

2013 Awards: Wrestler of the Year

A quick one to close us out. There's no real point to nominees here as this comes down to two people.

The winner is.....John Cena.

As well as Daniel Bryan. At the end of the day I simply can't pick one over the other so it's a tie. Let's look at both guys.

First up we have Bryan, who got the rocket push of this generation over the course of the summer. Bryan went from being in a very successful tag team to flying up the card, culminating in something that happens once a year at best: pinning John Cena 100% clean in the middle of the ring. That flat out does not happen most of the time and it's a huge deal. After that Bryan won another world title and main evented several PPVs to close out the year. That's something that's hard to top.

However, when you look at kayfabe accomplishments, Cena had a dominant year. He won the Royal Rumble, he won the world title in the main event of Wrestlemania, he held world titles for over half the year, he main evented Summerslam and TLC plus brought the WHC its most prestige in years. That's a great year by anyone's standards and a very good one for Cena.

I just can't pick one guy over the other and they both deserve to be called the best wrestler of the year. Now go ahead and call me biased.

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2013 Awards: Match of the Year

There were some great matches in 2013 and several of them were available for free.

One honorable mention: Sami Zayn vs. Antonio Cesaro from NXT. It's a 2/3 falls match and an outstanding fight. Zayn is as good of an underdog character as you'll find in wrestling today but Cesaro in Beast Mode is going to put down anyone he's against.

Now to the nominees:

Rhodes Brothers vs. Shield – Battleground. It's the worst show of the year but this match brought out so much emotion for reasons we've already covered. The main story here is the Brothers trying to get their jobs back after losing them to the Authority. The match was all about the emotion and that's better than action every single time. Great match but it didn't save the show.

CM Punk vs. John Cena – February 26 Raw. This was the match for Cena's Wrestlemania title shot and these guys tore the house down. I called it the best TV match I've ever seen and I still think it ranks right up there with anything I've ever seen. The one thing that holds it back is the lack of drama at the end. Everyone knew Cena was going to win, but the

question was how. That's very good but not perfect.

Daniel Bryan Runs The Gauntlet – July 22 Raw. If a match told a better story on TV this year, I didn't see it. Bryan had to face Jack Swagger, Antonio Cesaro and then Ryback in succession. Swagger didn't even last three minutes, but the Cesaro section is a war between two different styles. After that it was Ryback where Bryan gave it his all but couldn't overcome the power. The key here though: Ryback lost via DQ, thereby giving us a logical conclusion that doesn't damage anyone. Outstanding stuff.

That brings us to the two real contenders.

Daniel Bryan vs. John Cena – Summerslam. What else can I say about this match? It was long, it was exciting, it had great action, it had an ending that came out of nowhere. The one thing that holds it back: there was no way Cena was winning with that baseball growing out of his elbow. Just like Cena vs. Punk, there was only one possible winner to this and that was Daniel Bryan. Still though, excellent match.

The winner:

CM Punk vs. Brock Lesnar – Summerslam. My goodness what a match this was. In something I don't say that often, I was completely wrong about this one. I didn't think Punk could be a realistic threat to Lesnar but he went move for move with the beast and had me wondering who was going to win the entire time. It's an amazing match with both guys beating the tar out of each other. On top of that, it was more proof that HHH had no business hogging Lesnar for a year as Brock has had

masterpieces with Punk and Cena but three only good matches with HHH.

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2013 Awards: Surprise of the Year

Another one with more options than I was expecting. It's rare for me to be surprised in wrestling but this year it happened several times.

First up, a note about TNA. This is usually a category where they can pull off some good entries but there's nothing this year. It's seemed like you can predict just about everything that happens every time they have a big show. That's a really bad sign and something they need to work at.

Anyway, on to the nominees. There are two of these that happened in the span of about five minutes.

First up, Daniel Bryan pinning John Cena clean. The question here wasn't would Bryan win, but rather how he would do it. People had been expecting to see something like a rollup or a cradle, but to debut a brand new move and cave John Cena's chest in with a running knee was a big surprise. I had the words "for two" written but had to backspace furiously.

Orton cashes in. Yeah people thought it might happen, but the way they executed it was nearly perfect. That delay before Orton's music hit was the perfect way to sucker the fans into believing nothing was happening. I snapped up when the music hit, which is the sign of a good surprise.

This brings us to the winner, which ironically is kind of obvious.

Mark Henry fakes retirement. it led to a one off match, it doesn't hold up incredibly well when you look at the details, but it was AWESOME live. I completely bought that Henry was retiring and that this was the end for him. The speech was great, the reaction was great, and the turn was great. I loved this and it was another example of why Mark Henry is underrated.

