

# Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XXXII (2017 Edition): Hitting One Heck of a Wall

## Wrestlemania XXXII

Date: April 3, 2016

Location: AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas

Attendance: 101,763

Commentators: Michael Cole, John Bradshaw Layfield, Byron Saxton

We had to get here again at some point. I sat in the stadium last year for the better part of seven hours watching this show and was pretty entertained for the most part. However, since then I've thought back on it a few times and it seems to go all downhill from there. I'm not sure what to expect from this one other than it's going to take a few days to get through. Let's get to it.

As we get ready for the pre-show matches, the place might be 10% full at this point as there was some confusion in opening the gates. There were no lines and it was just a sea of humanity trying to get inside.

## Pre-Show: Ryback vs. Kalisto

Kalisto, in some ceremonial bird headpiece, is defending and this is your standard bully vs. smaller guy feud. It's such a weird visual to see people coming to the ring with so few fans in the seats. I'm not sure if it's going to make a difference but I expect a three part podcast from Ryback about how unfair it was to his career. We get the big staredown to show the match's story and to show off Ryback's new trunks.

Ryback plants him off a headlock and easily throws the champ outside. Kalisto gets in a quick bulldog for two but the kickout sends him outside. Some double knees to the chest get the same result and Ryback gets to show off by gorilla pressing Kalisto up the steps and back

inside. We take a break and come back with Kalisto taking a hard elbow to the jaw for two.

A running sitout powerslam (kind of like a Michinoku Driver) gets the same and it's time to slap at the mask. I know Ryback had some issues but he did seem to be trying to mix things up on offense. He deserves credit for trying at least and it's true that he had some unfair breaks. I just can't imagine it was as bad as he made it seem.

A delayed superplex is countered into a crossbody for two and the Shell Shock is countered into a quick DDT. The corkscrew crossbody gets two but Ryback plants him again. Kalisto goes to the corner and pulls a turnbuckle pad off. I'm sure you can piece the next step together but in case you're a bit slow, Ryback goes head first into the buckle and the Salida Del Sol retains the title at 8:57.

**Rating:** C. Despite the surprise when the title didn't change hands, this was a snappy little match with the power vs. speed working quite well. Kalisto is the kind of guy who can perform well against anyone and Ryback's power was a perfect foil. Ryback is still one of the more interesting what if's in recent years but it's pretty clear that the guy isn't all there sometimes, which can make for some messy negotiations.

#### Team Total Divas vs. Team B.A.D. and Blonde

Total Divas: Natalya, Brie Bella, Paige, Alicia Fox, Eva Marie

B.A.D. and Blonde: Naomi, Lana, Summer Rae, Tamina, Emma

Yes this story is still happening for reasons I'm sure you can figure out for yourself. If nothing else, Wrestlemania is an excuse to see Brie's legs, which you don't get for the rest of the year. This is Lana's only main roster match to date and uh...yeah this works. Fox elbows the heck out of Summer to start and a sloppy tilt-a-whirl backbreaker gets two. We get the big ten Diva staredown and it's off to a break because the pre-show is basically Raw.

Back from a break with Eva getting booed out of the stadium and suplexing Emma. A hard tag brings in Natalya and it's off to Naomi for the dancing

kicks. Paige comes in to play Bret to Natalya's Neidhart (that must have made her smile) on a Hart Attack. It's back to Emma for a wheelbarrow suplex on Paige before Lana is brought in to the pop of the match so far. Some good looking kicks drop Paige and we hear some trash talk with nothing resembling an accent.

Brie tries to come in so Lana mocks the YES chant in a nice touch. Tamina grabs a chinlock as the rapid tags continue (that's all you can expect in something like this). A Tower of Doom is teased but instead Paige dives onto a bunch of the women at ringside. Back in and Emma stomps on Paige in the corner but a rollup sends Emma's head into the buckle.

