

Thought of the Day: Benoit and Modern Wrestling

This came up on my forums earlier today and it made me think a little bit. Right now, wrestling is clearly trending downward. Ratings are going down and it's clear that public interest isn't what it used to be. Among many other things, I think people forget how big a role the Benoit incident plays in this. It's by far and away the biggest mainstream story you'll see in wrestling arguably ever and it sent shockwaves through everyone. People looked at wrestling and saw a monster who was about to win a title murdering his wife and son before killing himself. That was a wakeup call for a lot of fans and it made people walk away from wrestling. The importance of this to the modern product hasn't gone away and isn't going to for a very, very long time.

KB's Top Ten Matches Of 2012

To begin with, this is going to be a WWE heavy list. I only watch WWE and TNA and there's a lot more WWE out there than TNA, so there's a bigger selection of matches for WWE to pick from. Also I've always been a WWF/E guy and it's a natural bias for me. Also this is a combination of my favorites and what I found to be the best matches of the year, so your stances on them may widely vary. Let's get to it.

10. Austin Aries vs. Bobby Roode – Destination X

This was a match where the build to the match worked better than the overall match, even though the match itself was quite good. The story behind the match was Aries cashing in the X Title to get a guaranteed world title match here. This is where things got interesting, as you had Aries as the unbeatable X Division Champion facing the longest reigning world champion in company history. The idea was simple: take two guys who are perceived as unbeatable and put them in a match. The fact that the match was great helped a lot too.

9. Big Show vs. Sheamus – Hell in a Cell

This makes the list for the simple reason of how shocking it was. By shocking, I mean people were expecting a horrible match but we got a great showdown instead. Sheamus playing the giant killer worked very well for him as he's strong enough to be able to move Show around, but at the same time he's small enough to make Show's offense look good. This turned into the heavyweight slugfest, as in a match where both guys use their biggest power moves possible and the last man standing wins. Those can get very fun in a hurry, and this got excellent by the ending.

8. John Cena vs. The Rock – Wrestlemania 28

This isn't on here for the match, but rather the buildup. Cena vs. Rock was one of the only matches ever where I knew it would be good, but no matter how good it was I absolutely had to see it. I don't recall a match ever before where that happened other than maybe Rock vs. Austin II. The match itself is very good but I wouldn't call it great. Cena losing is still a questionable move, but it's not the worst decision of all time. On top of that, a match that draws a million PPV buys has to be doing something right.

7. CM Punk vs. Daniel Bryan – Over the Limit

The idea here is simple: take two guys that can work almost any style and give them 25 minutes. The match was good and the fans reacted to it. I don't have much else here because I actually don't remember much of the match, but the ratings I have for it seem to say I really liked it, so here's a spot for it.

6. Daniel Bryan vs. Sheamus – Extreme Rules

This was another war, with Sheamus' arm being such a factor that you couldn't tell if he was going to survive or not. This wasn't really a rematch but rather the first match between them, as the first match is the infamous 18 seconds match. It was 2/3 falls because that's EXTREME of course. These two beat the tar out of each other and it turned into an incredibly entertaining match. This match was also a part of the eventual Daniel Bryan anger management story, as he snapped in the first fall and kicked Sheamus long enough for a DQ. I like Sheamus a lot and this match was a good example of why.

5. James Storm vs. Bobby Roode – Lockdown

This was a bloodbath and seemingly the perfect blowoff for this feud. Naturally since this is TNA the feud continued over the summer and finally ended at Bound For Glory, but that's another story. The majority of the match was an excellent brawl with both guys bleeding like crazy. Storm kept beating on Roode until he couldn't take anymore, but the superkick knocked Roode out of the cage to keep the title on him. The problem of the match at the end of the day was there was no reason for Roode to keep the title here other than to extend the feud. If this was

the blowoff, it likely would have cracked the top three.

4. Shield vs. HELL NO/Ryback – Tables Ladders and Chairs (TLC Match)

That's likely high for this match but it blew my mind at TLC. This was the Shield's debut match and to say they delivered is the understatement of the year. It was a 25 minute war between six guys that looked like they wanted to maim each other. There were some huge spots, with the biggest one being Rollins going off the huge ladder and into a pile of tables, somehow without breaking his neck.

On top of that, the psychology was excellent here. The idea behind the match was Shield pounding down one guy at a time, giving them a 3-2 advantage at any given time. This was played up for the entirety of the match and it worked very well throughout. The match was all about a (non) blood feud and it came off feeling like a war rather than a match. On top of that, the idea of it being pinfall or submission made things even better. I'm surprised I rated this so high actually.

