wrestling and it's always going to work. As usual, simple yet effective is almost always best.

Also as usual, we have a Bray Wyatt story which could have been awesome but wound up being just ok with "Anyone But You Roman." This had the

potential to be something really interesting but instead we wound up with the usual hot opening and then the standard fallout that went nowhere because Bray can't win in the end. At least the match inside the Cell was fun though and that's really all you can expect from Bray's stories most of the time.

Another good one was over in Lucha Underground with Pentagon Jr. going from a midcard guy to one of the most interesting heels as he was guided by a mysterious master. Vampiro, the grizzled veteran who was long removed from being a regular, went after Pentagon to try and slow him down, only to eventually be revealed as Pentagon's master. It was a great story with a great surprise at the end and one of the best things from an awesome first season of Lucha Underground.

Finally, we have the story that would have won almost any other year: Bayley's road to the NXT Women's Title. This one had all the makings and the perfect blowoff as Bayley won the belt in the real main event of Takeover: Brooklyn. The only thing holding this one back is the fact that Sami Zayn did it the previous year in a better story and better final match. If I hadn't seen it so recently, this could have passed Cena but it was still awesome on its own.

But yeah, this goes to the US Open Challenge in probably the biggest runaway this year.

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2015 Awards: Worst Angle of the Year

Now this one doesn't have the ending you might expect.

We'll start with the most recent as Paige brought up Charlotte's deceased brother Reid to help set up their title match. Here's the thing: this was short. Yeah it was a bit tasteless (though nothing compared to some of the stuff WWE has done before) but they didn't bring up Reid by name or how he passed away etc. This was more tasteless than bad, but the match itself was even worse because they didn't go anywhere with the hatred. It's bad, but I think there's worse stuff they could do.

Earlier in the year in a much bigger story we had Roman Reigns' original push towards Wrestlemania XXXI. This is one where we all knew what we were going to get but again I didn't hate it as much as some. They felt like they were trying to push someone new and we got some good matches out of it. The problems here were the feeling predictable and that Reigns hadn't earned the title yet. However, what people overlook is that he didn't win it just yet. They bailed out at the last second and that helps things so much more. The ending and the fact that it wasn't that bad in the first place keeps this away from winning.

Also from late in the year, we had the latest Wyatt Family disaster with Bray kidnapping the Undertaker and Kane, stealing their souls (whatever that meant), taking their fireworks power, and then apparently just leaving them alone so that they could escape and win the match at Survivor Series. As bad as this was, it's actually pretty low on the list of bad storytelling with the Wyatts and Bray in particular. This is just what happens to the Wyatts and until it changes, it's hard to really call it horrible all over again.

Then James Storm threw Mickie James on train tracks. It's stupid, it's ridiculous, and at the end of the day it's TNA. I almost feel bad about

picking on them at this point and I have issues complaining about anything involving Mickie James. The biggest problem here was that Mickie was back way too soon with no problems, which makes it more stupid than bad.

At Summerslam, Jon Stewart cost John Cena the WWE World Title because he didn't want Cena to tie Ric Flair's record. I mean....yeah. What else is there that I'm supposed to say on this one? You had a talk show host there as the celebrity and then he costs Cena the World Title? At Summerslam? REALLY? This was the best they could come up with?

However, last but not least, we have the love...whatever shape it was with Ziggler/Summer Rae/Rusev. You had Summer loving Rusev and maybe loving Ziggler while Lana jumped to Ziggler from Rusev and thought it was about 1984 with all the denim. This went on forever with the pairs teasing getting back together and the whole thing was a big soap opera, ultimately ending with Lana getting hurt and WWE deciding that EVERYONE followed TMZ and knew that Rusev and Lana were engaged in real life.

And I liked it. Yeah to this day I'm still not sure why, but I really don't get the hatred for this storyline. I know it's stupid and I know the story really didn't make sense and I know the ending was HORRIBLE because WWE pulled the plug on the whole thing but I really didn't mind it. This gave these people something to do and Summer telling Rusev that they weren't getting married until he won a title was a good idea. That and it got Lana into some different looks and started to expand her character until the injury derailed the whole thing. I know it's hated, but I really didn't mind this story nearly as much as some people did.

For me, the worst was Jon Stewart. The celebrity stuff is stupid in the first place, but to have it be at Summerslam for the World Title and having it wind up as ANOTHER way to remind us how amazing Ric Flair is and how his record is just so sacred was too much for me. I love Jon Stewart and it was cool having him around, but this was just so stupid and such a lame way to keep the title on Rollins.

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2015 Awards: Surprise of the Year

I'll be doing 18 this year with one going up per day (allegedly) as we look back at the best of 2015.

This is one of those awards that rarely has a lot of options but the big ones are the ones you remember for a very long time.

We'll start down in NXT with one of the weaker options: the debut of Samoa Joe at Takeover: Rival. Sami Zayn was beaten down and badly injured so everyone knew he was going to be out for awhile. That left an opening for a challenger to the title, allowing Samoa Joe to debut and become the next challenger. For some reason this didn't go anywhere, but at least it was a good debut.

Now we'll look at a stronger candidate: the Dudley Boyz returning the night after Summerslam. This was a real surprise with no build to the fireworks going off and the return of one of the best teams of all time. It helps that they have one of the most exciting entrances in wrestling and that the division was dying for some fresh blood. This is a big candidate for the potential winner as I was genuinely surprised here.

Another real surprise was the reveal of Vampiro as Pentagon Jr.'s master

in Lucha Underground. For months, Pentagon Jr. had talked about serving a master who was teaching him to be evil. His final test was to destroy Vampiro, but the big reveal at the end was that Vampiro had sent Pentagon to destroy Vampiro himself to see how evil he really was. The match was an underrated gem but the moment where Pentagon bowed to Vampiro after nearly destroying him was awesome.