The hot tag brings in Brie to clean house and it's time for the parade of secondary finishers. Naomi: "FEEL MY GLOW!!!" By that she means barely get grazed by a split legged moonsault and have Lana shove Brie off the top. Not that it matters as Brie gets a good looking roll into the YES Lock to make Naomi tap at 11:26.

**Rating:** D+. Yeah the match was a mess but there's only so much you can put on the wrestling here. With so many people and so many of them being there as eye candy, there's only so much they can do. This is the last night for the old Divas style with people being able to use the most basic moves but mainly being there for the sake of their looks. There are FAR worse versions of this match though and this was actually fine for the circumstances.

Post match Nikki Bella comes out in her neck brace in what is supposed to be some big moment.

### Usos vs. Dudley Boyz

The Dudleys are heels and refusing to use tables. It's a brawl to start with the non-brothers cleaning house as the crowd is really filling in now. D-Von cranks on Jimmy's neck and it's off to Bubba for some trash talk about Rikishi. The snap punches take too long though and Jimmy gets in a superkick, setting up the hot tag to Jey. Everything breaks down and Jey takes What's Up. Bubba calls for the tables but again takes too long, earning a double superkick. 3D is broken up as well and Jey superkicks D-Von for the pin at 5:20.

**Rating:** D+. Another nothing match here as we're just getting ready for the big show and getting this stuff out of the way. You easily could have cut this match off and no one was going to notice it, especially with so little time. The Dudleys were fine at putting people over but did the Usos really need a win like this? Nothing to see here and it really could have been cut as a way to take some of the time off the main show.

Post match the Dudleyz load up some tables but get splashed through them instead. Cool visual if nothing else.

Fifth Harmony sings a very nice rendition of America the Beautiful.

The opening video focuses on the history of Wrestlemania and how it's never been bigger than this. Various legends and legendary moments are shown, as they certainly should be. This transitions into a preview of tonight's show, including the matches and of course a focus on the Rock's unspecified role. Nothing out of the ordinary here but as is usually the case with these things, WWE really knows how to make these things look great. Also of note: Kelsey Grammer of all people narrates this.

I'm not a fan of his but Flo Rida's My House is one of the catchiest theme songs they've had in years.

Inter-continental Title: Kevin Owens vs. The Miz vs. Dolph Ziggler vs. Zack Ryder vs. Stardust vs. Sin Cara vs. Sami Zayn

Owens is defending and this is a ladder match. Originally there were just four people involved but the match fell through with Stephanie making a triple threat for the title shot. That match went to a no contest so LET'S JUST THROW EVERYONE INTO THE MESS OF A MATCH. And people wonder why this title isn't treated as anything important anymore. Sami gets a very nice pop here but Owens' blows it away, making him the big crowd favorite.

On the other hand, Stardust (in Dusty polka dots) and Sin Cara come out to near silence, which isn't exactly the biggest surprise. Finally, Ryder gets to hear his music played at Wrestlemania for the first time ever, which really is a cool moment. Ryder: "I'VE BEEN WAITING MY WHOLE LIFE FOR THIS!!!"

Everyone drops to the floor to start and it's Owens left alone in the ring. As you might expect, Sami comes in with a ladder and it's time for the Wrestlemania slugout that you know means the world to them. Kevin gets the better of it and cleans house with the ladder until Cara gets in a ladder shot of his own to take over. Ryder neckbreakers Stardust onto the ladder and Miz throws a different ladder over the top and onto Cara.

Sami and Ziggler knock Miz's ladder over and there's the Blue Thunder Bomb, which thankfully doesn't have to go through the motions of a near fall. Back in and Owens backdrops Sami onto a ladder. Kevin: "THIS IS KO MANIA! GO BACK TO NXT!" Ziggler and Ryder go up but Stardust makes a save to put both guys down again. Cara does the same to Stardust and it's Sami vs. Miz in the ring.