3. Chris Jericho vs. CM Punk – Wrestlemania 28

If this wasn't on this card, it would have been the best match of the night by far. This was built upon the Punk is Drunk story with Jericho pushing the idea that Punk is an addict no matter how straightedge he is. This set Punk off, setting up a war here. Much like Wrestlemania 25 though, they decided that if the champion got disqualified, he would lose the title. In other words, we need a 22 minute wrestling match from Chris Jericho and CM Punk.

What followed was a classic, with both guys showing some insane psychology and the finish coming from Punk hooking the Anaconda Vice for the second time. Earlier in the match, Jericho had kneed Punk in the head to escape the hold, so to end the match, Punk leaned his head forward to prevent the knees. I'm a huge fan of people learning during the match and adapting to it later to win. Excellent match here.

T-1. Undertaker vs. HHH – Wrestlemania 28 (Hell in a Cell)

T-1. Brock Lesnar vs. John Cena – Extreme Rules (Extreme Rules)

I tried and tried but I can't decide between the two of these. They're different kinds of matches but they both were home runs in what they were going for. In wrestling, there is more than kind of great story and great match to end it. These two matches were prime examples of two very different kinds of stories and we'll look at them a bit here. We'll start with the battle of the legends in the cage.

To begin with, when I refer to the first HHH vs. Undertaker match, I mean the one that happened in 2011, not the one from eleven years ago.

This match might have the longest buildup for a match in the modern era. Think about it. This match was legitimately built up for over three years. The Shawn matches were more or less forerunners to this match, as was the match at last year's Wrestlemania. It helped that all three of the previous matches ranged anywhere from good to excellent. Every part of the final match was great, starting with the buildup.

The stipulation for the match was set up on an episode of Raw after HHH

and Undertaker had spent a few weeks glaring at each other and cutting overly dramatic promos. At the end of the day though, a stipulation was promised. My guess was that it was going to Streak vs. career again, but in something that hasn't happened in years, HHH offered a Hell in a Cell match at a point in the year other than the HIAC PPV.

This showed what is lacking from the HIAC PPV. As opposed to the PPV, this match felt natural and a logical progression and ending to the feud between Undertaker and HHH. On top of that, having the match come out of nowhere rather than being the inevitable conclusion makes the match feel bigger. The match fit the feud rather than the feud being made to fit the match, which you can't get at the PPV anymore.

Now let's get to the actual match. With Shawn as the referee, the question became could the Streak actually end. The problem with Undertaker matches at Wrestlemania is making people believe the Streak is in jeopardy. The second Shawn match and the first HHH match couldn't get over this issue: at no point did I ever feel that the Streak was in jeopardy. The matches were good, but they didn't hit that higher level. On the other hand, the first Shawn match and the second HHH match had me freaking out over the near falls. That's not something that often happens, but when it does, things get awesome.

The match itself was an all out war with a ton of drama the whole way through. Between HHH massacring Undertaker with a chair and Shawn nearly stopping it to the DX finisher of a superkick into a Pedigree only getting two to Undertaker not being able to finish HHH despite using finisher after finisher. After finally finishing him with a tombstone, we got perhaps the image of the year with the three legends embracing. I'm not sure what era this ended, but it was a great way to end that era.

Now let's move on to the next month and the other match of the year. The night after Wrestlemania, Brock Lesnar returned and laid out John Cena with an F5. They brawled a few times over the next few weeks until we got to their Extreme Rules match, appropriately enough at Extreme Rules. The bell rang and the war was on.

This match was a war from the bell and was the most physical match I've seen in years. John Cena took one of the worst beatings I can ever remember but he stayed in the match somehow. This match was all about violence and it worked amazingly well. It was more of a fight than a match, which is something we haven't seen in the company in years. These two beat each other up and the place was losing their minds over it.

On top of that, and I know this isn't the most popular opinion, but this match was a testament to John Cena, as was the match the previous month's battle with Rock. Cena has reached the point where no one on the regular roster can give him a legitimate challenge, so they had to bring in one of the biggest stars of all time and the former UFC World Heavyweight Champion. That says a lot about where Cena is on the all time greatness scale.

Overall, 2012 had some great matches, but the problem was getting between those matches. The TV shows are beyond watered down at this point as there's too much TV going on. The good thing is that the PPV matches can be quite good, but the TV continues to get worse. Between the AJ saga and Aces and 8's and Del Rio vs. Sheamus, these stories just go on too long. Still though, some matches were excellent and are well worth checking out again.