One more return would be Alberto Del Rio, who returned to answer John Cena's US Open Challenge after being gone for over a year. It was obvious that whoever answered the challenge was going to be the new champion, but who in the world thought Del Rio was going to make a big return like that? The Zeb Colter appearance beforehand hurt things a bit but it was still quite the surprise.

However, most big upsets come in the form of matches themselves with Kalisto pinning Ryback in the World Title tournament being near the top of the list. Ryback had been built up for a long time over the summer and it seemed that Kalisto was going to be a roadblock on the way to the next round. Then Kalisto kept hanging around and finally hit a middle rope Salida Del Sol for one of the biggest upsets in recent years.

We'll get back to the in ring upsets in a bit but first we need to look at one of the biggest surprises in years: New Day becomes awesome. Yeah people forget this but New Day used to be horrible. They were this nothing team with three guys who had no potential to go anywhere and people were booing them out of the building every week. Then they were finally allowed to turn heel and be themselves, making them one of the hottest acts in years. It amazes me that went from one end of the spectrum to the other like they did and it's really remarkable to see.

Finally though, there's one more from earlier in the year that made me lose my mind. Back in May, NXT Champion Kevin Owens debuted on Monday Night Raw and cut one of the best promos of the year, going back and forth with US Champion John Cena. This led to a non-title match at Elimination Chamber where Owens pinned Cena 100% clean in the middle of the ring with a pop up powerbomb.

The pin came at the end of a long back and forth match with both guys

hitting huge move after huge move. I know Cena loses a lot and puts over a ton of people, but it's rare to see it happen clean like that. Owens launched off like a rocket with this win and really hasn't looked back since. It made a new star overnight and gave me a reaction like I haven't had in a very long time. For once it felt like they were doing something right and that's more than you'll almost ever hear out of WWE.

Edit: somehow I forgot Rollins cashing in. That's kind of the biggest one of the year.

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Nick Bockwinkel Passes Away At 80

<http://www.wrestlezone.com/news/642185-wwf-hall-of-famer-and-pro-wrestling-legend-nick-bockwinkel-dies-at-the-age-of-80>

I know he's not for everyone but Bockwinkel was one of the first intelligent heels and influenced a lot of people, including HHH.

Another Bad Sign For Impact

I usually don't talk about these things but this is worth mentioning. Impact – 266,000 viewers
ROH – 227,000 viewers

ROH airs at 11pm and has already aired in syndication by the time it airs on Destination America. Now it's within shouting distance of TNA's new episodes. I know there was a debate last night as well as the World Series, but ROH is now close to even in viewers with Impact while airing a show that debuted in syndication days earlier. That's not good for TNA no matter how you look at it.

[Ratings: Impact Steady, ROH Skyrockets](#)

Thought of the Day: Building Up The Myth

You know what move didn't really do jack? Ric Flair's Figure Four. Take a look at how he won his World Titles (some recognized, some unrecognized. Don't start with the "IT'S MORE THAN 16 TIMES" stuff again).

WCW – 2 – Rollup

WCW – 3 – Rollup

WCW – 4 – Brass knuckles

WCW – 5 – Shoe to the face

WCW – 6 – Pin in the figure four

WCW – 7 – Small package

WCW – 8 – Awarded title

WWF – 1 – Won Royal Rumble

WWF – 2 – Pin in the Figure Four

NWA – 1 – Pin after Dusty Rhodes collapsed

NWA – 2 – Cross body

NWA – 3 – Rollup

NWA – 4 – Pin in the Figure Four

NWA – 5 – Pin after a ram into the cage

NWA – 6 – Small package

NWA – 7 – Rollup

NWA – 8 – Pin in the Figure Four

Yeah Flair won a few with it via pin, but he never won a World Title with the Figure Four via a traditional submission. However, when you think of Flair, you instantly think of the Figure Four, despite it almost never winning a major match. It says a lot about the way you can make something big just by talking about it and that you don't always have to see

everything to believe it.

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Hulk Hogan Accused Of Lying Under Oath

Because he hasn't had enough issues recently.

<http://www.wrestlingrumors.net/hulk-hogan-accused-of-lying-under-oath/38352/>

Yes, this is again stemming from the sex tape. Basically what he said to the FBI might be different than what he said under oath. That would be a crime, and therefore could mean jail time. I hope Bubba's wife was awesome, because this has to be the biggest mistake he's ever made. Like, bigger than Santa With Muscles.

Read Jim Duggan's Book

And it made me proud to be an American. Or Canadian for like three weeks.

This was a cheap buy so why not. I met Duggan at Axxess last year and he couldn't have been a nicer guy so it was a pretty easy choice. The book was a lot more straightforward than Holly's but in a way that makes it more fun. Duggan is far nicer than most wrestling writers as he rarely throws anyone under the bus or says bad things about anyone, save for himself at times.

It's an easy, fun read that took me about three days to get through and doesn't get boring. Above all else, Duggan has an interesting take on people like the Radicalz and most modern young wrestlers: yeah they can do all kinds of moves that he could never dream of, but isn't it interesting that he got more over by shouting H0 and chanting USA while holding a board than they got by doing all those moves? It's not about all the moves you can do, but rather about connecting with the fans in some way. If you can do that, they'll never abandon you, but there's always going to be someone who can do a flashier move. The only one that got more popular than Duggan (arguably of course) was Eddie, who had a story that the fans can connect to. Imagine that.

Duggan's book is worth reading and can be found pretty cheap so check it out if you're a fan of 80s/90s wrestling.