That doesn't last long either as Sami dives through a ladder to take out four people at once, followed by the diving tornado DDT on Owens. Cara gets shoved off the ladder but lands on the top rope into a springboard onto another pile of people. Ziggler starts the superkick party so JBL can talk about Shawn Michaels.

Owens comes back in and it's a double superkick to put everyone down. Stardust pulls out the polka dotted ladder (The Exo Atmospheric Starbird Mark II. I'd call it Larry.) and spins it around his head, only to get caught in a Skull Crushing Finale onto said ladder. Now it's Sami back in but charging into Kevin's boot in the corner. A frog splash onto Sami onto a ladder bridged onto the bottom rope crushes everyone (JBL: "That's the biggest frog I've ever seen.").

Ryder doesn't quite one up him with the Elbro off another ladder to crush Miz but it still looked cool. I'm not sure why there weren't more flashbulbs going off either as it was quite the highspot. Ziggler faceplants Ryder off the ladder and comes up favoring his knee. The delay lets Owens powerbomb Ziggler off the ladder and Cara kicks Stardust onto a ladder bridged between the apron and the barricade.

Cara hits the big dive to put Stardust through the ladder, leaving Owens and Zayn to slug it out above the ring. Sami gets the better of it and hits the half and half suplex to drop Owens head first into a ladder

(sick looking landing). That lets Sami go up until Miz shoves him over but this time Miz takes too long going up, earning himself a big shove off from Ryder, who climbs the ladder for the huge upset at 15:24.

**Rating:** B. It's a fun match and the spots were great but....RYDER??? I mean....HE'S ZACK RYDER! As is so often the case, there were too many people in here with guys like Cara and Stardust just being there to add more bodies to the thing. Cut this down to four people (five max) and it's WAY better but that might mean the title is treated a bit more seriously and we can't have that. I still think this was supposed to be Neville's spot until he broke his ankle but it doesn't really matter.

Ryder's dad comes in to celebrate with him for a really cool moment.

We recap AJ Styles vs. Chris Jericho. They traded some wins and then formed a short lived team (Y2AJ) but Jericho turned on him when they lost. Jericho was jealous over the AJ STYLES chants and wanted the respect for himself. It's actually a solid feud and one of the matches people wanted to see, though I could have gone with not having the same match three times before.

### AJ Styles vs. Chris Jericho

Jericho drives him into the corner to start and the AJ STYLES chants are already going nice and strong. Styles gets in a hurricanrana and a snappy armdrag before sending Jericho outside. That should mean a slingshot dive but Jericho dropkicks him out of the air to take over. Back in and a neckbreaker sets up a dragonsleeper for a change of pace.

AJ tries to fight back but gets pulled down into the Walls for some good old fashioned ASK HIM/AHHHH exchanges. A rope is grabbed so AJ can hit the moonsault into a reverse DDT for two. Both guys head to the corner for a super sitout gordbuster and one heck of a crash. The Pele is countered into a Walls attempt but AJ reverses that into the Calf Crusher.

The Styles Clash is broken up and a Codebreaker gets a delayed two (with Cole making sure to say the near fall was due to the delay in a nice touch). For a change of pace, Jericho loads up AJ for the Styles Clash

but gets planted face first for two instead. A rollup exchange sets up the real Styles Clash for two and the springboard 450 gets the same. With nothing else left, AJ heads to the apron and loads up the Phenomenal Forearm, only to have Jericho shove the referee away and catch Styles with the Codebreaker for the pin at 17:08.

**Rating:** B. Another long match here with an interesting choice for the ending. I know Jericho went on to have one of the best years of his career but at this point he's just Jericho and Styles hasn't even been in the company for three months yet. This continues to feel like booking for the sake of the surprise, which is almost never a good thing. Still though, would you expect anything other than very good from these two for seventeen minutes?

