

# Wrestlemania Count-Up – XXXV (2019 Redo): All The Happy Endings

## Wrestlemania XXXV

Date: April 7, 2019

Location: MetLife Stadium, East Rutherford, New Jersey

Attendance: 82,265

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Renee Young, Byron Saxton, Tom Phillips

America the Beautiful: Yolanda Adams

We're back to this show after a year away and I'm not sure what to think about this one. I wasn't in the stadium for this one and for once that is making me remember the show a little bit better. This whole thing is centered around a few matches, as Wrestlemania always tends to be. Let's get to it.

## Kickoff Show: Cruiserweight Title: Buddy Murphy vs. Tony Nese

Murphy is defending and this is during Nese's (who won a tournament to get here) not so great face run. First good thing: there are a bunch of people in their seats already so the place doesn't look ridiculous. Murphy misses a running knee at the bell so Nese hammers away in the corner and tells the fans that this is his Wrestlemania moment. A cartwheel off the apron lets Nese hit him in the jaw but Murphy grabs a fireman's carry drop onto the corner (Colt Cabana's Chicago Skyline) as we take a break.

Back with Murphy holding a chinlock but getting suplexed into the corner to cut things off. Some running elbows to the face rock Murphy and the Lionsault, with Murphy hanging in the ropes, gets two. Nese catches him on the ropes with a palm strike, only to get pulled into a Cheeky Nandos kick. A powerbomb into a spinning faceplant gives Murphy two as we get the "still filing in line" from commentary. Murphy's Law is countered and Nese hits a reverse hurricanrana to put them both down again.

Murphy wins a strike off but Nese is right back with a sunset driver for his own near fall as the fans are finally getting into this. The running Nese doesn't get to launch so Nese hits the Fosbury Flop instead. Back in and the 450 gets two in a surprising near fall. The jumping knee connects out of nowhere and Murphy's Law gets two as Nese gets a foot on the rope. Ever the villain, Murphy tries his own running Nese, which is cut off by a superkick. The real running Nese finishes Murphy at 10:44.

**Rating:** C. The 205 Live guys had several matches that would blow this one away but at least they had a nice moment in the end with the fans getting into things. Nese as a face didn't exactly click but beating Murphy felt like a bit deal. It's a nice mini feel good moment to start what is going to be a long night.

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

Zelina Vega, Kairi Sane, Ember Moon, Liv Morgan, Sarah Logan, Ruby Riott, Mandy Rose, Carmella, Maria Kanellis, Asuka, Sonya Deville, Candice LeRae, Naomi, Nikki Cross, Lana, Dana Brooke, Mickie James

Only Naomi and Asuka get entrances. Nikki goes nuts to start and it's a big brawl, as a battle royal should be. Maria is out in a hurry and Asuka knocks out Candice and Nikki back to back. Ember and Naomi trade hurricanranas until the former hits a quick springboard Eclipse on Lana. Another Eclipse gets rid of Naomi and there's the real version to Mandy. Ember goes up again but Lana (the one in the designated Captain Marvel attire) shoves her out.

Sane hits an Alabama Slam on Lana and goes up like a schnook, only to get shoved to the apron by Logan. Even the bigger schnook, Logan doesn't eliminate her but rather joins the rest of the Riott Squad to go after Lana. The elimination doesn't take long but Sane drops Logan. The Insane Elbow connects, only to have the Squad get together and eliminate Sane without much trouble. An assisted flipping Stunner rocks Vega but AGAIN Logan doesn't get the elimination.

Instead the Squad goes after Asuka and again they don't eliminate her. Brooke gets to fight off all three of them and manages a slow motion Thesz press on Morgan. Riott goes after Brooke and gets tossed, with

Morgan following her out. Brooke's handspring elbow hits Vega's knees though and the running knees in the corner make it worse. Rose and Deville get rid of Vega and Brooke, meaning we can get a big hug.

We're down to Rose, Deville, Asuka, James, Logan and Carmella, the latter of whom seems to be on the floor because that's something you have to have in battle royals these days. James hurricanranas Rose to the apron and superkicks her out, only to get dropped by Deville. Asuka beats up Logan and Deville at once but she manages to toss Deville. Logan gets rid of Asuka but, say it with me, Carmella is still in and superkicks Logan out for the win at 10:33.

**Rating:** D. Holy sweet goodness I can't stand that finish and yet we seem to get it in every few battle royals (including last year's women's battle royal). I know Carmella getting the win is for the sake of the New York fans but egads this feels like a waste of a match, which tends to be the case with so many of these pre-show battle royals. In other words: more of the same stuff that wasn't good in the first place.

#### Kickoff Show: Raw Tag Team Titles: Revival vs. Curt Hawkins/Zack Ryder

Revival is defending and picked the match because they thought it would be an easy win. See, Hawkins hasn't won a match in two and a half years so of course he gets a Wrestlemania title shot (you have to keep the New York crowd happy you see). Dawson shoves Hawkins down to start and then pats him on the cheek in the corner. We get a recap of the Edgeheads as Dawson headlocks Hawkins down.

Ryder comes in as we hear about how the show is "the shadow of New York", which is acknowledged as New Jersey, likely for one of the only times tonight. A middle rope missile dropkick puts Wilder down but Dawson low bridges him out to the floor. Something close to a top rope Demolition Decapitator gets two and the armbar goes on. Dawson comes back in and rips at the face before working on his own armbar.

That's enough of that so Wilder grabs another armbar (he's up 2-1 on Dawson) to keep Ryder down. Ryder fights up again but neckbreakers his way out of a double suplex. With Hawkins being distracted, the champs cheat to set up a hard clothesline for two more. The assisted legdrop

gives Wilder two and we hit the chinlock as this keeps going. Ryder finally suplexes his way to freedom and there's the hot tag to Hawkins.

House is cleaned until it's a double clothesline to put Hawkins and Dawson down at the same time. The middle rope Rough Ryder hits Dawson but Ryder and Wilder crash out to the floor. Wilder saves Dawson at two and tornado DDTs Ryder on the floor. A brainbuster drops Hawkins outside as well and they're all down for a bit. Back in and Hawkins is dead but manages a small package for the pin and the titles at 13:20. Hawkins slowly realizing that not only is the match over but that they won is kind of awesome.

**Rating:** D+. This went on too long but the ending was fine after setting everything up for so long with the losing streak. Hawkins and Ryder are a likable team so it's not like them winning the titles is a bad idea. Besides, WWE has already taken away anything that the Revival could offer (and yet it would still get worse) so the loss doesn't do a ton of damage to them anyway.

#### Kickoff Show: Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal

Otis, Karl Anderson, Andrade, Gran Metalik, Chad Gable, Heath Slater, Bo Dallas, Colin Jost, Jeff Hardy, No Way Jose, Lince Dorado, Bobby Roode, Konnor, Tyler Breeze, Viktor, Luke Harper, Ali, Apollo Crews, Michael Che, Titus O'Neil, Tucker, Braun Strowman, Shelton Benjamin, Jinder Mahal, Matt Hardy, Curtis Axel, Rhino, Luke Gallows, EC3, Kalisto

So the big deal here is Jost and Che are from Saturday Night Live and Strowman doesn't like them. The two of them bail to the floor and hide under the ring as Axel is out in about ten seconds. Dorado takes a SCARY bump to the floor with Breeze, EC3 and Benjamin following him out. There goes Dallas as well but it's time for a staredown with Strowman and Harper.

That's broken up in a hurry and Titus gets rid of Slater. As expected, Titus is out a few seconds later off a missed charge and Ali gets rid of Jose. Ascension sends Strowman shoulder first into the post for a crash to the floor (through the

ropes so no elimination). Anderson isn't so lucky as he gets tossed and the Hardys do the same to Rhyno. Roode and Metalik are out next as the ring is starting to empty a bit.

Andrade tosses Kalisto onto Metalik but Gable rolls Andrade with German suplexes. Since it's Gable though, Andrade throws him out in a hurry, leaving Otis to hit a double Caterpillar on the Ascension. They're both out as well but Strowman is back in to get rid of Gallows, Tucker and Otis in a row. There goes Mahal as Harper tries to suplex Ali over the top. With Ali hanging upside down, Strowman kicks Harper out, nearly dropping Ali on his head in a very near miss.

We're down to Strowman, Andrade, Matt, Jeff and Crews in the ring with Che and Jost still underneath the ring. Andrade and Crews go to the apron and Andrade tries a hurricanrana for no intelligent reason in a double elimination. Strowman puts the Hardys on the apron in the battle of North Carolina as Che and Jost get back inside. They can't get rid of Strowman, who dumps the Hardys and is ready for the destruction.

Jost grabs a mic though and says this doesn't need to end in violence. He presents his personal therapist, whose breathing exercises earn him a chokeslam. Che tries to eliminate himself but Strowman punches himself out instead. Strowman misses a charge and almost gets eliminated but powers through it and tosses Jost for the win at 10:27.

**Rating:** D+. Yeah it's stupid and the SNL guys added nothing to the whole thing but Strowman won in the end and there were some nice spots (granted they went with some scary ones) throughout. It isn't anything better or worse than your usual "get them all in there" battle royal and it could have been worse. That's high praise for something like this anymore.

And with that Smackdown length Kickoff Show out of the way, we can get on with the real show. Isn't modern WWE great?

Yolanda Adams sings America the Beautiful and we get the big

helicopter flyover.

The opening video, complete with a WWE Presents, features the wrestlers talking about how Shakespeare said all the world's a stage. Tonight, this is their stage and they are the players. We get the classic moments of course because this show is built around history. They do a good job of starting this slowly and then building it up into a big feeling. As usual, WWE's promo videos are nothing short of incredible and somehow they manage to get better a lot of the time. That being said, wrestlers calling themselves storytellers doesn't sound right.

Maybe it's how many times I've heard the song on highlight packages since then, but that Love Runs Out theme song is really catchy.

Here's Alexa Bliss, the host for the evening, to open things up. Bliss talks about how this show needs a goddess and if she snaps her fingers, she can make a Wrestlemania moment. A snap of her fingers produces Hulk Hogan, who is happy to be back here in the Silverdome. That gets a chuckle so then he calls it the MetLife Center in a joke that doesn't go over as well. Hogan and Bliss pose together in a cute moment.

Hold on though as Paul Heyman storms out and says we're doing the Universal Title match RIGHT NOW. The faster Lesnar wins, the faster he can go to Las Vegas where he is ULTIMATELY appreciated.

### Raw World Title: Brock Lesnar vs. Seth Rollins

Rollins is defending after winning the Royal Rumble and gets a big BEAST SLAYER intro. At least BURN IT DOWN gets a big reaction so they're doing something right. Lesnar jumps him before the bell and knees Rollins off the apron. An F5 plants Rollins on the floor and a hard whip into the barricade makes it even worse. Rollins gets tossed over the announcers' table as the beating is on in a big way. That's not enough for Lesnar so he throws Rollins over another table before throwing

Rollins inside.

Heyman and Lesnar talk the angry trash but it's back to the floor before the opening bell. Cole: "Seth Rollins never had a chance!" And there's your usual WWE line that gives away the ending. Brock throws Rollins over the announcers' table for a third time and then through the cover of the announcers' table. They go back in for the opening bell and there's the first German suplex. Lesnar: "SUPLEX CITY B\*\*\*\*\*!" Give him his t-shirt money.

The second suplex sends him flying again as Cole brings up the Wrestlemania XXXI cash-in. The F5 is countered though and Rollins gets in a low blow. That means a low superkick and three straight Stomps make Rollins champion at 2:30. It was an exciting start and the whole thing from Lesnar's first attack ran about 7:00. They had to get the title onto Rollins here (though more importantly off of Lesnar) and this was certainly a memorable way to do it. Certainly more so than when they did it again in a longer form four and a half months later.

### AJ Styles vs. Randy Orton

This is your "here are two big names without much else to do" match. Orton eliminated him from the Elimination Chamber and they got in an argument about who built Smackdown. Orton's big CGI snakes really don't look great but those things are hit and miss for everyone. AJ headlocks him to start and is promptly driven into the corner. A very early threat of an RKO sends AJ bailing to the corner and it's another standoff.

Orton pokes him in the eye and hits a dropkick to take over, including a boot across the eye to make it even worse. AJ gets in his own dropkick though as they're pretty even in the early minutes. With Orton taking a breather on the floor, AJ scores with the slingshot forearm, only to get knocked off the apron and hard into the barricade. Back in and the chinlock goes on as the fans start chanting something I can't understand.

That's broken up so AJ hits the sliding forearm, setting up the fireman's carry backbreaker for two. An early Styles Clash attempt is countered into a powerslam to give Orton his own near fall as the slow pace continues. The Calf Crusher attempt is countered without much trouble but the second attempt is slapped on in the middle of the ring. Not that the fans are exactly interested but AJ did get it on. That's broken up in a hurry so AJ heads to the apron for the Phenomenal Forearm.

Orton jumps up to RK0 him out of the air (as he had done last week) but AJ holds back, leaving Orton to crash. The springboard 450 gets two but Orton is right back with the backbreaker. Orton's rather good looking top rope superplex has AJ crashing down for two and an uppercut gets a crazy loud pop (that had to be for something else). The hanging DDT gets no reaction but Orton walking around does, as I'm almost scared to imagine what had the fans' attention.

AJ hits an enziguri to block the RK0, only to walk into it on the second attempt. That's only good for two as well and Orton is shocked. With nothing else working, Orton loads up a super RK0, which is escaped without a lot of effort. A Pele sends Orton to the floor and the Phenomenal Forearm knock him even sillier. Back in and Orton still can't hit the RK0, meaning it's another Phenomenal Forearm to give AJ the pin at 16:12.

**Rating:** C-. Things got a bit better by the end but it never got going at any intense level. These two are capable of a lot but it was rather slow paced for the most part and when the match is going that long, it can get pretty tiresome in a hurry. It's not bad in any sense but it wasn't exciting and you know these two could do a lot better. That makes it more frustrating than anything else, as I kept waiting for them to get going and they never really did.

Here's Lacey Evans to continue doing her thing of walking around, smiling, and then walking back.



## Smackdown Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Rusev/Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Bar vs. Ricochet/Aleister Black

The Usos are defending and it's one fall to a finish. There is something so awesome about seeing the look on Ricochet's face as he walks onto the stage. You can see what it means to him and there is no faking that kind of a feeling. This also marks Ricochet and Black's third shot at different titles this week, after Raw and NXT title shots earlier in the week. Jimmy and Black start things off with a feeling out process until Sheamus tags himself in to face Black.