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2013 Awards: Title Reign of the Year

I believe this has the most options. I'll go through some nominees as usual.

Bully Ray. Ray won the title in a moment that didn't surprise many people, but his title reign went well for the most part.

The biggest thing lacking was major title defenses, though it's not fair to blame that on Ray. On top of that, it was pretty clear that he was losing the belt at BFG no matter what.

Dean Ambrose. This started off promisingly but turned into the same midcard title reign you see every time.

Shield. Now we get into some of the interesting stuff. This is a good example of a title reign that started and ended well, with Shield looking dominant up until their reign, looking dominant in their reign, and losing the titles in an awesome match. This is probably second on my list.

Rhodes Brothers. The problem here is similar to Ambrose: too many losses. Despite an amazing title win and some great defenses, the Brothers keep losing matches that they shouldn't be losing, presumably leading to a split and Goldust vs. Cody match at Wrestlemania because someone said that was a good idea years ago and that's what we're getting, great tag team or not.

I'm going to leave out Del Rio and Orton's reigns as neither of them did anything for me at all. Del Rio is just dull and Orton spent his time being handed the title back over and over. Cena's title reigns were really nothing all that special either.

Actually I'm going with AJ Lee. This is a rare occurrence of someone cleaning out of a division and having no one left to challenge her. She even has her moment with the Total Divas promo and has made me cheer for her every time she's made one of those nitwits (or Natalya) tap out. She's closing in on the record for longest Divas Title reign and has looked dominant (and cute) while doing so. It's AJ by a few touchdowns.

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2013 Awards: Most Improved

This one took some time. One of the most common choices I see for this is Magnus and I really don't get why. He's improved somewhat but it's really more that he's been pushed more than gotten better. The same holds true for Roman Reigns, who has been the explosive power guy of Shield the entire time but has been pushed as a major force over the last few months.

If we're talking about someone who got much better, look no further than NXT Champion Bo Dallas. This guy started off the year as one of the only acts on NXT that made me want to fast forward but the heel turn changed everything. Now that Dallas is just S0 over the top that it's hard not to love him. The reaction when he loses the title is going to be off the charts and that's why the character works so well. Also getting rid of that spear and switching to the bulldog was a great change.

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Thought of the Day: Where Is TNA?

Fallout from the awards. As I've been doing the awards this year, it's come to my attention that TNA is notably absent. I've been reading through the WrestleZone Forums to make sure I'm not overlooking anything big and TNA doesn't come up much there either. This has been a really bad year for TNA as they just haven't had much to talk about. Everything has either been predictable, not very interesting or repetitive. There are certainly bright spots (Bad Influence, Angle vs. Roode), but so much stuff just doesn't stand out or doesn't feel important at all. Take Aces and 8's ending for instance. yeah the match that got rid of them was entertaining, but it was clear that Anderson was going to win and the moment isn't that big as the bikers had been dead in the water for years. There's nothing special going on over there and it's showing badly.

2013 Awards: Rookie of the Year

Part one of a double shot today as I forgot to put anything up yesterday.

Rookie of the year is a tricky award in wrestling. What do you classify as a rookie? Bray Wyatt debuted in WWE in 2013, but Husky Harris was around years ago. There's little

argument that Shield has been a force in WWE, but they had one match in 2012. It's hard to come up with official criteria, but for the sake of these we'll go with any new character in 2013. I'll leave Shield off because they'll win enough this year. Based on that, there are a lot of nominees this year.

A few honorable mentions:

Sami Zayn. If you watch NXT, you get this one immediately. Sami Zayn is the former El Generico and is currently chasing Bo Dallas' NXT Title. He is about as perfect an underdog as you can ask for and has put on some outstanding matches against guys like Antonio Cesaro and Jack Swagger. He's going to move up to WWE one day and will fit like a glove.

Ethan Carter III. He's the Rick Rude of modern wrestling. Now before you old school fans jump down my throat, think about this for a minute. Rude was a glorified comedy wrestler in the WWF but once he jumped to WCW, he became a killer and the top heel in the company for over a year. Carter was as goofy as you could ask a wrestler to be in WWE but he jumped over to TNA and is now playing a solid heel. The guy is going to be a big deal in TNA and is a rare instance of TNA getting a good steal from WWE.

Now for some actual nominees.

Wyatt Family. These guys are CREEPY. If you watch Survivor Series 1990, the crowd goes silent for Undertaker's debut. Not because they're bored, but because they have no idea what to make of the guy in front of them. That's the vibe I get from these guys. Wyatt is so perfect for the character it's unreal as well as a good sign. Instead of letting him be Husky Harris and having him lose for a year before cutting him, they realized the talent that was there and found

something that fit him perfectly.