Maria Menunos interviews Zack Ryder and talks about getting to take a picture with Razor Ramon and his Intercontinental Title when he was a kid. Tonight though, he and Ramon are taking a picture with RYDER'S Intercontinental Title. I'm not sure if that's a better line than waiting your whole life for this but Ryder is nailing it tonight.

### New Day vs. League of Nations

New Day comes out in a huge box of Booty0's which tips over...to reveal them in Dragon Ball Z costumes, complete with a tail on Woods. This was originally a Tag Team Title match but was changed to a handicap match before switching to a six man (Sheamus/Alberto Del Rio/Rusev for the League with King Barrett in the corner) for no apparent reason. I mean, other than having New Day lose or something crazy like that. Also, make no mistake about it: New Day was by FAR the most popular merchandise choice of the weekend. You would see that blue shirt all over Dallas and nothing was anywhere near as common.

Kofi and Sheamus start things off as we hear about New Day holding the titles for over 200 days. Somehow they're not even at the halfway point. Sheamus gets taken down into the corner for the Unicorn Stampede and Woods starts in with some tromboning. Xavier comes in and gets beaten down as JBL has the nerve to compare these two to the Freebirds and the Horsemen.

Sheamus gets in the forearms to the beat of NEW DAY SUCKS and it's off to Rusev for a running flip senton. Woods sends Del Rio to the floor in a big crash but Sheamus is over there to take New Day off the apron in a smart move. Not that it matters as Kofi gets the hot tag a few seconds later and house is cleaned again. Trouble in Paradise is broken up and Rusev adds a kick to the head of his own for two.

The fans try to get an UP UP DOWN DOWN chant going and Big E. tags himself in for some suplexes. The spear through the ropes takes out Sheamus, Rusev and Barrett but it does the same to Big E., who thankfully didn't break his neck. Back in and Woods drops a top rope double stomp for two on Sheamus. Del Rio makes a save and hits a scary double stomp off the apron to crush Kofi. That leaves Woods alone to take the Bull Hammer from Barrett to give Sheamus the pin at 10:02.

**Rating:** D+. Ok they're trolling us now right? The League of Nations is one of the most worthless stables in a LONG time and they're beating one of the most over groups in recent memory? I know it's designed to set up the post match shenanigans but there are multiple ways to do the same thing without beating New Day. It's even worse when you consider the group was split less than a month later.

Post match Barrett says there are no three men who can beat them. Cue Shawn Michaels (nearly causing the wife to jump out of the upper deck), Mick Foley and Steve Austin (he's a bit too big of a star for this group) for the beatdown. The moment is cool but Cole talking about how great of a moment this is feels so stupidly forced. Anyway, house is quickly cleaned (and apparently Austin further injures his already destroyed shoulder in the process). New Day gets back in and dancing ensues with Shawn and Steve getting into it...until it's a Stunner for Woods. Beer is quickly consumed.

We recap Brock Lesnar vs. Dean Ambrose. Lesnar is the Beast and needs someone to fight him so Dean was like "eh I'll do it." This led to one heck of a beatdown so Ambrose was given some weapons by various hardcore legends (barbed wire bat from Foley and a chainsaw from Terry Funk) because this is a no holds barred street fight.



## Dean Ambrose vs. Brock Lesnar

Anything goes and Heyman gives Brock a big, over the top intro. JBL gives us a good example of trying to be too smart by calling Lesnar a former NWA Champion (assuming he means NCAA), which of course he never won. Brock hits the first suplex inside of ten seconds and the huge video screen above the ring kept count (It had been all over the place all night with unicorns for the New Day and various three camera shot replays. In other words, it was annoying in a hurry.).

We hit the third German suplex forty five seconds in and Ambrose is on the floor. A few kendo stick shots annoy Lesnar so he rolls two more suplexes. Brock breaks the stick over his knee and there's number six. Ambrose can barely move so he gives the referee a thumbs up and there are numbers seven and eight before we're even five minutes into the match. Dean slaps him in the face...and gets suplexed again.

