

Wrestlemania XXXI Preview: WWE World Heavyweight Title: Brock Lesnar vs. Roman Reigns

And then there's this.

This is one of those matches where there are so many different ways it could go that it makes me want to see it. I'm not entirely sure that's how they meant to get there, but it makes me want to see the main event more than I did otherwise. I'm not even sure where to start with this one.

So Reigns won the Rumble after everyone knew he would for like a year, then beat Bryan to defend his title shot at Fast Lane. Much like HHH vs. Sting, it all started coming off the rails after that because they had no idea where to go with it after that. They've tried things like Roman wanting to be the monster that slays the bigger monster or Reigns living up to his family's history of being all dominant and such, but it seems like they really don't know where they're going.

That of course leaves the problem of people not caring about Roman Reigns. They've done a horrible job at making him a guy that we're going to connect with because he doesn't have much of a personality. Look back at the two stories they've tried. Not many people are going to be able to connect with the idea of being a Superman who can beat up anyone in the world and is going off to fight the big dragon. At the same time, most of them can't connect with the idea of being part of a legendary family with a huge reputation to live up to.

On the other hand, there's a major risk of having Reigns booed out of the stadium because Brock Lesnar is the easiest guy in the world to cheer for because fans like seeing Brock destroy people like Godzilla crushing buildings in the abandoned warehouse district of Tokyo. He's a guy people are ready to cheer for (because they can forgive the Streak being broken

that quickly) but instead we're supposed to cheer for Reigns because of....hey isn't that Reverend Slick over there?

They just haven't done a good job of setting this match up because there's no reason to want to see the showdown. Reigns is pretty much the same guy he was a year ago but now he has the stupid promos on his resume. He's been SO much better when he's the Batista type who lets his fighting do the talking and spears people in half after punching them in the face. But instead, for some reason WWE decides that he needs to be a guy with a personality because that's how WWE thinks people are supposed to be.

You know who works as a powerhouse who doesn't say much and shows off with his physical abilities? Brock Lesnar. He's actually a really good standard for someone who doesn't need to do much talking and can be a huge success by just letting his power and dominance do all the talking he needs. Let Reigns be something like a Batista instead of trying to make him the new John Cena.

I don't even see why Reigns needs to win the title at Wrestlemania. Why does Reigns, age 29, NEED to get his first World Title here? Most wrestlers don't win their first title at Wrestlemania and they wind up being fine. Let him win it somewhere else first and then come back and get his really big win later on? Why have him win here and throw him out in deep water? It's like asking him to win a gold medal in the Olympics and not even giving him a broken freaking neck. It doesn't work that way.

All these issues aside, it seems very obvious that it's going to be Reigns taking the title from Lesnar because the story seems to be that Cena couldn't do it so let's get someone even bigger and stronger to take the title from Lesnar. That's a pretty lame story to tell because it's just going and getting the next guy up instead of finding someone we might be interested in seeing.

Then Lesnar re-signed and everything changed.

That signing turned this match on its head and made it a completely different story. The idea was that Lesnar was going to lose the title because he might have been on his way out of the promotion to MMA so

Reigns had to be the guy to take it from him. However, now that he's staying and there's a chance Bryan and Cena will be winning the midcard titles to headline the house shows, why not leave the belt on Brock?

There are a million ways to go with Lesnar if he sticks around as champion, including turning him face. Like, for instance, Reigns sees that he can't win the title on his own and needs some help. Maybe two guys in black? One of whom says Reigns is his brother? Or you have him fight the Authority and finally clear them out. There are a million options.

Then there's one more option: the cash-in. I'll keep this short: if Lesnar retains, I think there's a cash-in tomorrow on Raw. Otherwise, nothing.

So for the official prediction, I'll take Lesnar retaining because he's sticking around. At the end of the day, I think WWE is going to throw the brakes on at the last minute and let Reigns lose here to build him up again for later. I know Vince wants to pull the trigger on him, but hopefully HHH can talk him out of the itchy trigger finger for now. No cash-in at Wrestlemania if Lesnar retains.

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I Want To Talk A Little Bit About Money In The Bank

Money in the Bank has ruined a lot about wrestling. It causes multiple problems and is a major reason why the world titles don't mean anything anymore. Granted there are other reasons like automatic rematch clauses but we'll get into those later. Anyway, there are a lot of things that MITB does which hurts wrestling and I felt like talking about them a bit so let's get to it.

First and foremost, the title changes mean NOTHING. A few years ago at a PWG show in California, Kevin Steen gave someone three package piledrivers then put his six month old son on top of the guy that took the piledrivers and counted three, making the son undefeated as a wrestler. It was cute and everyone laughed and all that jazz. It was ok because it didn't mean anything and was used to make a joke. WWE does the same thing, including once at Summerslam last year in front of 17,000 people at the biggest show of the year.