The armbars doesn't last long as Rusev tags Sheamus and runs Black over. Nakamura comes in for a kick to the back but the rapid fire tags continue, with Jimmy coming in to Samoa drop Black. Nakamura kicks Jimmy into a tag to Ricochet, who does a very spinny headscissors on Cesaro. Since it's just a headscissors though, Cesaro uppercuts Ricochet down and starts swinging him, as Sheamus forearms everyone else.

After a nearly 40 second swing (geez), the Sharpshooter goes on in the middle of the ring. Black makes the save and strikes away, setting up a springboard moonsault for two on Rusev. Nakamura is back in with some running knees to Black, meaning Ricochet has to make a save of his own. That earns him a swinging Rock Bottom from Rusev and it's time for the nine man Tower of Doom. Just to show off, Ricochet flips out and lands safely in the corner, setting up the 630 for two on Sheamus. We hit the parade of kicks to the face with the Usos superkicking Sheamus down. The Double Us retains the titles at 10:05.

**Rating:** B. This was almost all action from bell to bell and that's all you can do with a match like this one. Let them do whatever they want and get in spot after spot for a little while. They didn't overstay their welcome either, as this match got in the right amount of time. Good stuff here and one of the more entertaining things all night so far.

Hall of Fame recap. Thankfully Bret being attacked isn't mentioned whatsoever.

Here's the class being presented in the stadium:

Honky Tonk Man (How was he not in yet?)

Harlem Heat (Perfectly fine.)

Torrie Wilson (The new low benchmark.)

Brutus Beefcake (Again, how was he not in yet?)

Hart Foundation (Should have been earlier so Neidhart could be there but long overdue as well.)

Sue Aitchison (Warrior Award.)

D-Generation X (I'm sure they had to twist their arms to get here. Deserved of course.)

We recap Miz vs. Shane McMahon. Somehow Shane won the World Cup despite not being in the tournament and Miz, the man he replaced in the finals, was jealous. Miz's dad thought they should team together so they won the Tag Team Titles. The reign didn't last long though and they split up, with Shane turning on Miz. Tonight, it's Falls Count Anywhere. This was in the middle of Shane's RIDICULOUS run near the top of Smackdown where he was all over the show and beating main eventers, including that Tag Team Title win. Of course he gets a big Wrestlemania match, because that's what makes sense for such a star.

### Shane McMahon vs. The Miz

Falls Count Anywhere, but hang on as Shane needs to hear his introduction three times in a row. With that out of the way, Shane bails to the floor at the bell so the chase is on, with Shane hitting his horrible punches. In a smart move, Shane grabs Miz's dad (in the front row) and again, the chase goes badly for Miz as Shane hammers away. They head outside again with Shane loading up the announcers' table.

A monitor shot to the head puts Miz on the table but Miz's dad blocks the

big elbow. Shane gets down so Miz's dad gets inside for the showdown, with Miz's dad doing the pose that launched a subplot on the upcoming season of Miz and Mrs. Shane takes him into the corner and stomps away, drawing Miz back in for the beating. They fight to to the floor with Shane falling over the barricade but hold on as Miz wants someone to check on his dad.

With the medics doing their job, Miz dives over the barricade to take Shane down again. They fight over towards one of the big pillars that holds up the canopy over the ring but Shane fights out of the Skull Crushing Finale. Instead Shane grabs a DDT for two but Miz kicks him down off the stage. Shane is sent knee first into a barricade and Miz beats on him with a chair to blow off some more steam.

They wreck announcers' row with Miz throwing him over every chair he can find, plus throwing some chairs around. Shane gets sent through a table for two, followed by a monitor shot to knock him over a barricade and onto the top of a well placed golf cart. That gives Miz a delayed two so he punches Shane up towards a production tower. A Skull Crushing Finale onto the platform gets two, because he's Shane and Miz is just a former World Champion.

Shane fights back (of course) and climbs up to the top of the tower. Miz pursues so Shane begs off, even dropping to one knee. That earns him some left hands to the head and Miz superplexes him all the way down (after asking if Shane is ready) onto a crash pad. Worry not though as Shane lands on top for the pin at 15:25.

**Rating:** D-. I knew the ending was coming here and I still shake my head at the ending. Shane is the boss' son but my goodness how hard can you push him? The worst part is that it is only going to get worse as the summer goes on, but this was a punch to the gut as Shane wins AGAIN, meaning he isn't going away anytime soon. The superplex was a nice idea but showing the landing on the pad (which just happened to be there) took away all of the impact that it had. That is, whatever was left before Shane won of course.

Paige joins commentary.

Women's Tag Team Titles: IIconics vs. Beth Phoenix/Natalya vs. Nia Jax/Tamina vs. Sasha Banks/Bayley

Banks and Bayley are defending and it's one fall to a finish. Bret Hart is here with Beth and Natalya (who really feel like fill ins for Trish Stratus/Lita), though he doesn't go beyond the stage. Tamina shoves Bayley down to start and superkicks Natalya for a bonus. Everything breaks down in a hurry with Nia being sent outside for a ram into the steps. Back in and Peyton rolls Sasha up for two and it's a double kick to put drop Sasha again.

The Hardys' Spin Cycle gets two on Banks but she's right back with a backslide for the same. It's back to Bayley for a sliding clothesline for two on Beth but Billie tags herself in. The IIconics take over on Beth, who is right back with a suplex to both of them at once. Natalya comes in for two but Bayley makes a fast save. The champs get in a fight with Beth and Natalya and it's a Bank Statement to Phoenix. That's broken up but the Glam Slam is countered into a rollup into the corner.

Natalya drops Sasha onto Bayley and they get the always fairly dumb looking double Sharpshooter treatment. This time it's Tamina making the save and Nia comes back in to wreck everyone else. The IIconics get crushed with stereo Samoan drops but Beth shoves Nia off the top to break up a splash. Sasha takes Beth down as well and Bayley drops the top rope elbow, followed by Banks' frog splash. The Tower of Doom is broken up so Beth hits a super Glam Slam on Bayley, with Kay making a blind tag. With Beth sent outside, Kay steals the pin and the titles at 10:47.

**Rating:** D. This went on too long and wasn't all that interesting in the first place. The titles were brand new at this point and they already seemed pretty worthless, which would be proven over the next year. The fallout here is more interesting than the match itself, as you Nia would go away for about a year with double ACL surgery and Sasha (allegedly) threw a fit over losing and took the summer off.

The pilots from the Kickoff Show flyover are in the crowd. That's always cool.

We recap Kofi Kingston vs. Daniel Bryan for the Smackdown World Title.

Kofi replaced the injured Ali in the Elimination Chamber and got down to the final two. That set up one of the most dramatic things that WWE has ever done, as Kofi got inches away from winning the title and the fans ate it up. It was clear that Kofi had to get the title at Wrestlemania or he never would, which sent Kofi and New Day into a crusade to finally get the title shot that had eluded him for eleven years.

After jumping through all kinds of hoops set by Vince McMahon, it took New Day winning a gauntlet match to get the shot, with their longtime rivals the Usos stepping aside in a great show of respect for Kofi. At the same time, Bryan said that Kofi was a B+ player in an awesome role reversal from his legendary run five years earlier.

The match was finally set and it was a heck of a story, as Kofi had put in so many years of building credibility to get here and was finally cashing in. This wasn't JBL jumping up to the main event scene, as Kofi had pretty much won every title other than the World Title. That's not a big jump, but it was hard to believe that they would actually pull the trigger here. In other words, this was EXCELLENT and would have headlined any other year.

#### Smackdown World Title: Kofi Kingston vs. Daniel Bryan

Kofi is challenging and has New Day in his corner, while Bryan has Rowan. Big E. has a gift for Kofi and promises it for after the match. I had forgotten how nice of a touch Bryan's eco-friendly belt really was. They stare each other down to start and the fans are behind Kofi, which is almost hard to fathom until you realize that Bryan might be a better heel than face. Kofi's headlock doesn't get anywhere so they fight over a backslide. Bryan monkey flips him so Kofi lands on his feet, setting up a dropkick to the floor.

The big dive takes Bryan down again and the roster is behind Kofi in the back. Things slow down a bit as Bryan needs a breather with Rowan. Back in and Bryan uppercuts him a few times to set up the surfboard, which always looks awesome. That's broken up in a hurry as usual, allowing Kofi to kick away in the corner. Bryan's moonsault into the running clothesline is countered into something resembling the standing double

stomp (almost a Thesz press as Kofi can't hit it properly) for two.

Kofi's jumping clothesline works a bit better and the Boom Drop connects. Bryan heads outside again so Kofi tries a springboard dive, which lands ribs first on the announcers' table. You don't have to ask Bryan twice to go after the ribs like that so he drops Kofi ribs first across the top rope. The ribs get sent into the corner and it's off to a waistlock, which works a lot better this time around. Kofi fights up and elbows in the corner but a very quick Trouble in Paradise is countered into a Boston crab.

Bryan's belly to back superplex is broken up with elbows to the face and Kofi hits a top rope splash to the back for two. They slug it out but Trouble in Paradise is countered again, only to be countered into a small package to give Kofi two more. Kofi's crossbody is rolled through though and Bryan pulls him into a failed LeBell Lock attempt so they're both down for a second. The running knee is countered into the SOS but Bryan reverses into the LeBell Lock, with Bryan letting go for some more elbows to the ribs.

Kofi finally gets his foot on the rope and you can hear the sigh of relief. Bryan YES Kicks at the ribs even more but Kofi fires up and tells Bryan to kick him even harder. As Bryan backs away, Kofi throws his own kicks and busts out a reverse suplex for two. They head outside again so Rowan can go after New Day, earning himself Trouble in Paradise. The Midnight Hour on the floor takes care of Rowan and Kofi blocks Bryan's suicide dive.

Back in and Bryan hits the running knee....for two and a big pop on the kickout. Bryan has had it and unloads with stomps to the head to set up the LeBell Lock. Kofi breaks out again and blasts Bryan with forearms to the face with more aggression than you usually see from him. Bryan won't let go of the wrist so Kofi stomps him right back, knocking Bryan silly. Trouble in Paradise gives Kofi the clean pin and the title at 23:45.

**Rating:** A. That is the definition of the Wrestlemania moment and it holds up to perfection a year later. The fans completely bought into the idea of Kofi fighting through everything and winning the title in the end and

that's all it should have been. Kofi is the kind of guy who has been around forever and built up so much good will that when he finally went after the title, everyone was on his side. That made for a special moment and it was amazing throughout as it's something that I never thought I would see, but here it is. That's a great thing to see as rare as it can be.

On top of that, this was an awesome match with both guys giving it everything they had. The story here was perfect with Kofi not being the wrestler Bryan was but knowing that this was his one shot and giving everything he had to achieve his dream when he could. The fans believed in him and there was no way he could lose in this spot. Outstanding stuff and if not for the historic main event, this would have headlined in a landslide. Watch this again and smile a lot.

Post match Woods and Big E. pull out the classic WWE Championship and hand it to Kofi for the first time (Kofi kneeling in the ring and waiting to have it presented to him is a great visual). The pyro goes off and Kofi's sons get in the ring to celebrate with him and one of them holds up the title, which is almost bigger than he is. We're not done yet though as Big E. brings in the present from earlier. It's the first New Day shirt featuring Kofi as champion and his kids get to hold them up for a perfect visual. Woods: "THEY SAID WE COULDN'T MAKE IT! WE MADE IT TO THE TOP!" Outstanding.

Che and Jost are banged up so Bliss introduces them to Dr. Scott Hall and Dr. Kevin Nash. Ok then.

Booker T. is the next guest commentator.

#### US Title: Samoa Joe vs. Rey Mysterio

Mysterio is challenging and this year's comic gear is....well Mysterio appropriately enough. Now how did he never do that one before? Joe kicks him in the face but Rey is right back with the springboard hurricanrana. The 619 connects but Joe pulls him out of the air into the Koquina Clutch and Rey is out at 1:00, which may have something to do with Rey injuring his ankle on Monday. Booker being annoyed at wasting all the time on prep work is good for a chuckle.

Sneak peak of Batista's new movie Stuber.

We recap Roman Reigns vs. Drew McIntyre. Reigns returned from leukemia after a four month absence and he needs a first victim. Drew has run through the rest of the Shield as a bonus. This is your likely layup result of the show and that's fine.

### Roman Reigns vs. Drew McIntyre

Drew gets played to the ring by the New York Bagpipe Band. They trade shots to the face to start so Reigns snaps off a Samoan drop for an early two. McIntyre is right back with a spinebuster into a jackknife cover for two of his own. The Glasgow Kiss knocks Reigns down again and McIntyre throws him into the corner for two. The chinlock/armbar goes on until Reigns powers out and knocks him to the floor. Reigns' running kick to the face is blocked though and McIntyre suplexes him down.

Back in and the reverse Alabama slam gives McIntyre two so he takes Reigns up top. That earns him a crotching, only to have Drew pull himself up from the Tree of Woe to send Reigns flying with a belly to belly superplex. Reasons of general heelishness cause McIntyre to slap him in the face, meaning the comeback is on. McIntyre gets knocked outside again for the Samoan drop on the floor, followed by the Superman Punch back inside. The spear finishes McIntyre at 10:06.

**Rating:** D. The fans didn't care and why should they have? As usual, it was clear that Reigns was going to win and that happens far too often at Wrestlemania. It's amazing that Reigns got to come back here but it's Reigns, who almost always wins, winning again in a match where the ending was obvious throughout. Nothing to see here, and the fans were silent throughout.

Post match Reigns gets to pose in a rather emotional moment.

Here's Elias for his self described greatest performance ever. He's on screen playing drums, with a second Elias joining him on piano and the real thing in the ring playing guitar. They jam for a bit and guitar Elias says the other two deserve a standing ovation. Elias teases more members of the band and gets in his catchphrase before loading up the



song....but here's a SPECIAL BULLETIN on Babe Ruth calling his shot in the 1932 World Series.

Cue John Cena in Dr. of Thuganomics gear and the fans seem rather pleased. Cena raps about how he's about to turn heel and how bad his own movies are. WWE doesn't stand for Walk With Elias because it really means Wasted Wrestling Experiment. We get a nuts joke, followed by the FU to leave Elias laying. They have history together so this was as good as you were going to get. This was funny for a change if nothing else and that's a cool Wrestlemania feeling.