However, he might not have the most potential out of all of them. I dig Luke Harper more and more every time he's out there. That discus clothesline of his is AWESOME and looks like it could take anyone out. The look in his eyes is just disturbing and he's got a great finisher to top it off. What more can you ask for from a guy? He's got a future once the Family breaks up and the gimmick change is so easy too.

Now for the winner: Big E. Langston. This guy is actually a rookie by WWE's standards and looks like he's going to be a big deal for a long time. He's been treated like a monster (save for that stupid loss to Del Rio) and is already in the main event scene. They're actually protecting this guy and he has the promo skills to back it up. Considering he only started wrestling about four years ago and is just 27 years old, that's remarkable.

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2013 Awards: News Story of the Year

For once we have a close one. There were some big stories this year and picking the biggest is actually difficult. As

usual we'll go with some nominees first.

Bruno Sammartino comes back to WWE. This is minor by comparison but to see Bruno on Raw and at Wrestlemania was long overdue.

Hulk Hogan and Eric Bischoff leave TNA. This is less of a news story and more of an answer to several prayers. I won't say these two were universally bad for the company but the bad outweighed the good. The focuses on the Hogan drama and Garrett Bischoff from a few years ago dragged the good stuff down and it just never ended. Hogan would have been great as a GM character who showed up once every few weeks and made a match and OCCASIONALLY got physical. Having everything centered around Hogan got old fast and the fact that we never got a payoff to Hogan vs. Bully Ray really hurt things.

TNA running out of money. It isn't as high on the list because of one simple things: there isn't much of a surprise here. TNA has cut PPVs down to like three a year, moved onto the road and hasn't cut any major salaries. I'm no economist, but it's clear that a model like that isn't going to last long at all. Things seems to have stabilized in recent months with Hogan and Bischoff leaving and moving back to Orlando. Yeah it's a step back, but it's either step back or fall off a cliff.

Death of Paul Bearer. Not so much of a story as it is a big surprise. Bearer seemed to be in far better health and was certainly more normal sized than when he weighed well over 500lbs. From what I can find people saw him looking bad on March 2 and he was gone on March 5. That's a very quick turnaround and was a shock to wrestling fans everywhere.

This brings us to the winner: Darren Young coming out. No it hasn't meant much since, but think about this for a minute. The NBA has one active player who is out (yet not on a

roster), MLB, the NFL and NHL have zero. Darren Young is in a physical contact sport in very little clothing yet came out anyway. Luckily there hasn't been a lot of backlash that we know of and might be helpful for others in the future. It hasn't meant much since, but this was big at the time.

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2013 Awards: Best Group/Tag Team

Let's get this over with.

It's Shield. It just is. Moving on to the other nominees.

First team I want to talk about is Bad Influence. These guys are what happens when you let entertaining guys be entertaining instead of trying to make wrestlers into comedians. Every week these guys go out there and make me laugh which is something WWE very rarely does anymore. Bad Influence is a good example of playing to wrestlers' strengths

and that's the best thing that can be done a lot of the time.

Then we have the Rhodes Brothers. If there's been a better renaissance than the one Goldust is currently on, it's been more years than I can remember. These guys are going out there and stealing the show every night and I'm still not tired of them. I'd also like to point out how important a story can be. The Brothers got over with the audience not because of their in ring work (which has been very good) but because the fans can relate to their problems. Cody just got married and lost his job and Goldust is out of work. They're given a chance to fight back and that's exactly what they did. A story like that connects with so many fans and that's why it worked so well. Do more of that, though it helps to have one of the best tag teams going today involved.

Finally, we have the Usos. They're a pretty distant fourth, but they deserve some recognition for how consistently good they are. A lot of the time you just need a pair of interesting guys who can fly around the ring and pop a crowd. Right now no one is as good at that as the Usos and I'm a big fan.

But yeah, if you didn't know this was going to be Shield you haven't paid enough attention.

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2013 Awards: Worst Wrestler of the Year

I changed my mind on this at the last minute. My first pick was Eva Marie, who serves no purpose other than looking good in small outfits. To be fair though, she's not half bad at that so she at least has something going for her. Instead, my pick is from TNA. Well he was at least.

I'm going with Chavo Guerrero. I've watched wrestling for a long time and I can't remember anyone that made me lose interest faster than Chavo. His matches are usually good but I just do not care about anything he does or says. His character is simply "I'm Eddie's nephew!" which is even less than people like Miz or Alex Riley, the black holes of characters. Most of the time I can bring myself up to indifference, but Chavo brings me down to a level that no one else is capable of. Chavo wins this but thankfully he's gone for now.