With nothing else to do, Lesnar offers Dean a free shot with the stick, which Brock then stands on. That earns him a low blow (Ambrose: "THAT'S HILARIOUS!") and now the stick shots work a bit better. Dean goes outside and finds a chainsaw (Heyman's eyes bug out) but that means a tenth suplex. A laptop off Lesnar's face allows Dean to chair him a few times, only to have Brock run the ropes for a belly to belly superplex. Dean's next trick is a fire extinguisher blast to the face followed by some lame chair shots to the ribs.

A dropkick to send the chair into Lesnar's face works a bit better and the top rope chair drop gets two. For some reason Dean throws in about ten chairs, which he then goes sailing over off another German suplex. The F5 is countered into a DDT onto (or close to) a chair for two. Now it's time for the barbed wire baseball bat but it's another German suplex onto the chairs. An F5 onto them is enough to put Dean away at 12:50.

**Rating:** C+. This wasn't as bad as I remember it but they made it very clear that Ambrose wasn't on Lesnar's level or really close to it for that matter. There's only so much you can do when Lesnar is out there doing nothing but suplexes (other than those and an F5, I actually can't think of anything else he did in the match) and Dean ran into that

problem here. This could have been a lot worse but a little more offense from Ambrose would have been appreciated.

Ric Flair teaches Ryder how to Woo but it turns out to be a Snickers commercial. Ryder takes a bite...and turns into Charlotte. Yeah I don't get it either but I think Charlotte is the new Intercontinental Champion.

Hall of Fame time with a pretty good class:

Godfather (So completely out of place here.)

Stan Hansen (How was he not in already?)

Big Boss Man (That's perfectly fine.)

Jacqueline (Fine, just don't let her talk.)

Joan Lunden (Warrior Award, which seems to have been forgotten this year.)

Fabulous Freebirds (You could argue they were the headliners.)

Snoop Dogg (Harmless. Not exactly PG but harmless.)

Sting (Only entrance and the loudest reaction.)

We go back to the Kickoff Show with Lita unveiling the new WOMEN'S Title (meaning the Divas era is finally over). Oh and remember that this is completely different than the original Women's Title, meaning it actually has its own lineage.

We recap the Women's Title match with a really cool WWE Network themed video. It's a search for Women's Champions which shows some famous names before a Women's Revolution search brings up the three of them (with Stephanie's screeching narration of course). This gets the music video treatment, which it actually deserves.

Women's Title: Sasha Banks vs. Becky Lynch vs. Charlotte

The title is officially vacant coming in though Charlotte never lost the Divas Title. Banks has Snoop Dogg (her real life cousin) rap her to the ring, which should guarantee her winning the title here. She also has

Eddie Guerrero inspired gear and actually looks better in the tights than the trunks. Charlotte (still wearing the Divas Title) has Ric Flair in her corner and debuts the blue gear, with the robe being made from the robe Flair wore in his final match. That's a very good thing as she rocks the heck out of that outfit. Lita is holding the new title and after the Big Match Intros we're ready to go.

Everyone trades rollups to start in a fast and pretty athletic sequence until Charlotte kicks Becky in the face. That earns a nice round of applause and you can tell the women are ready tonight. A hurricanrana sends Charlotte across the ring and Sasha throws in an Eddie dance. They botch (not bad) a sunset flip/German suplex spot before Charlotte it sent outside, leaving Sasha to elbow Becky in the face.

Charlotte pulls Sasha outside though and gives her something like a wheelbarrow suplex onto the apron. Back in and Becky (with a lot of eye makeup) grabs an arm trap reverse DDT for two on Charlotte and we hit the cross armbreaker. Flair gets on the apron like a good pop though and it's time for the Figure Four. That also means that it's time for Sasha to come in with a frog splash for the save.