We recap Batista vs. HHH. Back at Smackdown 1000, Batista had mentioned that HHH never beat him but laughed it off. Then in February, Ric Flair was having a 70<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration but Batista attacked him, while asking HHH if he had his attention. This set up the match, with Batista demanding that HHH give him what he wanted (over and over and over). HHH has put up his career just in case the ending was in the slightest bit of doubt.

Shawn Michaels is guest commentator.

### Batista vs. HHH

No holds barred with HHH's career on the line. Batista goes out to glare at Shawn but here's HHH, riding in a Mad Max style cart because of course he is. Batista drives him straight into the corner to start so HHH is back with some right hands to the face. A backdrop sends Batista outside but he throws HHH over the announcers' table in a crash. HHH is right back up with a ram into the barricade and busts out a chain to whip Batista over the back.

The chain is pulled into Batista's mouth (Shawn: "That's not going to help his movie career.") and HHH whips him into the steps. To ramp up the pain, HHH busts out some pliers to bend Batista's fingers around a bit. HHH isn't done with the toolbox so he grabs some needle nose pliers and ribs Batista's nose ring out. To be fair, that thing looked horrible. Cole: "HHH just ripped a nose ring out of the nose of Batista." So the nose ring in his ear is still intact.

Batista's nose is good enough to drop HHH onto the announcers' table and then he does it again onto a different one. A chair to the back sets up the shoulders in the corner for two as things have slowed way down. Batista slams him down for two more and let's go outside again. The steps are set on the table and another table is cleared off as this is taking quite a long time for one big spot.

The huge Batista Bomb through the table is countered with a backdrop onto (not through) the other table and they're both down again. HHH gets up, spinebusters him through the table, and we get another breather. HHH pulls out the sledgehammer but it's a spear to cut him down for two. This time it's HHH knocking the sledgehammer away from Batista, earning himself a spinebuster in the process. The Batista Bomb, which makes HHH drop the sledgehammer again, connects for two.

With nothing else working, Batista brings in the steps but goes up top for some reason. That reason would be so HHH can powerbomb him onto the steps, setting up a Pedigree for two (Because this MUST KEEP GOING!). They're both down again so here's Flair to slip HHH the sledgehammer. HHH gets up and uses the steps as a launchpad to hammer Batista in the head. Since that's not enough to pin him (or KILL HIM as it probably should have), Batista pops up to take the Pedigree for the pin at 25:45.

**Rating:** D. Why does HHH do this? They could have had the same match with at least ten minutes chopped off but for some reason we needed to get HHH's latest big epic match, no matter how much people aren't interested in seeing it. This was terrible with Batista looking like a shell of his glory days (fair enough) and the match going WAY longer than it should have. Horrible match, and did you expect anything else given this style of match's history?

The B Team model Daniel Bryan WWE Champion shirts but here's Ron Simmons for the joke.

JBL is your next guest commentator.

Baron Corbin vs. Kurt Angle

This is Angle's retirement match as he can barely get in the ring without

injuring himself these days and needs to limp away for good. Corbin is here because we all did something horrible in a past life. Angle goes after him to start but gets knocked into the corner to put him in early trouble. Corbin takes it to the corner and pounds away before mocking Angle's family a bit. A missed middle rope ax handle sends Corbin throat first into the rope so Angle snaps off some suplexes for two.

Angle walks into a big boot but is fine enough to grab a quickly broken ankle lock. Deep Six gives Corbin two more but he misses a charge, allowing the Angle Slam to connect for two. The straps come down and the ankle lock goes on until Corbin rolls him into the corner for the break. Corbin throws in a You Can't See Me so Angle punches him into more rolling German suplexes. The moonsault misses though and the End of Days finishes Kurt's career at 5:59.

**Rating:** D. Angle does seem fine with putting Corbin over on the way out but this was another step in the seemingly eternal nonsense that was/is the Corbin push. It's a lot to take and while I can live with Angle going out on his back, it's a lot to take because Corbin really is going way above his pay grade every time he's in a match like this.

Post match Angle thanks the fans and asks for one more YOU SUCK chant for the road.

#### Intercontinental Title: Bobby Lashley vs. Finn Balor

Lashley, with Lio Rush, is defending and they've traded the title, so tonight it's the Demon to make the match feel big. Balor gets a special entrance by coming down off a raised platform, though it's not as creepy as his NXT entrances. Lashley has very bright green contacts in for some reason. Some early dropkicks put Lashley on the floor and Balor takes him out with a dive for a bonus.

A hard drive into the apron cuts Balor off though and there's a suplex to make it worse. Lashley clotheslines him hard to the floor but a Sling Blade gets Balor out of trouble. Rush's distraction lets Lashley hit a HARD spear through the ropes though and a regular one gets two back inside. Balor fights out of a powerbomb and hits one of his own, setting up the Coup de Grace for the pin and the title at 4:01.

**Rating:** C. The match was entertaining enough for something that was going so fast but at the same time, the booking still doesn't make a ton of sense. Balor has already shown that he can beat Lashley so now he needs to bring up the powers to win? And the extraordinary thing was just a powerbomb? I'm glad to see the Demon again but this wasn't exactly the most logical thing in the world.

Here's Alexa Bliss to announce the attendance record of 82,265. Cue R-Truth and Carmella for the Wrestlemania Dance Break (Remember those?).

We recap the main event of Raw Women's Champion Ronda Rousey and Smackdown Women's Champion Charlotte defending against Becky Lynch in a winner take all match. Rousey is the unstoppable force, Charlotte is Charlotte and Becky is here because she's the hottest name in wrestling at the moment and won the Royal Rumble. Tonight the winner leaves with both titles and it's the biggest women's match in history.

### Raw Women's Title/Smackdown Women's Title: Ronda Rousey vs. Charlotte vs. Becky Lynch

Lynch is challenging both. In a nod to her father and the Four Horsemen, Charlotte lance in a helicopter outside and walks into the stadium. Already inside, Joan Jett and the Blackhearts play Rousey to the ring. There is something so cool about watching Becky walk down the ramp in a wide shot as Cole talks about how she has started a movement. I'm not sure if that is the right term but it looked awesome. The bell rings and even a year later I still can't believe this happened. The women's division was a joke just a few years ago and now it's the biggest match of the year. That's hard to believe and it's very cool.

They stare at each other for a good bit to start until Becky goes after Rousey's arm. Rousey kicks her to the floor without much trouble and that means a Samoan drop into the barricade. Charlotte follows and takes Piper's Pit but pops right back up for a fall away slam to send Rousey into the barricade for a change. That sets up the required Charlotte vs. Becky fight with Becky getting the better of things but can't get the Figure Four, allowing Rousey to come and hammer away.

Charlotte breaks up an armbar attempt but gets pulled into a triangle choke over the ropes. Becky hits a running dropkick though and Rousey falls HARD onto the floor in a nasty crash. That leaves Charlotte to knee Becky in the head as the fans get behind Becky in a big way. Charlotte's moonsault hits knees and Becky gets the Disarm-Her but Rousey make the save in a hurry. A double Natural Selection gives Charlotte two each and it's Becky going outside this time.

For some reason Charlotte tries to slug it out with Rousey, earning herself a knee to the head. Charlotte pulls her into a Boston crab, drawing Becky in for her own save. Becky and Charlotte slug it out again until Charlotte is sent to the apron. Charlotte gets caught up top with a super Bexploder for two but Rousey drops both of them with a high crossbody for a double near fall. The double armbar goes on so Becky and Charlotte powerbomb her for the break. It took three attempts but they finally got out.

Everyone is down for a bit until Becky hits a Rock Bottom for two on Charlotte. Rousey goes after Becky and gets pulled straight into the Disarm-Her so she uses the ropes to power up in the corner. That's fine with Becky, who puts it on again in the corner until Charlotte boots her in the face. Charlotte's super Spanish Fly gets two but she might have banged up her knee. Rousey's knee is banged up as well so Charlotte stomps away and grabs the Figure Four around the post.

After sending Becky into the barricade, Charlotte grabs the Figure Eight but Becky dives in off the top for another save. Just because, let's bring in a table but Charlotte decks Becky for taking too long to set it up. Rousey shoves Charlotte off the top and turns the table over because she doesn't need it. A double spear takes down Becky and Rousey so Charlotte sets up the table in the corner.

Charlotte sends Rousey face first into the table and spears Becky for two more. Back up and Charlotte gets hiptossed through the table, leaving Becky and Rousey to have the slugout we've been waiting for. They throw some serious hands but Piper's Pit is countered into a crucifix (with Rousey's shoulder a good six inches off the mat in a bad botch) to give Becky both titles at 21:28.

**Rating:** B. I don't know if it's because I didn't watch it in one sitting this time around but I liked the match a good bit better on a second viewing. These three beat each other up and while Becky winning was the presumed finish, it wasn't entirely a lock given who she was in there against. It was a heck of a fight and the three of them all came out looking great. This is much more historic than good, but it's really rather good and that's always a positive way to go out.

Rousey is ticked as Becky celebrates to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C+. The positives are better than the negatives but not by much. There are some flat out bad matches on here but they are overcome by some great feelings with the faces winning all of the big matches for a change. That felt like an old school style as for the first time in what felt like forever, they didn't cut the fans off for the sake of dragging things out until later. For once it felt like a season finale and that's what Wrestlemania should be when it gets the chance. Good show, but it could have been a lot better.

How you ask? CUT THE SHOW DOWN! Look at how long this show is and tell me that it's well put together. There is no need for a sixteen match card, especially with some of the matches that feel tacked on. All three Tag Team Title matches feel like they're here for the sake of being here and some of the matches just need to be shortened. Either that or find a way to get people to the ring faster. I know it seems simple but how much of these shows are spent on ring entrances alone? Just find a way to shorten things, please.

Overall there are more good things than bad, but this isn't a show that you need to watch in one sitting. As soon as you get to the point where the show is five hours plus an episode of Smackdown before it starts (and a Smackdown with more wrestling than usual at that), you're hitting a firm ceiling of how much you can enjoy this. I know you can't cut out big chunks, but find a way to get this under six hours. Do that and it's a lot better, but that has been the case for years now and it keeps getting longer. Either way, at least we had enough nice stuff on here, but don't watch it all at once.

## Ratings Comparison

Tony Nese vs. Buddy Murphy

Original: C+

Redo: C

Women's Battle Royal

Original: D

Redo: D

Revival vs. Zack Ryder/Curt Hawkins

Original: C

Redo: D+

Men's Battle Royal

Original: D

Redo: D+

Brock Lesnar vs. Seth Rollins

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

AJ Styles vs. Randy Orton

Original: B-

Redo: C-

Usos vs. Shinsuke Nakamura/Rusev vs. The Bar vs. Aleister Black/Ricochet

Original: C+

Redo: B

Shane McMahon vs. The Miz

Original: C-

Redo: D-

Boss N Hug Connection vs. Natalya/Beth Phoenix vs. IIconics vs. Nia Jax/Tamina

Original: D

Redo: D

Kofi Kingston vs. Daniel Bryan

Original: A-

Redo: A

Samoa Joe vs. Rey Mysterio

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

Drew McIntyre vs. Roman Reigns

Original: C-

Redo: D

Batista vs. HHH

Original: D+

Redo: D

Baron Corbin vs. Kurt Angle

Original: F

Redo: D

Finn Balor vs. Bobby Lashley



Original: C

Redo: C

Ronda Rousey vs. Becky Lynch vs. Charlotte

Original: B

Redo: B

Overall Rating

Original: B-

Redo: C+

About the same all around, but some of those earlier ones are a good bit off. Still though, too long, despite some of the very good parts.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<https://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2019/04/08/wrestlemania-xxxv-so-much-for-no-happy-endings/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and head over to my Amazon author page with 30 different cheap wrestling books at:

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# Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XXXV (2019 Redo): Special Moment! Special Moment!

## Wrestlemania XXXV

Date: April 7, 2019

Location: MetLife Stadium, East Rutherford, New Jersey

Attendance: 82,265

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Renee Young, Byron Saxton, Tom Phillips

America the Beautiful: Yolanda Adams

We're back to this show after a year away and I'm not sure what to think about this one. I wasn't in the stadium for this one and for once that is making me remember the show a little bit better. This whole thing is centered around a few matches, as Wrestlemania always tends to be. Let's get to it.

### Kickoff Show: Cruiserweight Title: Buddy Murphy vs. Tony Nese

Murphy is defending and this is during Nese's (who won a tournament to get here) not so great face run. First good thing: there are a bunch of people in their seats already so the place doesn't look ridiculous. Murphy misses a running knee at the bell so Nese hammers away in the corner and tells the fans that this is his Wrestlemania moment. A cartwheel off the apron lets Nese hit him in the jaw but Murphy grabs a fireman's carry drop onto the corner (Colt Cabana's Chicago Skyline) as we take a break.

Back with Murphy holding a chinlock but getting suplexed into the corner to cut things off. Some running elbows to the face rock Murphy and the Lionsault, with Murphy hanging in the ropes, gets two. Nese catches him on the ropes with a palm strike, only to get pulled into a Cheeky Nandos kick. A powerbomb into a spinning faceplant gives Murphy two as we get

the “still filing in line” from commentary. Murphy’s Law is countered and Nese hits a reverse hurricanrana to put them both down again.

Murphy wins a strike off but Nese is right back with a sunset driver for his own near fall as the fans are finally getting into this. The running Nese doesn’t get to launch so Nese hits the Fosbury Flop instead. Back in and the 450 gets two in a surprising near fall. The jumping knee connects out of nowhere and Murphy’s Law gets two as Nese gets a foot on the rope. Ever the villain, Murphy tries his own running Nese, which is cut off by a superkick. The real running Nese finishes Murphy at 10:44.

**Rating:** C. The 205 Live guys had several matches that would blow this one away but at least they had a nice moment in the end with the fans getting into things. Nese as a face didn’t exactly click but beating Murphy felt like a bit deal. It’s a nice mini feel good moment to start what is going to be a long night.

#### Kickoff Show: Wrestlemania Women’s Battle Royal

Zelina Vega, Kairi Sane, Ember Moon, Liv Morgan, Sarah Logan, Ruby Riott, Mandy Rose, Carmella, Maria Kanellis, Asuka, Sonya Deville, Candice LeRae, Naomi, Nikki Cross, Lana, Dana Brooke, Mickie James

Only Naomi and Asuka get entrances. Nikki goes nuts to start and it’s a big brawl, as a battle royal should be. Maria is out in a hurry and Asuka knocks out Candice and Nikki back to back. Ember and Naomi trade hurricanranas until the former hits a quick springboard Eclipse on Lana. Another Eclipse gets rid of Naomi and there’s the real version to Mandy. Ember goes up again but Lana (the one in the designated Captain Marvel attire) shoves her out.