Let's take either Alberto's or Bryan's win as an example here. Those wins don't prove anything. There was a battle royal once where Jimmy Hart hid under the ring for the whole match but then ran in after everyone else was eliminated to win the match. It was a joke and the whole place erupted in booing. I could give you a dozen examples of matches just like that. You know what the one connecting factor would be? None of them would be for the world title. MITB breaks that rule.

It's a joke instead of a real match. The guy that cashes in hasn't proven he's better than the former champion. Look back to Flair in 1991 in WCW. Lex Luger never beat him, so why should people have accepted Luger as the rightful champion? There was no reason to, so no one did. It's the same here. Why should I have accepted Bryan as the world champion? He didn't

beat Big Show. He pinned a guy that was already beaten. Yes I get that that's the point of his heel turn, but just like everything else in wrestling, it's been done into the ground.

This brings me to my second issue: MITB allows the writers to be lazy. MITB has become a nuclear option in case something needs to be changed in a hurry. Don't have someone built up (Oh we'll get to that soon enough)? Let them cash in. Someone not working as champion? Give someone a briefcase. Want to give us a surprise with no thinking to it that gives you a way out of your bad stories? Here's MITB to the rescue!

The writers are already lazy enough. They've come up with so many tricks to buy themselves months off (automatic rematch clauses for example) that they don't need to actually think anymore. The writers need all the exercise they can get to show them what works and what doesn't, so having then being allowed to just throw something out there with no thinking to it is making things even worse.

Don't believe me that they need to be made to think? Flash back to the Attitude Era. The company was in big trouble and had to be pushed harder and harder to come up with new storylines. What was the result? Compelling storylines that had people glued to their sets every week to see what happened next. Now you get the same story every year. And their solution to the problem? DOUBLE THE AMOUNT OF CASES!!!

That ties into the next problem with the cases: they're repetitive. At the end of the day, the winner has a perfect record with it. The shock value of it is fine for a few moments, but there's nothing new to them. It's like watching a great movie for the first time then watching the story being rehashed in a bunch of sequels. It's cool the second time but after that, it really starts to get dull because you've seen it time after time.

Somehow the process needs to be switched up. First of all,

drop it down to less competitors in the ladder match. Eight people is just WAY too many as you can't keep track of what's going on and it drains the rest of the card because everyone is in the ladder match. Cut it down to five or six and things would be much more interesting. The other thing, which has been beaten into the ground over the years but needs to be said again, is that someone needs to lose their cash-in attempt.

Money in the Bank was built on the idea of it could happen at anytime. When Edge originally cashed in, it was shocking because you didn't see it coming. It's a legit surprise and a great moment because it fits in with the idea that Edge was the ultimate opportunist. The second one at least had a twist on it as the cash-in was announced in advance to build to a match. Since then though, it's been one surprise after another.

These are indeed cool at the moment but they need something changed about them. After the cash-in, the shock is gone and you'd left realizing how weak of a champion that person has become. In order to rebuild the shock value, they need to slow things down. This could be done by either cutting the amount of cash-ins down to one, or having the surprise element taken out. Have someone cash in at a designated time like RVD did. Use it on a major Raw or at a PPV.

Daniel Bryan talked about doing it that way and cashing in at Wrestlemania, but at the end of the day we get the same thing all over again: someone cashing in as a surprise when the champion was down and the title change means nothing. Instead, spend the next few cash-ins on matches that are announced in advance. If nothing else it lets you build up to something instead of hoping that the people watch in hopes of seeing a cash-in.

However in the modern world of WWE, that's as likely as a Diva having a match last longer than five minutes or most people

caring about it. The idea is that bigger and more is better, which isn't the case but in Vince's mind it is. Money in the Bank is possibly not going to be its own PPV this year which would be a step in the right direction, but I doubt they'll keep things going that way because that's not how WWE works.

In summation, Money in the Bank is fine in the short term if you need something fixed, but the problems with it outweigh the good. It furthers the idea of being lazy in creative is ok and that there's no need to give the fans a reason to care about guys as long as you do something that shocks them. It's rationale like that which hurt WCW and look how well they did.

The idea can be fixed but it might be too far gone. If it were up to me, I'd drop the concept. Yeah imagine that: a guy having to earn a title shot and then win the title without someone else doing all the work. Unfortunately that's probably not going to happen because at the end of the day, this is the WWE and they're going to use the easiest method possible anymore, which is why things are weaker lately.