Becky grabs something like a Rock Bottom for two on Charlotte and rolls Sasha up for the same. In the first big spot of the match, Sasha dives through the ropes to flip onto Charlotte (possibly catching her foot on the ropes but it didn't seem to change much). Becky TAKES OUT FLAIR, drawing one of the biggest pops of the night. With Becky and Sasha staggered, Charlotte goes up top and moonsaults onto both of them (looked sweet) for maybe the biggest spot in the history of women's wrestling.

Back in and double Natural Selection gets a double near fall, much to Charlotte and Ric's collective frustration. Charlotte loads Sasha up into an electric chair but Becky comes in with a missile dropkick for two on Sasha. The Disarm-Her has Charlotte in trouble until Sasha makes the save with the Bank Statement.

That brings Charlotte back in with the Figure Four on Banks, which is upgraded into the Figure Eight until Becky pulls them to the ropes. Charlotte spears Banks down but gets taken to the top for one heck of a

superplex. Banks gets up and goes for the Bank Statement, only to be sent outside so Charlotte can grab the Figure Eight (with Flair holding Banks' foot) to make Becky tap at 16:08.

**Rating:** A-. Match of the night so far by a good stretch and pretty easily the best women's match ever on the main roster to date. There were a few botches here and there but the idea that three women could have a match on par with if not exceeding a lot of the better men would have been unthinkable just a few years ago. Great stuff here and FAR better than I think anyone could have hoped for (save for the logical Banks title win of course).

Charlotte poses and gets some pyro to really make this special.

You know, we're about two hours and twenty minutes into this show and it's on pace to be one of the best shows ever. I know there are some booking issues but other than a nothing six man (with a really fun post match segment), nothing has been bad and even that match was fine. However, there are four matches left and nearly TWO AND A HALF HOURS left in the show. I think I know where things are going to start going downhill.

The Cell is lowered for the 33<sup>rd</sup> time in WWE history. That stat kind of pulls things back a bit no?

We recap Shane McMahon vs. Undertaker and it's time for this show to start to unravel. So Shane came back in January and talked about how Vince and Stephanie had ruined everything. There was something about a lockbox with evidence of Vince doing something bad (never specified) and Shane threatened to open it if he didn't get to run Raw (which he said basically meant WWE). Vince decided to put it up in a match with Shane facing Undertaker in the Cell. Undertaker's Wrestlemania career was put on the line and that's about it for anyone buying this as anything serious.

At the end of the day, it's really, REALLY hard to believe that Undertaker was in any real danger against Shane, who hadn't wrestled a single match in seven years. It's kind of hard to buy this as a

competitive match, but there's a very good chance that this was supposed to be John Cena instead of Shane but injuries derailed the plans (a major problem all night). To their credit, this match led to something like tens of thousands of tickets being sold in a hurry so it was definitely a draw and worthy of this kind of a push.

### Shane McMahon vs. Undertaker

Inside Hell in a Cell. Shane does the high energy entrance and brings his kids out to dance to the ring with him as Shane Bucks fall from the ceiling in a cool moment. Apparently Shane wants to take Undertaker's cardio, which you know Shane has in droves due to, you know, everything that works against him. Some right hands have no effect on Undertaker so he punches Shane down with one shot. Remember: best pure striker ever in WWE, which you can add to the list of reasons this should be a squash.

Snake Eyes into the big boot have Shane reeling but he gets Undertaker to chase him and stomps away. That earns him a throw into the cage wall and the apron legdrop as this is total dominance in the first five minutes. The Last Ride gets two and the match is instantly a complete mess at 5:32. I'm sorry but there's no way I can buy this no matter what WWE wants to tell me. That move has beaten World Champions but SHANE MCMAHON, in his mid 40s and seven years removed from his last match, kicks out of it after getting beaten up? Just...no, period.