Sane hits an Alabama Slam on Lana and goes up like a schnook, only to get shoved to the apron by Logan. Even the bigger schnook, Logan doesn’t eliminate her but rather joins the rest of the Riott Squad to go after Lana. The elimination doesn’t take long but Sane drops Logan. The Insane Elbow connects, only to have the Squad get together and eliminate Sane without much trouble. An assisted flipping Stunner rocks Vega but AGAIN Logan doesn’t get the elimination.

Instead the Squad goes after Asuka and again they don't eliminate her. Brooke gets to fight off all three of them and manages a slow motion Thesz press on Morgan. Riott goes after Brooke and gets tossed, with Morgan following her out. Brooke's handspring elbow hits Vega's knees though and the running knees in the corner make it worse. Rose and Deville get rid of Vega and Brooke, meaning we can get a big hug.

We're down to Rose, Deville, Asuka, James, Logan and Carmella, the latter of whom seems to be on the floor because that's something you have to have in battle royals these days. James hurricanranas Rose to the apron and superkicks her out, only to get dropped by Deville. Asuka beats up Logan and Deville at once but she manages to toss Deville. Logan gets rid of Asuka but, say it with me, Carmella is still in and superkicks Logan out for the win at 10:33.

**Rating:** D. Holy sweet goodness I can't stand that finish and yet we seem to get it in every few battle royals (including last year's women's battle royal). I know Carmella getting the win is for the sake of the New York fans but egads this feels like a waste of a match, which tends to be the case with so many of these pre-show battle royals. In other words: more of the same stuff that wasn't good in the first place.

#### Kickoff Show: Raw Tag Team Titles: Revival vs. Curt Hawkins/Zack Ryder

Revival is defending and picked the match because they thought it would be an easy win. See, Hawkins hasn't won a match in two and a half years so of course he gets a Wrestlemania title shot (you have to keep the New York crowd happy you see). Dawson shoves Hawkins down to start and then pats him on the cheek in the corner. We get a recap of the Edgeheads as Dawson headlocks Hawkins down.

Ryder comes in as we hear about how the show is "the shadow of New York", which is acknowledged as New Jersey, likely for one of the only times tonight. A middle rope missile dropkick puts Wilder down but Dawson low bridges him out to the floor. Something close to a top rope Demolition Decapitator gets two and the armbar goes on. Dawson comes back in and rips at the face before working on his own armbar.

That's enough of that so Wilder grabs another armbar (he's up 2-1 on

Dawson) to keep Ryder down. Ryder fights up again but neckbreakers his way out of a double suplex. With Hawkins being distracted, the champs cheat to set up a hard clothesline for two more. The assisted legdrop gives Wilder two and we hit the chinlock as this keeps going. Ryder finally suplexes his way to freedom and there's the hot tag to Hawkins.

House is cleaned until it's a double clothesline to put Hawkins and Dawson down at the same time. The middle rope Rough Ryder hits Dawson but Ryder and Wilder crash out to the floor. Wilder saves Dawson at two and tornado DDTs Ryder on the floor. A brainbuster drops Hawkins outside as well and they're all down for a bit. Back in and Hawkins is dead but manages a small package for the pin and the titles at 13:20. Hawkins slowly realizing that not only is the match over but that they won is kind of awesome.

**Rating:** D+. This went on too long but the ending was fine after setting everything up for so long with the losing streak. Hawkins and Ryder are a likable team so it's not like them winning the titles is a bad idea. Besides, WWE has already taken away anything that the Revival could offer (and yet it would still get worse) so the loss doesn't do a ton of damage to them anyway.

#### Kickoff Show: Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal

Otis, Karl Anderson, Andrade, Gran Metalik, Chad Gable, Heath Slater, Bo Dallas, Colin Jost, Jeff Hardy, No Way Jose, Lince Dorado, Bobby Roode, Konnor, Tyler Breeze, Viktor, Luke Harper, Ali, Apollo Crews, Michael Che, Titus O'Neil, Tucker, Braun Strowman, Shelton Benjamin, Jinder Mahal, Matt Hardy, Curtis Axel, Rhino, Luke Gallows, EC3, Kalisto

So the big deal here is Jost and Che are from Saturday Night Live and Strowman doesn't like them. The two of them bail to the floor and hide under the ring as Axel is out in about ten seconds. Dorado takes a SCARY bump to the floor with Breeze, EC3 and Benjamin following him out. There goes Dallas as well but it's time for a staredown with Strowman and Harper.

That's broken up in a hurry and Titus gets rid of Slater. As

expected, Titus is out a few seconds later off a missed charge and Ali gets rid of Jose. Ascension sends Strowman shoulder first into the post for a crash to the floor (through the ropes so no elimination). Anderson isn't so lucky as he gets tossed and the Hardys do the same to Rhyno. Roode and Metalik are out next as the ring is starting to empty a bit.

Andrade tosses Kalisto onto Metalik but Gable rolls Andrade with German suplexes. Since it's Gable though, Andrade throws him out in a hurry, leaving Otis to hit a double Caterpillar on the Ascension. They're both out as well but Strowman is back in to get rid of Gallows, Tucker and Otis in a row. There goes Mahal as Harper tries to suplex Ali over the top. With Ali hanging upside down, Strowman kicks Harper out, nearly dropping Ali on his head in a very near miss.

We're down to Strowman, Andrade, Matt, Jeff and Crews in the ring with Che and Jost still underneath the ring. Andrade and Crews go to the apron and Andrade tries a hurricanrana for no intelligent reason in a double elimination. Strowman puts the Hardys on the apron in the battle of North Carolina as Che and Jost get back inside. They can't get rid of Strowman, who dumps the Hardys and is ready for the destruction.

Jost grabs a mic though and says this doesn't need to end in violence. He presents his personal therapist, whose breathing exercises earn him a chokeslam. Che tries to eliminate himself but Strowman punches himself out instead. Strowman misses a charge and almost gets eliminated but powers through it and tosses Jost for the win at 10:27.

**Rating:** D+. Yeah it's stupid and the SNL guys added nothing to the whole thing but Strowman won in the end and there were some nice spots (granted they went with some scary ones) throughout. It isn't anything better or worse than your usual "get them all in there" battle royal and it could have been worse. That's high praise for something like this anymore.

And with that Smackdown length Kickoff Show out of the way, we can get on with the real show. Isn't modern WWE great?

Yolanda Adams sings America the Beautiful and we get the big helicopter flyover.

The opening video, complete with a WWE Presents, features the wrestlers talking about how Shakespeare said all the world's a stage. Tonight, this is their stage and they are the players. We get the classic moments of course because this show is built around history. They do a good job of starting this slowly and then building it up into a big feeling. As usual, WWE's promo videos are nothing short of incredible and somehow they manage to get better a lot of the time. That being said, wrestlers calling themselves storytellers doesn't sound right.

Maybe it's how many times I've heard the song on highlight packages since then, but that Love Runs Out theme song is really catchy.

Here's Alexa Bliss, the host for the evening, to open things up. Bliss talks about how this show needs a goddess and if she snaps her fingers, she can make a Wrestlemania moment. A snap of her fingers produces Hulk Hogan, who is happy to be back here in the Silverdome. That gets a chuckle so then he calls it the MetLife Center in a joke that doesn't go over as well. Hogan and Bliss pose together in a cute moment.

Hold on though as Paul Heyman storms out and says we're doing the Universal Title match RIGHT NOW. The faster Lesnar wins, the faster he can go to Las Vegas where he is ULTIMATELY appreciated.

### Raw World Title: Brock Lesnar vs. Seth Rollins

Rollins is defending after winning the Royal Rumble and gets a big BEAST SLAYER intro. At least BURN IT DOWN gets a big reaction so they're doing something right. Lesnar jumps him before the bell and knees Rollins off the apron. An F5 plants

Rollins on the floor and a hard whip into the barricade makes it even worse. Rollins gets tossed over the announcers' table as the beating is on in a big way. That's not enough for Lesnar so he throws Rollins over another table before throwing Rollins inside.

Heyman and Lesnar talk the angry trash but it's back to the floor before the opening bell. Cole: "Seth Rollins never had a chance!" And there's your usual WWE line that gives away the ending. Brock throws Rollins over the announcers' table for a third time and then through the cover of the announcers' table. They go back in for the opening bell and there's the first German suplex. Lesnar: "SUPLEX CITY B\*\*\*\*\*!" Give him his t-shirt money.

The second suplex sends him flying again as Cole brings up the Wrestlemania XXXI cash-in. The F5 is countered though and Rollins gets in a low blow. That means a low superkick and three straight Stomps make Rollins champion at 2:30. It was an exciting start and the whole thing from Lesnar's first attack ran about 7:00. They had to get the title onto Rollins here (though more importantly off of Lesnar) and this was certainly a memorable way to do it. Certainly more so than when they did it again in a longer form four and a half months later.

### AJ Styles vs. Randy Orton

This is your "here are two big names without much else to do" match. Orton eliminated him from the Elimination Chamber and they got in an argument about who built Smackdown. Orton's big CGI snakes really don't look great but those things are hit and miss for everyone. AJ headlocks him to start and is promptly driven into the corner. A very early threat of an RKO sends AJ bailing to the corner and it's another standoff.

Orton pokes him in the eye and hits a dropkick to take over, including a boot across the eye to make it even worse. AJ gets in his own dropkick though as they're pretty even in the early



minutes. With Orton taking a breather on the floor, AJ scores with the slingshot forearm, only to get knocked off the apron and hard into the barricade. Back in and the chinlock goes on as the fans start chanting something I can't understand.

That's broken up so AJ hits the sliding forearm, setting up the fireman's carry backbreaker for two. An early Styles Clash attempt is countered into a powerslam to give Orton his own near fall as the slow pace continues. The Calf Crusher attempt is countered without much trouble but the second attempt is slapped on in the middle of the ring. Not that the fans are exactly interested but AJ did get it on. That's broken up in a hurry so AJ heads to the apron for the Phenomenal Forearm.

Orton jumps up to RK0 him out of the air (as he had done last week) but AJ holds back, leaving Orton to crash. The springboard 450 gets two but Orton is right back with the backbreaker. Orton's rather good looking top rope superplex has AJ crashing down for two and an uppercut gets a crazy loud pop (that had to be for something else). The hanging DDT gets no reaction but Orton walking around does, as I'm almost scared to imagine what had the fans' attention.

AJ hits an enziguri to block the RK0, only to walk into it on the second attempt. That's only good for two as well and Orton is shocked. With nothing else working, Orton loads up a super RK0, which is escaped without a lot of effort. A Pele sends Orton to the floor and the Phenomenal Forearm knock him even sillier. Back in and Orton still can't hit the RK0, meaning it's another Phenomenal Forearm to give AJ the pin at 16:12.

**Rating:** C-. Things got a bit better by the end but it never got going at any intense level. These two are capable of a lot but it was rather slow paced for the most part and when the match is going that long, it can get pretty tiresome in a hurry. It's not bad in any sense but it wasn't exciting and you know these two could do a lot better. That makes it more frustrating than anything else, as I kept waiting for them to

get going and they never really did.

Here's Lacey Evans to continue doing her thing of walking around, smiling, and then walking back.

### Smackdown Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Rusev/Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Bar vs. Ricochet/Aleister Black

The Usos are defending and it's one fall to a finish. There is something so awesome about seeing the look on Ricochet's face as he walks onto the stage. You can see what it means to him and there is no faking that kind of a feeling. This also marks Ricochet and Black's third shot at different titles this week, after Raw and NXT title shots earlier in the week. Jimmy and Black start things off with a feeling out process until Sheamus tags himself in to face Black.

The armbar doesn't last long as Rusev tags Sheamus and runs Black over. Nakamura comes in for a kick to the back but the rapid fire tags continue, with Jimmy coming in to Samoa drop Black. Nakamura kicks Jimmy into a tag to Ricochet, who does a very spinny headscissors on Cesaro. Since it's just a headscissors though, Cesaro uppercuts Ricochet down and starts swinging him, as Sheamus forearms everyone else.

After a nearly 40 second swing (geez), the Sharpshooter goes on in the middle of the ring. Black makes the save and strikes away, setting up a springboard moonsault for two on Rusev. Nakamura is back in with some running knees to Black, meaning Ricochet has to make a save of his own. That earns him a swinging Rock Bottom from Rusev and it's time for the nine man Tower of Doom. Just to show off, Ricochet flips out and lands safely in the corner, setting up the 630 for two on Sheamus. We hit the parade of kicks to the face with the Usos superkicking Sheamus down. The Double Us retains the titles at 10:05.

**Rating:** B. This was almost all action from bell to bell and that's all you can do with a match like this one. Let them do

whatever they want and get in spot after spot for a little while. They didn't overstay their welcome either, as this match got in the right amount of time. Good stuff here and one of the more entertaining things all night so far.

Hall of Fame recap. Thankfully Bret being attacked isn't mentioned whatsoever.

Here's the class being presented in the stadium:

Honky Tonk Man (How was he not in yet?)

Harlem Heat (Perfectly fine.)

Torrie Wilson (The new low benchmark.)

Brutus Beefcake (Again, how was he not in yet?)

Hart Foundation (Should have been earlier so Neidhart could be there but long overdue as well.)

Sue Aitchison (Warrior Award.)

D-Generation X (I'm sure they had to twist their arms to get here. Deserved of course.)

We recap Miz vs. Shane McMahon. Somehow Shane won the World Cup despite not being in the tournament and Miz, the man he replaced in the finals, was jealous. Miz's dad thought they should team together so they won the Tag Team Titles. The reign didn't last long though and they split up, with Shane turning on Miz. Tonight, it's Falls Count Anywhere. This was in the middle of Shane's RIDICULOUS run near the top of Smackdown where he was all over the show and beating main eventers, including that Tag Team Title win. Of course he gets a big Wrestlemania match, because that's what makes sense for such a star.

### Shane McMahon vs. The Miz

Falls Count Anywhere, but hang on as Shane needs to hear his introduction three times in a row. With that out of the way, Shane bails to the floor at the bell so the chase is on, with Shane hitting his horrible punches.