Thought of the Day: Fight Over The Music

I only remember seeing this twice and it hasn't happened in over 25 years. Back in 1986, Hulk Hogan and Paul Orndorff had a HUGE feud. During the course of this, Orndorff started to use Hogan's legendary Real American song as his own, claiming that he (Orndorff) was the true Real American.

In 1987, the Young Stallions formed and started using a song called Crank It Up. Jimmy Hart, the writer of the song, was angry because he wanted the Hart Foundation to use it.

Why don't we see theme music as a feud starter anymore? I know a lot of the songs are generic and could be interchanged, but given how similar a lot of the feuds are anymore, this is as good an idea as anything else for getting people not liking each other.

Thought of the Day: Keep It In The Family

As usual, it's about taking it back to the past. When Ricky Steamboat debuted, he was billed as the nephew of a popular local wrestler named Sam Steamboat. Shane Douglas was the nephew of Paul Orndorff when he started. Kane is Undertaker's brother. Why not do this more often? They harp on how important being a second generation guy is all the time now,

so why not make it up? It's ok to lie to up once in awhile, so why not try something like this?

Your Christmas Wish List

Simple idea: what do you want from Xanta Claus for Christmas? My list: 1. Less 50/50 booking.

2. Better stories.

3. Less Hogan.

4. Eve Torres

Your lists?

Thought of the Day: The New X-Pac Heat

The old version has since been replaced by Vickie Guerrero Heat where people boo her simply because that's what you do when Vickie is on screen. My question about it, as well as X-Pac Heat: what difference does it make why the people are booing? Isn't that the desired goal? Who cares if it's X-Pac/Vickie Heat or regular heat?

Thought of the Day: Wrestling Needs Used Car Salesmen

Watching a Nitro from 1997 and it made me miss something. It's the night after Bash at the Beach 1997 and Heenan is talking incessantly about how you ABSOLUTELY HAVE TO see the encore. That's something you NEVER hear anymore about PPVs. Anymore today it's basically "here's what we've got, buy it. Please?" Gene Okerlund and Bobby Heenan were masters at sounding like used car salesmen or carnival barkers, where after hearing them talk for 20 minutes you had to buy the PPV, just because you had heard so much about it.

Another thing you hardly ever heard said anymore about WWE PPVs: the date of the show. Watch an old WWF TV show and you'll hear the date of their next PPV probably 10 times. That's done for a reason: you hear the date so often that you start counting down to it in your head and on the day or before it, you snap and order the show because you NEED to see it. Now it's always "in just under two weeks" or whatever they say anymore, which is something easier to forget.

Don't beg us to buy a PPV. Sell it to us.

Thought of the Day: Make It A Title Match

This is one of those things I put in a Smackdown review recently and it bares repeating. A few weeks ago, Big Show fought William Regal on Smackdown. It lasted like two minutes and was a Big Show squash, making it pretty uninteresting. My idea: make it a title match. Regal never stood a chance, but if you make it a title match there's a tiny chance that we could see a title change, and that makes the match more interesting. It doesn't hurt Show and it makes Regal look like a bigger deal, so why not do it?

Thought of the Day: Stop Counting

Sometimes it's so simple that it eludes people. Throughout the history of wrestling, we've had people like Harley Race, Flair and Hogan who have ridiculous amounts of world title reigns (8, 16 and 12 respectively). In the regional area, you have guys like Nick Dinsmore with 10 OVW Titles, Bulldog Bob Brown with 18 Central States Titles, and Jerry Lawler with an insane 80 (yes EIGHTY) Memphis Heavyweight Titles. Today, you have guys like Cena with 12, Orton with 9 and HHH with 13.

What's one of the main difference? Today you have these <http://onhealthy.net/product-category/gastrointestinal-tract/> numbers pounded into your head. Watch old Memphis stuff and you NEVER hear the amount of title reigns Lawler has and the

same is true of Dinsmore in OVW. Today though, you hear about how Cena is a 12 time world champion every time he's on screen. When you hear that number so many times, it takes away the appeal of the next title change. I know you can realize that someone has won that many titles before, but not hearing it over and over again could help a lot.

Thought of the Day: Setting Up Title Matches

I think I might have said this before but it came to me again watching Raw.

Is there NO other way to set up a title feud than having the challenger pin the champion? Just say they're having a title match at the PPV. Seriously just do it that way. Stop having to walk us through everything and just do the match. Let them TALK to each other and have some interaction and then do the freaking match. I assure you it's not that hard.