In a smart move, Shane grabs Miz's dad (in the front row) and again, the chase goes badly for Miz as Shane hammers away. They head outside again with Shane loading up the announcers' table.

A monitor shot to the head puts Miz on the table but Miz's dad blocks the big elbow. Shane gets down so Miz's dad gets inside for the showdown, with Miz's dad doing the pose that launched a subplot on the upcoming season of Miz and Mrs. Shane takes him into the corner and stomps away, drawing Miz back in for the beating. They fight to to the floor with Shane falling over the barricade but hold on as Miz wants someone to check on his dad.

With the medics doing their job, Miz dives over the barricade to take Shane down again. They fight over towards one of the big pillars that holds up the canopy over the ring but Shane fights out of the Skull Crushing Finale. Instead Shane grabs a DDT for two but Miz kicks him down off the stage. Shane is sent knee first into a barricade and Miz beats on him with a chair to blow off some more steam.

They wreck announcers' row with Miz throwing him over every chair he can find, plus throwing some chairs around. Shane gets sent through a table for two, followed by a monitor shot to knock him over a barricade and onto the top of a well placed golf cart. That gives Miz a delayed two so he punches Shane up towards a production tower. A Skull Crushing Finale onto the platform gets two, because he's Shane and Miz is just a former World Champion.

Shane fights back (of course) and climbs up to the top of the tower. Miz pursues so Shane begs off, even dropping to one knee. That earns him some left hands to the head and Miz superplexes him all the way down (after asking if Shane is ready) onto a crash pad. Worry not though as Shane lands on top for the pin at 15:25.

**Rating:** D-. I knew the ending was coming here and I still shake my head at the ending. Shane is the boss' son but my goodness how hard can you push him? The worst part is that it is only going to get worse as the summer goes on, but this was a punch to the gut as Shane wins AGAIN, meaning he isn't going away anytime soon. The superplex was a nice idea

but showing the landing on the pad (which just happened to be there) took away all of the impact that it had. That is, whatever was left before Shane won of course.

Paige joins commentary.

Women's Tag Team Titles: IIconics vs. Beth Phoenix/Natalya vs. Nia Jax/Tamina vs. Sasha Banks/Bayley

Banks and Bayley are defending and it's one fall to a finish. Bret Hart is here with Beth and Natalya (who really feel like fill ins for Trish Stratus/Lita), though he doesn't go beyond the stage. Tamina shoves Bayley down to start and superkicks Natalya for a bonus. Everything breaks down in a hurry with Nia being sent outside for a ram into the steps. Back in and Peyton rolls Sasha up for two and it's a double kick to put drop Sasha again.

The Hardys' Spin Cycle gets two on Banks but she's right back with a backslide for the same. It's back to Bayley for a sliding clothesline for two on Beth but Billie tags herself in. The IIconics take over on Beth, who is right back with a suplex to both of them at once. Natalya comes in for two but Bayley makes a fast save. The champs get in a fight with Beth and Natalya and it's a Bank Statement to Phoenix. That's broken up but the Glam Slam is countered into a rollup into the corner.

Natalya drops Sasha onto Bayley and they get the always fairly dumb looking double Sharpshooter treatment. This time it's Tamina making the save and Nia comes back in to wreck everyone else. The IIconics get crushed with stereo Samoan drops but Beth shoves Nia off the top to break up a splash. Sasha takes Beth down as well and Bayley drops the top rope elbow, followed by Banks' frog splash. The Tower of Doom is broken up so Beth hits a super Glam Slam on Bayley, with Kay making a blind tag. With Beth sent outside, Kay steals the pin and the titles at 10:47.

**Rating:** D. This went on too long and wasn't all that interesting in the first place. The titles were brand new at this point and they already seemed pretty worthless, which would be proven over the next year. The fallout here is more interesting than the match itself, as you Nia would go away for about a year with double ACL surgery and Sasha (allegedly)

threw a fit over losing and took the summer off.

The pilots from the Kickoff Show flyover are in the crowd. That's always cool.

We recap Kofi Kingston vs. Daniel Bryan for the Smackdown World Title. Kofi replaced the injured Ali in the Elimination Chamber and got down to the final two. That set up one of the most dramatic things that WWE has ever done, as Kofi got inches away from winning the title and the fans ate it up. It was clear that Kofi had to get the title at Wrestlemania or he never would, which sent Kofi and New Day into a crusade to finally get the title shot that had eluded him for eleven years.

After jumping through all kinds of hoops set by Vince McMahon, it took New Day winning a gauntlet match to get the shot, with their longtime rivals the Usos stepping aside in a great show of respect for Kofi. At the same time, Bryan said that Kofi was a B+ player in an awesome role reversal from his legendary run five years earlier.

The match was finally set and it was a heck of a story, as Kofi had put in so many years of building credibility to get here and was finally cashing in. This wasn't JBL jumping up to the main event scene, as Kofi had pretty much won every title other than the World Title. That's not a big jump, but it was hard to believe that they would actually pull the trigger here. In other words, this was EXCELLENT and would have headlined any other year.

#### Smackdown World Title: Kofi Kingston vs. Daniel Bryan

Kofi is challenging and has New Day in his corner, while Bryan has Rowan. Big E. has a gift for Kofi and promises it for after the match. I had forgotten how nice of a touch Bryan's eco-friendly belt really was. They stare each other down to start and the fans are behind Kofi, which is almost hard to fathom until you realize that Bryan might be a better heel than face. Kofi's headlock doesn't get anywhere so they fight over a backslide. Bryan monkey flips him so Kofi lands on his feet, setting up a dropkick to the floor.

The big dive takes Bryan down again and the roster is behind Kofi in the

back. Things slow down a bit as Bryan needs a breather with Rowan. Back in and Bryan uppercuts him a few times to set up the surfboard, which always looks awesome. That's broken up in a hurry as usual, allowing Kofi to kick away in the corner. Bryan's moonsault into the running clothesline is countered into something resembling the standing double stomp (almost a Thesz press as Kofi can't hit it properly) for two.

Kofi's jumping clothesline works a bit better and the Boom Drop connects. Bryan heads outside again so Kofi tries a springboard dive, which lands ribs first on the announcers' table. You don't have to ask Bryan twice to go after the ribs like that so he drops Kofi ribs first across the top rope. The ribs get sent into the corner and it's off to a waistlock, which works a lot better this time around. Kofi fights up and elbows in the corner but a very quick Trouble in Paradise is countered into a Boston crab.

Bryan's belly to back superplex is broken up with elbows to the face and Kofi hits a top rope splash to the back for two. They slug it out but Trouble in Paradise is countered again, only to be countered into a small package to give Kofi two more. Kofi's crossbody is rolled through though and Bryan pulls him into a failed LeBell Lock attempt so they're both down for a second. The running knee is countered into the SOS but Bryan reverses into the LeBell Lock, with Bryan letting go for some more elbows to the ribs.

Kofi finally gets his foot on the rope and you can hear the sigh of relief. Bryan YES Kicks at the ribs even more but Kofi fires up and tells Bryan to kick him even harder. As Bryan backs away, Kofi throws his own kicks and busts out a reverse suplex for two. They head outside again so Rowan can go after New Day, earning himself Trouble in Paradise. The Midnight Hour on the floor takes care of Rowan and Kofi blocks Bryan's suicide dive.

Back in and Bryan hits the running knee....for two and a big pop on the kickout. Bryan has had it and unloads with stomps to the head to set up the LeBell Lock. Kofi breaks out again and blasts Bryan with forearms to the face with more aggression than you usually see from him. Bryan won't let go of the wrist so Kofi stomps him right back, knocking Bryan silly.

Trouble in Paradise gives Kofi the clean pin and the title at 23:45.

**Rating:** A. That is the definition of the Wrestlemania moment and it holds up to perfection a year later. The fans completely bought into the idea of Kofi fighting through everything and winning the title in the end and that's all it should have been. Kofi is the kind of guy who has been around forever and built up so much good will that when he finally went after the title, everyone was on his side. That made for a special moment and it was amazing throughout as it's something that I never thought I would see, but here it is. That's a great thing to see as rare as it can be.

On top of that, this was an awesome match with both guys giving it everything they had. The story here was perfect with Kofi not being the wrestler Bryan was but knowing that this was his one shot and giving everything he had to achieve his dream when he could. The fans believed in him and there was no way he could lose in this spot. Outstanding stuff and if not for the historic main event, this would have headlined in a landslide. Watch this again and smile a lot.

Post match Woods and Big E. pull out the classic WWE Championship and hand it to Kofi for the first time (Kofi kneeling in the ring and waiting to have it presented to him is a great visual). The pyro goes off and Kofi's sons get in the ring to celebrate with him and one of them holds up the title, which is almost bigger than he is. We're not done yet though as Big E. brings in the present from earlier. It's the first New Day shirt featuring Kofi as champion and his kids get to hold them up for a perfect visual. Woods: "THEY SAID WE COULDN'T MAKE IT! WE MADE IT TO THE TOP!" Outstanding.

Che and Jost are banged up so Bliss introduces them to Dr. Scott Hall and Dr. Kevin Nash. Ok then.

Booker T. is the next guest commentator.

US Title: Samoa Joe vs. Rey Mysterio

Mysterio is challenging and this year's comic gear is...well Mysterio appropriately enough. Now how did he never do that one before? Joe kicks



him in the face but Rey is right back with the springboard hurricanrana. The 619 connects but Joe pulls him out of the air into the Koquina Clutch and Rey is out at 1:00, which may have something to do with Rey injuring his ankle on Monday. Booker being annoyed at wasting all the time on prep work is good for a chuckle.

Sneak peak of Batista's new movie Stuber.

We recap Roman Reigns vs. Drew McIntyre. Reigns returned from leukemia after a four month absence and he needs a first victim. Drew has run through the rest of the Shield as a bonus. This is your likely layup result of the show and that's fine.

### Roman Reigns vs. Drew McIntyre

Drew gets played to the ring by the New York Bagpipe Band. They trade shots to the face to start so Reigns snaps off a Samoan drop for an early two. McIntyre is right back with a spinebuster into a jackknife cover for two of his own. The Glasgow Kiss knocks Reigns down again and McIntyre throws him into the corner for two. The chinlock/armbar goes on until Reigns powers out and knocks him to the floor. Reigns' running kick to the face is blocked though and McIntyre suplexes him down.

Back in and the reverse Alabama slam gives McIntyre two so he takes Reigns up top. That earns him a crotching, only to have Drew pull himself up from the Tree of Woe to send Reigns flying with a belly to belly superplex. Reasons of general heelishness cause McIntyre to slap him in the face, meaning the comeback is on. McIntyre gets knocked outside again for the Samoan drop on the floor, followed by the Superman Punch back inside. The spear finishes McIntyre at 10:06.

**Rating:** D. The fans didn't care and why should they have? As usual, it was clear that Reigns was going to win and that happens far too often at Wrestlemania. It's amazing that Reigns got to come back here but it's Reigns, who almost always wins, winning again in a match where the ending was obvious throughout. Nothing to see here, and the fans were silent throughout.

Post match Reigns gets to pose in a rather emotional moment.

Here's Elias for his self described greatest performance ever. He's on screen playing drums, with a second Elias joining him on piano and the real thing in the ring playing guitar. They jam for a bit and guitar Elias says the other two deserve a standing ovation. Elias teases more members of the band and gets in his catchphrase before loading up the song....but here's a SPECIAL BULLETIN on Babe Ruth calling his shot in the 1932 World Series.

Cue John Cena in Dr. of Thuganomics gear and the fans seem rather pleased. Cena raps about how he's about to turn heel and how bad his own movies are. WWE doesn't stand for Walk With Elias because it really means Wasted Wrestling Experiment. We get a nuts joke, followed by the FU to leave Elias laying. They have history together so this was as good as you were going to get. This was funny for a change if nothing else and that's a cool Wrestlemania feeling.

We recap Batista vs. HHH. Back at Smackdown 1000, Batista had mentioned that HHH never beat him but laughed it off. Then in February, Ric Flair was having a 70<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration but Batista attacked him, while asking HHH if he had his attention. This set up the match, with Batista demanding that HHH give him what he wanted (over and over and over). HHH has put up his career just in case the ending was in the slightest bit of doubt.

Shawn Michaels is guest commentator.

### Batista vs. HHH

No holds barred with HHH's career on the line. Batista goes out to glare at Shawn but here's HHH, riding in a Mad Max style cart because of course he is. Batista drives him straight into the corner to start so HHH is back with some right hands to the face. A backdrop sends Batista outside but he throws HHH over the announcers' table in a crash. HHH is right back up with a ram into the barricade and busts out a chain to whip Batista over the back.

The chain is pulled into Batista's mouth (Shawn: "That's not going to help his movie career.") and HHH whips him into the steps. To ramp up the

pain, HHH busts out some pliers to bend Batista's fingers around a bit. HHH isn't done with the toolbox so he grabs some needle nose pliers and rips Batista's nose ring out. To be fair, that thing looked horrible. Cole: "HHH just ripped a nose ring out of the nose of Batista." So the nose ring in his ear is still intact.

Batista's nose is good enough to drop HHH onto the announcers' table and then he does it again onto a different one. A chair to the back sets up the shoulders in the corner for two as things have slowed way down. Batista slams him down for two more and let's go outside again. The steps are set on the table and another table is cleared off as this is taking quite a long time for one big spot.

The huge Batista Bomb through the table is countered with a backdrop onto (not through) the other table and they're both down again. HHH gets up, spinebusters him through the table, and we get another breather. HHH pulls out the sledgehammer but it's a spear to cut him down for two. This time it's HHH knocking the sledgehammer away from Batista, earning himself a spinebuster in the process. The Batista Bomb, which makes HHH drop the sledgehammer again, connects for two.

With nothing else working, Batista brings in the steps but goes up top for some reason. That reason would be so HHH can powerbomb him onto the steps, setting up a Pedigree for two (Because this MUST KEEP GOING!). They're both down again so here's Flair to slip HHH the sledgehammer. HHH gets up and uses the steps as a launchpad to hammer Batista in the head. Since that's not enough to pin him (or KILL HIM as it probably should have), Batista pops up to take the Pedigree for the pin at 25:45.

**Rating:** D. Why does HHH do this? They could have had the same match with at least ten minutes chopped off but for some reason we needed to get HHH's latest big epic match, no matter how much people aren't interested in seeing it. This was terrible with Batista looking like a shell of his glory days (fair enough) and the match going WAY longer than it should have. Horrible match, and did you expect anything else given this style of match's history?

The B Team model Daniel Bryan WWE Champion shirts but here's Ron Simmons

for the joke.

JBL is your next guest commentator.

### Baron Corbin vs. Kurt Angle

This is Angle's retirement match as he can barely get in the ring without injuring himself these days and needs to limp away for good. Corbin is here because we all did something horrible in a past life. Angle goes after him to start but gets knocked into the corner to put him in early trouble. Corbin takes it to the corner and pounds away before mocking Angle's family a bit. A missed middle rope ax handle sends Corbin throat first into the rope so Angle snaps off some suplexes for two.

Angle walks into a big boot but is fine enough to grab a quickly broken ankle lock. Deep Six gives Corbin two more but he misses a charge, allowing the Angle Slam to connect for two. The straps come down and the ankle lock goes on until Corbin rolls him into the corner for the break. Corbin throws in a You Can't See Me so Angle punches him into more rolling German suplexes. The moonsault misses though and the End of Days finishes Kurt's career at 5:59.

**Rating:** D. Angle does seem fine with putting Corbin over on the way out but this was another step in the seemingly eternal nonsense that was/is the Corbin push. It's a lot to take and while I can live with Angle going out on his back, it's a lot to take because Corbin really is going way above his pay grade every time he's in a match like this.

Post match Angle thanks the fans and asks for one more YOU SUCK chant for the road.

### Intercontinental Title: Bobby Lashley vs. Finn Balor

Lashley, with Lio Rush, is defending and they've traded the title, so tonight it's the Demon to make the match feel big. Balor gets a special entrance by coming down off a raised platform, though it's not as creepy as his NXT entrances. Lashley has very bright green contacts in for some reason. Some early dropkicks put Lashley on the floor and Balor takes him out with a dive for a bonus.

A hard drive into the apron cuts Balor off though and there's a suplex to make it worse. Lashley clotheslines him hard to the floor but a Sling Blade gets Balor out of trouble. Rush's distraction lets Lashley hit a HARD spear through the ropes though and a regular one gets two back inside. Balor fights out of a powerbomb and hits one of his own, setting up the Coup de Grace for the pin and the title at 4:01.

**Rating:** C. The match was entertaining enough for something that was going so fast but at the same time, the booking still doesn't make a ton of sense. Balor has already shown that he can beat Lashley so now he needs to bring up the powers to win? And the extraordinary thing was just a powerbomb? I'm glad to see the Demon again but this wasn't exactly the most logical thing in the world.

Here's Alexa Bliss to announce the attendance record of 82,265. Cue R-Truth and Carmella for the Wrestlemania Dance Break (Remember those?).

We recap the main event of Raw Women's Champion Ronda Rousey and Smackdown Women's Champion Charlotte defending against Becky Lynch in a winner take all match. Rousey is the unstoppable force, Charlotte is Charlotte and Becky is here because she's the hottest name in wrestling at the moment and won the Royal Rumble. Tonight the winner leaves with both titles and it's the biggest women's match in history.

Raw Women's Title/Smackdown Women's Title: Ronda Rousey vs. Charlotte vs. Becky Lynch

Lynch is challenging both. In a nod to her father and the Four Horsemen, Charlotte lance in a helicopter outside and walks into the stadium. Already inside, Joan Jett and the Blackhearts play Rousey to the ring. There is something so cool about watching Becky walk down the ramp in a wide shot as Cole talks about how she has started a movement. I'm not sure if that is the right term but it looked awesome. The bell rings and even a year later I still can't believe this happened. The women's division was a joke just a few years ago and now it's the biggest match of the year. That's hard to believe and it's very cool.

They stare at each other for a good bit to start until Becky goes after

Rousey's arm. Rousey kicks her to the floor without much trouble and that means a Samoan drop into the barricade. Charlotte follows and takes Piper's Pit but pops right back up for a fall away slam to send Rousey into the barricade for a change. That sets up the required Charlotte vs. Becky fight with Becky getting the better of things but can't get the Figure Four, allowing Rousey to come and hammer away.

Charlotte breaks up an armbar attempt but gets pulled into a triangle choke over the ropes. Becky hits a running dropkick though and Rousey falls HARD onto the floor in a nasty crash. That leaves Charlotte to knee Becky in the head as the fans get behind Becky in a big way. Charlotte's moonsault hits knees and Becky gets the Disarm-Her but Rousey make the save in a hurry. A double Natural Selection gives Charlotte two each and it's Becky going outside this time.

For some reason Charlotte tries to slug it out with Rousey, earning herself a knee to the head. Charlotte pulls her into a Boston crab, drawing Becky in for her own save. Becky and Charlotte slug it out again until Charlotte is sent to the apron. Charlotte gets caught up top with a super Bexploder for two but Rousey drops both of them with a high crossbody for a double near fall. The double armbar goes on so Becky and Charlotte powerbomb her for the break. It took three attempts but they finally got out.

Everyone is down for a bit until Becky hits a Rock Bottom for two on Charlotte. Rousey goes after Becky and gets pulled straight into the Disarm-Her so she uses the ropes to power up in the corner. That's fine with Becky, who puts it on again in the corner until Charlotte boots her in the face. Charlotte's super Spanish Fly gets two but she might have banged up her knee. Rousey's knee is banged up as well so Charlotte stomps away and grabs the Figure Four around the post.

After sending Becky into the barricade, Charlotte grabs the Figure Eight but Becky dives in off the top for another save. Just because, let's bring in a table but Charlotte decks Becky for taking too long to set it up. Rousey shoves Charlotte off the top and turns the table over because she doesn't need it. A double spear takes down Becky and Rousey so Charlotte sets up the table in the corner.

Charlotte sends Rousey face first into the table and spears Becky for two more. Back up and Charlotte gets hiptossed through the table, leaving Becky and Rousey to have the slugout we've been waiting for. They throw some serious hands but Piper's Pit is countered into a crucifix (with Rousey's shoulder a good six inches off the mat in a bad botch) to give Becky both titles at 21:28.

**Rating:** B. I don't know if it's because I didn't watch it in one sitting this time around but I liked the match a good bit better on a second viewing. These three beat each other up and while Becky winning was the presumed finish, it wasn't entirely a lock given who she was in there against. It was a heck of a fight and the three of them all came out looking great. This is much more historic than good, but it's really rather good and that's always a positive way to go out.

Rousey is ticked as Becky celebrates to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C+. The positives are better than the negatives but not by much. There are some flat out bad matches on here but they are overcome by some great feelings with the faces winning all of the big matches for a change. That felt like an old school style as for the first time in what felt like forever, they didn't cut the fans off for the sake of dragging things out until later. For once it felt like a season finale and that's what Wrestlemania should be when it gets the chance. Good show, but it could have been a lot better.

How you ask? CUT THE SHOW DOWN! Look at how long this show is and tell me that it's well put together. There is no need for a sixteen match card, especially with some of the matches that feel tacked on. All three Tag Team Title matches feel like they're here for the sake of being here and some of the matches just need to be shortened. Either that or find a way to get people to the ring faster. I know it seems simple but how much of these shows are spent on ring entrances alone? Just find a way to shorten things, please.

Overall there are more good things than bad, but this isn't a show that you need to watch in one sitting. As soon as you get to the point where the show is five hours plus an episode of Smackdown before it starts (and

a Smackdown with more wrestling than usual at that), you're hitting a firm ceiling of how much you can enjoy this. I know you can't cut out big chunks, but find a way to get this under six hours. Do that and it's a lot better, but that has been the case for years now and it keeps getting longer. Either way, at least we had enough nice stuff on here, but don't watch it all at once.

### Ratings Comparison

Tony Nese vs. Buddy Murphy

Original: C+

Redo: C

Women's Battle Royal

Original: D

Redo: D

Revival vs. Zack Ryder/Curt Hawkins

Original: C

Redo: D+

Men's Battle Royal

Original: D

Redo: D+

Brock Lesnar vs. Seth Rollins

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

AJ Styles vs. Randy Orton

Original: B-



Redo: C-

Usos vs. Shinsuke Nakamura/Rusev vs. The Bar vs. Aleister Black/Ricochet

Original: C+

Redo: B

Shane McMahon vs. The Miz

Original: C-

Redo: D-

Boss N Hug Connection vs. Natalya/Beth Phoenix vs. IIconics vs. Nia Jax/Tamina

Original: D

Redo: D

Kofi Kingston vs. Daniel Bryan

Original: A-

Redo: A

Samoa Joe vs. Rey Mysterio

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

Drew McIntyre vs. Roman Reigns

Original: C-

Redo: D

Batista vs. HHH

Original: D+

Redo: D

Baron Corbin vs. Kurt Angle

Original: F

Redo: D

Finn Balor vs. Bobby Lashley

Original: C

Redo: C

Ronda Rousey vs. Becky Lynch vs. Charlotte

Original: B

Redo: B

Overall Rating

Original: B-

Redo: C+

About the same all around, but some of those earlier ones are a good bit off. Still though, too long, despite some of the very good parts.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<https://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2019/04/08/wrestlemania-xxxv-so-much-for-no-happy-endings/>

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# Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XXXV (Original): History Has Been Made

## Wrestlemania XXXV

Date: April 7, 2019

Location: MetLife Stadium, East Rutherford, New Jersey

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Renee Young, Byron Saxton, Tom Phillips

America the Beautiful: Yolanda Adams

As long as this show is going to be, there's something special about getting to see it every year. This year's show is built around the three major matches and the question of how many happy endings we can have. You know it's not going to be all three, but which of the three doesn't go through. Those matches consist of Universal Champion Brock Lesnar vs. Seth Rollins, Smackdown World Champion Daniel Bryan vs. Kofi Kingston and the winner take all match for both Women's titles as Ronda Rousey faces Charlotte and Becky Lynch in a genuinely historic main event. Let's get to it.

### Kickoff Show: Cruiserweight Title: Tony Nese vs. Buddy Murphy

Nese is challenging after winning a tournament and wastes no time in trying a jumping knee. Murphy gets sent outside but is fine enough to drop Nese ribs first onto the turnbuckle as we go split screen for an ad. Well at least they didn't do this during the TV build. Back to full with Nese fighting out of a chinlock and suplexing the champ into the corner. Murphy gets tied in the ropes for a Lionsault but catches Nese with a superkick. A spinning faceplant gets two and some knees to the face have Nese in more trouble.

Nese is fine enough to hit a reverse hurricanrana and they trade a series

of strikes to the face. Nese's kneeling over the back piledriver gets two, followed by the 450 for the same. Murphy is right back up with Murphy's Law but Nese gets a foot on the rope. With nothing else working, Murphy tries Nese's running knee in the corner but walks into a superkick. A German suplex into the corner sets up the real running knee to give Nese the pin and the title at 10:43.

**Rating:** C+. Pretty good stuff here, even if I can't imagine Nese holding the title very long. He's the New York guy so it makes sense to have him win the title for a feel good moment. It wasn't the most surprising thing in the world but it's a good idea to open the night with a mostly short but effective match. Not bad at all, though Nese is a short term champion at best.

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

Naomi, Lana, Nikki Cross, Asuka, Mickie James, Kairi Sane, Ember Moon, Ruby Riott, Sarah Logan, Liv Morgan, Zelina Vega, Dana Brooke, Eve Torres, Mandy Rose, Candice LeRae, Maria Kanellis, Sonya Deville, Carmella

It's a wild brawl to start with Nikki Cross chasing Maria in a circle and getting rid of her. Asuka sends Nikki out and LeRae is out as well. Ember Eclipses Lana (as Captain Marvel) and knocks out Naomi, followed by another Eclipse to Mandy. Lana manages to get rid of Ember and insists that she's #1 before kicking Sane in the face. Sane goes up and gets shoved to the apron, leaving us with a Lana vs. Logan staredown.

The Riott Squad gets together and dumps Lana but Sane is back in with the Insane Elbow on Logan. The Squad gets rid of Sane though and Logan lifts Morgan up for a flipping Stunner on Vega. Now it's Asuka taking the triple teaming but she slides back in from the apron. Dana of all people fights back against the Squad and gets rid of Ruby. Logan is out as well but Vega blocks a cartwheel elbow.

Mandy and Sonya get rid of Vega and Brooke as we're down to Logan, Rose, Deville, James and Asuka. James superkicks Mandy out but gets eliminated by Sonya to get us to three. Asuka sends Deville to the apron but Logan dumps both of them out...as Carmella slides back in, JUST LIKE LAST YEAR.

Carmella knocks Logan over but Logan keeps her feet above the floor. A superkick gets rid of Logan to give Carmella the win at 10:30.

**Rating:** D. Hey, remember last year when someone snuck back in at the end and won the Women's Battle Royal in a big surprise despite doing nothing coming into the match where someone could have gotten something out of it? No particular reason for asking of course. The match was your usual deal of everyone standing around until it was time for them to be eliminated until the ending. It was shorter than last year's though and that's an improvement. Oh and so much for Lacey Evans winning the thing as a surprise.

#### Kickoff Show: Raw Tag Team Titles: Revival vs. Zack Ryder/Curt Hawkins

The Revival is defending and this wasn't announced on the Kickoff Show. Dawson takes Hawkins into the corner to start and gets two off a rollup. It's off to Ryder vs. Wilder, the latter of whom gets the loudest cheer of his career after he decked the guy who jumped Bret last night. An armbar keeps Ryder down and Dawson comes back in to rip at Ryder's face. Ryder gets in a suplex and tosses Wilder into the corner but Dawson knocks Hawkins off the apron.

We hit the chinlock on Ryder for a bit until he backdrops his way to freedom, allowing the hot tag to Hawkins. A backslide gets two on Dawson and Wilder gets knocked off the apron. The double clothesline gives us a double knockdown and it's back to Ryder. The middle rope Rough Ryder hits Dawson and Ryder suplex suplexes Wilder to the floor for a scary crash. Hawkins throws Ryder back in for the tag but Wilder breaks up the cover.

Wilder DDTs Ryder on the floor and Hawkins takes a brainbuster to put all four down on the floor. Back in Dawson is rather cocky about beating Hawkins, who seems to be a bit dead. You never want to be too cocky in wrestling though and it's a small package to pin Dawson for the titles at 13:21.

**Rating:** C. Ignoring Hawkins losing 269 matches in a row and not having a win since November 2016, Ryder not winning a non-Main Event match on TV since December 2016 and the team not winning a match together since 2008, this makes perfect sense. The love for the New York fans is strong

tonight, which makes me wonder what kind of horrible things they have in mind for the main card. Just let the Revival go sit at home until their contracts are up though because I'd rather they go out with just this humiliation rather than seeing what else WWE could think of for them.

### Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal

Colin Jost, Michael Che, Braun Strowman, Otis, Tucker, Kalisto, Gran Metalik, Lince Dorado, Ali, Titus O'Neil, Konnor, Viktor, Matt Hardy, Jeff Hardy, Andrade, Jinder Mahal, Harper, Bo Dallas, Bobby Roode, Apollo Crews, Bo Dallas, Luke Gallows, Karl Anderson, No Way Jose, Tyler Breeze, Chad Gable, Heath Slater, Rhyno, Shelton Benjamin, EC3

Hey Harper is back. The SNL guys bail to the floor as Breeze and EC3 are both out. Shelton and Dorado are eliminated as well with Strowman throwing everyone he comes near. Harper vs. Strowman gets a big reaction but everyone piles onto them to break it up. Titus misses a charge and gets eliminated, followed by Ali tornado DDTing Jose and tossing him. Strowman gets sent into the post and goes through the ropes to the floor as Anderson is tossed.

Rhyno is out as well and the Hardys get into a mini match with Roode/Gable, with Roode being eliminated. Metalik gets thrown out by Mahal and Andrade monkey flips Kalisto out. There goes Gable as the ring is clearing out in a hurry. Tucker runs the Ascension over and there's a double Caterpillar to both of them. The Ascension is thrown out but Strowman tosses Heavy Machinery.

Mahal is out next as Harper tries to suplex Ali, only to have Strowman kick them both out at the same time. We're down to Strowman, Che, Jost, Matt, Jeff, Apollo and Andrade. Apollo and Andrade go to the apron and Andrade snaps off a hurricanrana to eliminate both of them in a dumb move. The Hardys try to pull Strowman out but the SNL guys come in and fail to throw them out.

Strowman shrugs them off and dumps the Hardys, leaving him alone with Jost and Che. One of them grabs a mic and says this doesn't have to end in violence, so here's his therapist to talk Strowman through this. Strowman beats him up and gives him a chokeslam (good thing the therapist

knows how to take a flat back bump) before slapping Che out. A running boot in the corner misses and Jost goes for the elimination but gets shoved away. Strowman throws him out for the win at 10:24.

**Rating:** D. Yeah it was stupid and the SNL guys were annoying, but it was on the Kickoff Show and the right person won so I can't complain all that much. Strowman should have won something bigger than this but at least he comes away with something instead of just being tossed out like anyone else. You know, like they did with Asuka in the first match.

Yolanda Adams sings America the Beautiful.

Helicopters fly over the stadium instead of the usual planes.

The opening video features wrestlers talking about this being the biggest stage and them being the players and storytellers. We see stills of famous Wrestlemania moments as the wrestlers talk about having the chance to live forever. They switch into a regular video of everyone involved with Lynch saying that they are the storytellers. This is a great idea, but not exactly practical when you consider that this is Wrestlemania GET EVERYONE ON THE CARD.

Here's Wrestlemania host Alexa Bliss to say that Wrestlemania needs a goddess. She snaps her fingers....and here's Hulk Hogan. Well that works. Hogan: "It's great to be back here in the Silverdome brother!" Ok that was funny. Hogan: "Ok it's great to be back here in the MetLife Center!" He hits the catchphrase and poses with Bliss as Paul Heyman of all people storms out between the two of them. Heyman goes to the ring and says if they're not closing the show, they're not hanging around. They're getting their business done and going to Las Vegas where Lesnar is ULTIMATELY appreciated.

Universal Title: Brock Lesnar vs. Seth Rollins

Lesnar is defending. Rollins has a new BEAST SLAYER graphic but Brock knees him off the apron and it's an F5 on the floor before the bell rings. Lesnar throws him into various things at ringside and then over the announcers' table a few times. They get inside but the referee won't start the match because Rollins isn't ready. Lesnar tosses him outside

again for another whip over the announcers' table and through the top piece of the table.

They go back inside and Rollins is mostly dead but gets to his feet for the opening bell. Three straight German suplexes let Lesnar bounce as Rollins' back is all kinds of pretty colors. The F5 is escaped and the ref is bumped, allowing Rollins to hit the low row. Rollins hits the low superkick and the Stomp connects. A second and third Stomp give Rollins the title at 2:30.

Jerry Lawler joins commentary.

### Randy Orton vs. AJ Styles

The CGI graphics are back with Orton's being a HUGE snake that made me jump. Battle over respect between the two of them as Orton has asked why it took AJ so long to get here. An early RKO attempt is blocked so Orton goes with a thumb to the eye and the Orton Stomp. AJ gets back up with the dropkick and the slingshot forearm to the floor drops Orton again. Orton is thrown back in and knocks AJ into the barricade. The chinlock doesn't last long as AJ fights up with the Phenomenal Blitz and a basement forearm.

The Styles Clash is blocked and Orton tries the hanging DDT, which is reversed into the Calf Crusher. Once the rope is grabbed AJ goes to the apron and loads up the Phenomenal Forearm but drops back down as Orton jumps for the RKO and crashes, allowing AJ to hit the springboard 450 for two. Orton is back up with the top rope superplex as the fans are interested in something else.

The hanging DDT plants AJ and Orton plays to the crowd to get their attention back. The RKO is countered with an enziguri but the second attempt connects for two. It feels like it's been awhile since anyone kicked out of that. With the regular version not working, Orton loads up a super RKO but gets kicked out to the floor. That means a Phenomenal Forearm to the outside and the regular one finishes Orton at 16:17.

**Rating:** B-. This was about what you would have expected with good action between two talented veterans. AJ knowing that the RKO counter was coming



was fine and the ending was as decisive as you could get with AJ surviving the RKO and winning clean. It's a perfectly good match and it's not like the two of them have anything else to do at the moment. Expect a rematch next month.

Lacey Evans cameo, though this time she stops to sneer at the crowd.

### Smackdown Tag Team Titles: Usos vs. Ricochet/Aleister Black vs. Shinsuke Nakamura/Rusev vs. The Bar

The Usos are defending. Jey and Black start things off but Sheamus tags himself in and low bridges Jey to the floor. Black gets taken down and it's Rusev coming in to hold Black up for a kick from Rusev. It's off to Ricochet with the springboard clothesline for two on Nakamura before spinning around Cesaro multiple times for a headscissors.

That just earns him a shot to the face and it's time to swing Ricochet while Sheamus beats on Rusev's chest. Nakamura tries to make a save so Sheamus beats on him as well, followed by the same to Jey and Black, all while Ricochet is swinging Ricochet for well over a minute. The Sharpshooter goes on with Jey making the save, earning himself a trip to the floor with his brother.

We settle down (kind of) to Black bringing in Ricochet, who gets caught by Rusev in a swinging release Rock Bottom. Everyone goes to the corner for the required Tower of Doom, with Ricochet rolling through because he's Ricochet and more awesome than you. Black knees Sheamus down and Ricochet hits the 630 for two with a bunch of people diving in for the save. We get a parade of kicks to the face with Sheamus taking the double superkick. The Double Us retains the Usos' titles at 10:05.

**Rating:** C+. The big spots helped a lot here and it felt like an amped up Smackdown match, which is one of the best things that you can have in this situation. There's no other way you can go with no story and the match being thrown together on Smackdown. Just have them do the spots and do the best they can, like Ricochet sticking the landing and that insane swing.

Recap of the Hall of Fame.

Honky Tonk Man (Long overdue)

Harlem Heat (More than deserved)

Torrie Wilson (The bar has been lowered)

Brutus Beefcake (Sure why not)

Hart Foundation (Yep, and may I add yep)

Sue Aitchison, with John Cena's 600<sup>th</sup> Make-A-Wish (Nothing wrong with that)

D-Generation X (Fine, though they feel weak for headliners)

We recap Shane McMahon vs. The Miz in the feud that WWE cares about and thinks we do too. Miz's dad is a horrible person and only cared about his son when Miz started teaming with Shane, who didn't like having to fix Miz's daddy issues. Tonight it's Falls Count Anywhere to blow it off.

### Shane McMahon vs. The Miz

Falls Count Anywhere. Shane makes Greg Hamilton do his entrance three times, with the third being held out extra long. Miz's dad is in the front row so Shane goes straight to the floor to choke him. The chase is on but Shane gets in a monitor shot to the head. The big elbow through the announcers' table is loaded up so Miz's dad gets in the way. Still doesn't help the fact that he's a horrible father.

Dad gets in the ring and puts up his fists so Shane jumps him. The beating brings Miz back into the ring to take Shane apart and send him into the barricade before checking on his dad. With the medics taking care of Papa Miz, Miz tackles Shane over the barricade and they head into the crowd, eventually going to the tech arena near one of the towers that holds up the structure above the ring. They go into an open area of the crowd with Miz hitting Shane in the foot with a chair.

Another shot to the back lets Miz knock Shane over to the international commentators station where tables are overturned. A chokeslam puts Shane through the table for two and a monitor shot knocks Shane over a

barricade and down into the shadows (cool visual). Miz follows and gets a delayed two as replays show Shane landing on top of a golf cart.

They fight up a camera tower ala HHH vs. Undertaker at Wrestlemania XVII with Miz hitting a Skull Crushing Finale onto a metal platform for two. Shane gets in a shot to the face and climbs to the top of the tower as this isn't going to go well. Miz follows him up and gets rather stalkerish as he stares Shane down to one knee. Shane begs off so Miz hammers away and suplexes him off the tower onto a crashpad...with Shane landing on top for the pin at 15:38.

**Rating:** C-. Why not. Why not. WHY THE #\$\*\*#%!!@# NOT! Why shouldn't we spend five months building this up and giving Shane McMahon a title before having him win at Wrestlemania? I'm sure this will continue, because going from November until April isn't long enough for a Shane McMahon story. That's just great.

The match itself was your usual walking around the stadium fight with Miz dominating through most of it until the end. The deal with Miz's dad was a cool moment but they should have brought him out later on in the match instead of so close to the beginning. Not bad overall, but the ending was stupid.

Paige joins commentary.

Women's Tag Team Titles: Boss N Hug Connection vs. Natalya/Beth Phoenix vs. IIconics vs. Nia Jax/Tamina

Bayley and Sasha Banks are defending. The IIconics are a devil (Billie) and a black winged angel (Peyton). Natalya and Beth are in matching pink and black so here's Bret Hart to stand with them on the stage and then go to the back. It's a brawl to start with Nia being sent into the steps. We settle down to Peyton getting beaten up but Billie helps her out, allowing them to hit their superhero pose.

Beth gets bulldogged onto Billie's knee with the kickout making Peyton scream. Natalya comes in for a Hart Attack for two on Billie with Bayley making the save. It's off to Sasha, who is taken down without too much effort. Natalya and Beth lift Sasha into the air so Bayley makes the save

and throws Bayley at Beth for the Bank Statement but Beth powers out as you probably expected.

Natalya puts Bayley and Sasha in the Sharpshooter at the same time until Tamina breaks it up with a superkick. Nia gets back in and starts crushing people, setting up Nia and Tamina going up top at the same time. Beth saves Banks from death by shoving Nia off and Sasha drops the frog splash for two on Natalya. Beth is back up and takes Bayley to the top for a super Glam Slam...but Billie comes in and steals the pin and the title at 10:46.

**Rating:** D. Some of the spots were good but at the same time, there were too many people running around and it hurt things a lot. I do like the IIconics coming in and stealing the belts as it certainly fits their style better (Do they even have a regular finisher?). But yeah, just too much going on when it didn't need to be the case. Drop Beth and Natalya and it would have fit better, but I guess the Beth Phoenix fan club needed one more moment?

The helicopter pilots from earlier are here.

We recap Kofi Kingston vs. Daniel Bryan. Kingston has basically done everything there is to do in the company outside of winning the World Title. He got close in the Elimination Chamber but couldn't quite pull it off. Vince McMahon then decided to throw one challenge after another at him with Kofi coming up just short every time until Big E. and Xavier Woods won a tag team gauntlet match to get him the title shot. If Kofi doesn't win here, I don't know if he ever will.

#### Smackdown World Title: Kofi Kingston vs. Daniel Bryan

Kofi is challenging with New Day in his corner while Bryan has Rowan. Big E. has a present for Kofi, but only after he wins. They go to the mat to start with Kofi sticking the landing off a monkey flip to send Bryan outside. That means the big dive over the top as the roster is watching in the locker room again, where there is a total of one single monitor showing the match. Back in and Kofi tries to jump a little too much, allowing Bryan to pull him down into a surfboard.

Some forearms to the back of the head seem to wake Kofi up and it's a clothesline into the Boom Drop. Bryan bails outside and Kofi dives after, only to crash onto the announcers' table ribs first. Back in and we hit the waistlock for a good while as Bryan stays on the ribs. He switches over to the Boston crab, eventually stepping to the side to make it half Liontamer. With that broken, Bryan loads up a belly to back superplex but gets elbowed down three times in a row.

Kofi drops a top rope splash to the back for two but the ribs are banged up again in the process. Trouble in Paradise misses and they go to some rollups for near falls until Kofi kicks him in the head. Bryan stops him with a stomp out of the corner and busts out the YES pose for a nice callback. The running knee is countered into a rollup and SOS gets two but Bryan reverses into the LeBell Lock in the middle of the ring.

The long crawl gets Kofi's leg on the rope and Bryan is starting to get mad. The kicks to the ribs have Kofi in trouble but he fires back kicks of his own, capped off by a reverse suplex (ok then) for a close two. Rowan goes after New Day but Kofi hits him with Trouble in Paradise, followed by the Midnight Hour on the floor. Bryan's suicide dive is countered by a right hand but Trouble in Paradise misses, allowing Bryan to hit the running knee for two, causing the fans to build a roof on the stadium and then blow it off.

Bryan has had it and starts stomping the head as Woods and Big E. watch on. The LeBell Lock goes on and the referee checks the arm...which stays up. Bryan hits him in the face and pulls again but Kofi rolls out and hammers away at Bryan, who won't let go of Kofi's hand. That lets Kofi stomp away for a change and Bryan is done, setting up Trouble in Paradise to give Kofi the pin and the title at 23:41.

**Rating:** A-. I mean...they could have gone out there and demonstrated how to make a pimento loaf and it wouldn't have mattered as long as they had that ending. That was a genuine Wrestlemania moment and you could feel what it meant to everyone. This was incredible and one of the best moments they could have had. Eleven years ago, Kofi had the worst debut match I've ever seen and now he's WWE Champion at Wrestlemania. Not too shabby.

Post match Woods pulls off the cover and unveils the non-wooden title so Kofi can pose with the right design, already complete with custom side plates. Kofi's kids come in to celebrate and now it's time to open the present. It's a new New Day shirt with Kofi holding the title.

We recap the Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal.

Bliss, now in a different outfit, goes in to see Jost and Che as they're checked for injuries. She says don't worry because they're in good hands...because Scott Hall and Kevin Nash are the doctors? And giving them prostate exams? Am I missing a joke here?

Booker T. joins commentary.

US Title: Samoa Joe vs. Rey Mysterio

Mysterio is challenging and I believe he's dressed as Mysterio from Spider-Man. Joe goes straight at him and Rey hits a 619 in less than a minute. Rey's wheelbarrow bulldog is countered into the Koquina Clutch...and Rey is out at 1:00. So I'm thinking he's still a bit injured? Booker: "I DID ALL MY PREP WORK FOR THAT???"

Trailer for Batista's new movie.

We recap Roman Reigns vs. Drew McIntyre. Reigns is back from leukemia and needed a first singles match. Drew took out both Dean Ambrose and Seth Rollins and is promising to do the same to Reigns tonight.

Roman Reigns vs. Drew McIntyre

McIntyre is played to the ring by the New York Police Department Bagpipe Band. Reigns lowers his head to start and gets kicked in the face but what looked to be a powerslam is escaped. That means a legdrop to the back of the head over the middle rope but Drew is right back with the Glasgow Kiss. The chinlock has Reigns in more trouble until Drew takes him outside for a suplex, thereby upping the total amount of trouble.

The reverse Alabama Slam gives Drew two and he tells Reigns he should have said no. A flipping slam off the top has Reigns down again as Drew tells him that he broke the Shield. The Future Shock (Drew: "THIS ONE IS

FOR AMBROSE!") is broken up so Drew slaps him in the face. A big boot sends Drew outside and it's a Samoan drop on the floor. Back in and the jumping clothesline puts Drew down, followed by the Superman Punch to do it again. The spear finishes Drew at 10:10.

**Rating:** C-. Totally standard Raw main event with Drew trying but not having a prayer of winning. There's only so much you can do when everything is against you like this and Drew tried as hard as he can. Just getting this spot is Drew's big win of the night and that's not the worst place to be. He'll be back and do just fine because he's that good.

Here's Elias to play some drums rather well. Now he's at a piano (teleporting from one to the other) and does quite splendidly there too. Now he's in the middle of the ring with his guitar. Elias the drummer and Elias the piano player play him in and he continues to have chops. Piano and Drum take a bow and now guitar Elias is on his own. The fans sing a little OH WALK WITH ELIAS and Elias promises more versions of himself, including a harpsichord player. As he starts his song, a SPECIAL BULLETIN appears on screen showing...the 1932 World Series?

Babe Ruth calls his shot (yes he did) and hits a home run...and here's John Cena to Basic Thuganomics. Well you know the Yankees gear is making his skin crawl. Cena says Elias got the worst deal because John Cena is about to turn heel. He feels like he's watching one of his movies because this whole thing sucks.

Cena isn't feeling it because this is a wasted wrestling experiment. Cena: "They call me the golden shovel so I'm about to bury your push." He throws him some nuts and says there's no AA today, but here's an FU. Cena lays him out with the knuckles and plants him with the FU. This worked well as Cena is often at his best when he's making fun of himself.

We recap Batista vs. HHH. Batista wanted one more match with HHH to end their careers on his terms so he beat up Ric Flair to get HHH's attention. The match is on and it's No Holds Barred.

Shawn Michaels is on commentary.

Batista vs. HHH

No Holds Barred with HHH's career on the line. Batista slips through the ropes on the way into the ring before heading outside to glare at Shawn. He even walks around the ring and does his entrance again, this time without the slipping. HHH's entrance video seems to be inspired by Mad Max and shows a road race. The stage opens up and the car drives out with HHH on the back. I've seen worse.

Batista drives him into the corner to start but gets elbowed out to the floor. They fight to the floor with HHH going over the announcers' table but managing to pull out a tool box to hit Batista in the head. Now it's a chain to whip Batista in the back and choke a bit before going for some pliers. Batista's finger gets bent back and HHH stomps on the pliers to make it even worse. Now it's time for some needle nose pliers, but first he sits in a chair on Batista's throat. HHH: "THAT'S A NICE NOSE RING!" And then he rips it out with the pliers!

Graves: "Batista won't be able to be a guardian of the house like this! This guy is my boss!" Batista heads to the floor (Shawn: "His nose is bleeding!" Graves: "YOU THINK???" ) and drops HHH onto the announcers' table three times in a row without breaking the thing. Some chairs to the back keep HHH in trouble and they head back inside with Batista busting out a White Noise of all things.

Back to the floor with Batista putting the steps onto an announcers' table and clearing off a second one, complete with a point to Shawn. The Batista Bomb off the steps is countered with a backdrop and the table STILL doesn't break. Good grief where have those tables been all these years? HHH gets up, throws a crotch chop, and spears Batista through the German table. They slowly get back inside and HHH (eventually) finds a sledgehammer.

That just earns him a spear for two but a charge with the hammer is cut off by HHH's raised boot. The spinebuster connects and it's time for the Batista Bomb, with HHH dropping the hammer on his way down. That gets two and Batista brings the steps inside. He takes too long punching in the corner (right in front of the steps because wrestlers never learn) and gets powerbombed down onto the steps.



The Pedigree...only gets two as this keeps going. Batista gets in a DDT onto the steps and things stop again but here's Ric Flair (I was waiting on him) to hand HHH a sledgehammer. HE COULDN'T DO THIS TEN MINUTES AGO??? HHH uses the steps to launch into a sledgehammer shot to the head but Batista pops back up so he can eat the Pedigree for the pin at 24:49. You know, because a JUMPING HAMMER TO THE HEAD isn't enough to pin someone.

**Rating:** D+. The first ten minutes of this was very good but, as tends to be the case for almost any HHH match anymore, it went on too long because there was way too much laying around between moves. The ending looked ridiculous as well but that's another situation. What they did early on was entertaining and brutal (that pliers thing was nuts) but I was looking at the clock near the end, which happens way too often.

Alexa Bliss (outfit #3) has the B Team model AND STILL CHAMPION Daniel Bryan shirts. Ron Simmons comes in for the cameo.

JBL joins commentary.

### Kurt Angle vs. Baron Corbin

No Angle video package? Angle snaps off a belly to belly suplex but gets taken down early on. The rolling German suplexes give Kurt two but the Angle Slam is broken up for a big boot. The ankle lock is countered into Deep Six for two and Corbin is already getting frustrated. Kurt hits the Angle Slam for two but Corbin is right back and says You Can't See Me. That odd taunt lets Angle roll some more German suplexes...and Kurt goes up. The moonsault misses as it always does...and the End of Days gives Corbin the pin at 6:00.

**Rating:** F. The idea of Kurt Angle losing to Baron Corbin in his last match is a failure. Not because it's Angle last match. Not because the match wasn't good. Not because WHY? But because we now have to deal with more Baron Corbin on Raw as more fans' heads explode as we try to figure out what WWE sees in him. I'm sure this was Angle's decision and while I can respect that, someone named McMahon should have overridden him.

Post match Angle wants his music played one last time so we can get in

one more YOU SUCK. That's exactly what he gets, as he should.

#### Intercontinental Title: Bobby Lashley vs. Finn Balor

Lashley, with special contacts in, is defending and Balor is the Demon, making its Wrestlemania debut. Balor hits a spinwheel kick and ax kick to the back, followed by a dropkick to put him on the floor. There's the big flip dive but Lashley catches him with a spinebuster back inside. Lashley hits a heck of a spear through the ropes to drive Balor to the floor, followed by a regular one for two back inside. Balor gets back up and powerbombs Lashley (good one too) and the Coup de Grace gives Balor the title back at 4:04.

**Rating:** C. The spots were good (that spear was awesome) and the powerbomb looked awesome, but the problem is they didn't need to do the Demon here. I get why they did it and it makes sense to do it at Wrestlemania, but at the same time what's the point in having him do it if he can already beat Lashley and Lio Rush? It's a good enough match, but this story was them trading the title and then the Demon doing what regular Balor could do.

Alexa (#4) announces the new WWE attendance record of 82,265. She thinks we need a break though so here are R-Truth and Carmella for the world's largest dance break.

Wrestlemania XXXVI is in Tampa Bay on April 5, 2020.

We recap the women's triple threat match. Becky Lynch has become the people's champion, Charlotte is the Smackdown Women's Champion and the corporate pick and Ronda Rousey is the Raw Women Champion and the unstoppable force. Tonight is winner take all for both belts, but it's much more about the history because the match is actually headlining the show.

#### Raw Women's Title/Smackdown Women's Title: Ronda Rousey vs. Charlotte vs. Becky Lynch

Ronda is Raw Women's Champion and Charlotte is Smackdown Women's Champion...and she comes in via helicopter and lands in the parking lot, where a red carpet is rolled out for her in a Horseman homage. Since she

has to walk a good ways into the stadium, here are Joan Jett and the Blackhearts to play Ronda to the ring. The bell rings at 12:01am and Becky goes straight for the Disarm-Her on Ronda but gets shoved away so they can all head outside.

That means a Piper's Pit for both of them and Ronda starts the trash talk. Charlotte gets up and sends Rousey into the barricade, setting up a showdown with Charlotte inside. The Disarm-Her to Becky is broken up and it's Ronda coming back in to kick Becky in the face. A double powerbomb over the top is countered into a double armbar on Becky and Charlotte. Becky escapes and dropkicks Ronda to the floor for a NASTY crash on her back. Charlotte Downward Spirals Becky into the buckle for two as we look at Rousey landing square on her back again.

Becky is right back with the Disarm-Her but Ronda comes back to life and makes the save. A running knee breaks up the armbar on Becky and Charlotte hits a double Natural Selection for two each. Becky gets sent outside so Charlotte chops Ronda, who tells her to bring it. That's just what Charlotte does with a backhand to the face so Ronda hits a jumping knee, which is countered into a Liontamer. Becky breaks it up with a bulldog and hits a double DDT for two each.

A super Bexploder gets two on Charlotte, setting up a double high crossbody from Rousey. The double armbar is countered with a double powerbomb Ronda is done for the moment. Becky calls Charlotte to her and avoids a charge, letting Becky kick her to the floor. The Disarm-Her goes on and Rousey uses the ropes to stand up for the break. A missed charge lets Becky get the Disarm-Her in the corner until Charlotte's big boot breaks it up.

Charlotte starts in on Rousey's knee and gets the Figure Four but Becky comes off the top with a legdrop for the save. And now, a table because that's what this match was calling for. Rousey breaks up a powerbomb through the table and turns the table over, saying tables are for b\*\*\*\*\* (at least the third time she's used that word so far). Charlotte comes back in for a double spear as Cole's voice is almost gone.

The table is set up in the corner and Charlotte gets two off a spear to

Becky. Rousey gets back up and helps Becky drive Charlotte somewhat through the table to knock her outside. The fight is on and Rousey goes with a Shining Wizard and tries Piper's Pit...but gets reversed into a crucifix to give Becky the pin and the titles at 22:27!

**Rating:** B. The ending was straight out of Angle vs. Benoit at Wrestlemania XVII with the submission attempts all match until the quick pinfall. What matters here is Becky defeated Rousey to win the titles as she should have. That was how this show needed to end and it did, even if the ending could have been a bit smoother. Charlotte will be fine and I'm curious to see who goes after Becky as the first victim.

Replays show Rousey's shoulders were WAY up so there's your story going forward (if Rousey sticks around). Cole: "Tonight will forever be known as WrestleMANia!" Oh just stop dude. Pyro and posing takes us out.

**Overall Rating:** B-. Let's get the things I got wrong out of the way first. First: this was WAY better than I was expecting after last year's near nightmare of a show. Second: they actually did give us three happy endings, which I said several times would not happen. I'm very glad to be wrong on that, but I certainly was wrong. Third: yeah HHH vs. Batista went on too long and it brought things down. I had high hopes and they didn't come through.

Now for the good stuff: the right people won (mostly) and the big matches all went to the right people. For the first time in way too long, we had something to cheer about. If that's it for Lesnar at the moment, thank goodness because he needs to go away for a long time and leave the title here. Rollins will be fine as champion for the summer before someone wins Money in the Bank and takes it from him (It's going to be Corbin isn't it?). Becky winning was the right way to go also, even if the ending was a little rushed. There's one big one left though.

Kofi Kingston is WWE Champion. That was one of the best moments I've seen WWE put on in years and might pass Bryan in New Orleans. It felt special and you don't get that often enough, mainly because there was serious doubt if they could actually pull the trigger. I loved that moment and was happier than I've been at something in a long time. I'd have loved to

see it close the show, but I get why they couldn't go there. Incredible moment though.

Overall, the pacing was FAR better than what they've had in recent years and while there was a lot of stuff they needed to trim down (despite having multiple matches go less than five minutes), it didn't drag nearly as bad as it has before. It still needs to be shorter by about an hour (at least) and not everyone needs to be on the show, but for what we got, it was one of the better shows in recent memory and we got a genuine Wrestlemania moment. Well done, and it was close to being great.

### Results

Seth Rollins b. Brock Lesnar – Stomp

AJ Styles b. Randy Orton – Phenomenal Forearm

Usos b. The Bar, Aleister Black/Ricochet and Shinsuke Nakamura/Rusev – Double Us to Sheamus

Shane McMahon b. The Miz – McMahon pinned Shane after a superplex off a camera tower

IIconics b. Boss N Hug Connection, Nia Jax/Tamina and Beth Phoenix/Natalya – Super Glam Slam to Bayley

Kofi Kingston b. Daniel Bryan – Trouble in Paradise

Samoa Joe b. Rey Mysterio – Koquina Clutch

Roman Reigns b. Drew McIntyre – Spear

HHH b. Batista – Pedigree

Baron Corbin b. Kurt Angle – End of Days

Finn Balor b. Bobby Lashley – Coup de Grace

Becky Lynch b. Ronda Rousey and Charlotte – Crucifix to Rousey

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