Undertaker grabs the steps but gets pulled into a weak triangle choke. That's countered into a chokeslam onto the steps for another two as Shane is suddenly the offspring of Super Cena and Hulk Hogan. Undertaker misses an elbow onto the steps so Shane sits on them and teases Undertaker into a drop toehold onto said steps. I don't buy Undertaker as being that stupid, nor do I buy the cover that follows.

Shane punches him in the face off the situp so Undertaker gets him in the Hell's Gate, which Shane reverses into a Sharpshooter. You know, because anyone can survive THREE UNDERTAKER FINISHERS IN TWELVE MINUTES. Undertaker easily powers out so Shane punches him into the corner, which is totally enough to have Undertaker in trouble. Coast to Coast into a trashcan gets two and Shane grabs...boltcutters.

He cuts the Cell open but Undertaker tackles him through the wall and onto the announcers' table. A monitor to the head looks to set up a Tombstone onto the table but Shane reverses into a sleeper. That's reversed with a backwards crash through the table as this is getting even more ridiculous. A toolbox to the head puts Undertaker on a table...and Shane climbs the Cell.

The big elbow completely misses (because it would have killed Undertaker) and you can see the crash pad deflate as Shane lands. Cole: "FOR THE LOVE OF MANKIND!" It was a terrifying spot live but now it's much more silly than anything else, which isn't the point in a match like this. Then again this stopped being anything serious or really interesting as soon as the Last Ride only got two so it's a moot point. Shane says bring it again so Undertaker carries him inside for the Tombstone and the pin at 30:06.

**Rating:** D-. WAY too long here with a match that should have been a glorified squash (which this was) that ran only about half this long. The idea that Shane could hang in there with Undertaker under these or any circumstances (including a bunch of run-ins, which never happened), is a combination of insulting and stupid.

It's a ridiculous story (both the buildup and the match itself) and a terribly dull match with one big spot not being able to make up for anything. This was more fun live but GOOD NIGHT it does not hold up. Cut it down to twenty minutes at most and this is much better but as it is, this is horrible. On top of that, allegedly Shane was supposed to win until Undertaker shot it down, which he certainly should have done. The show has hit a major wall now and it's going to need something special to bring them out.

Shane is taken out on a stretcher as the announcers brag about how awesome he is, which is why a lot of people don't like seeing Shane wrestle. Yeah he'll do a bunch of stuff but he gets WAY more credit and praise than he deserves. Shane gives a thumbs up on the way out.

Reason #1 this show crashed so hard: from the time the Cell was lowered to the time we cut away from Shane: 50:43. That's a lot of time to spend

on something that....bleh.

The pre-show panel chats for a bit.

### Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal

Fandango, Damien Sandow, Shaquille O'Neal, Big Show, Viktor, Diamond Dallas Page, Konnor, Tatanka, Jack Swagger, R-Truth, Goldust, Curtis Axel, Baron Corbin, Adam Rose, Heath Slater, Tyler Breeze, Mark Henry, Bo Dallas, Darren Young, Kane

O'Neal is a surprise, or as much of one as you can be when his face popped up on the big screen during the other entrances. We get the big staredown between Shaq and Show but they have to stop and double chokeslam Kane. Everyone else is sent outside (none eliminated) until Fandango comes in and gets eliminated. Sandow (POP) does the same and is eliminated as well, allowing everyone else to come in and eliminate Shaq and Show. Somehow, that means we NEED to see them at Wrestlemania the next year, despite almost no one asking to see it. Everyone stands around until Page hits the Diamond Cutter on Viktor and tosses him with ease.

Konnor gets rid of Page a few seconds later as this is already pretty dull stuff. The yet to be official Golden Truth eliminates Konnor and Tatanka goes on a warpath that no one was asking for. Corbin tosses Tatanka to no reaction and Kane backdrops Swagger out. The Social Outcasts of all people clean house and get rid of Goldust and Truth. We get a victory lap until Kane and Corbin get rid of Rose and Axel.

We're down to Corbin, Kane, Young, Breeze, Henry and Dallas with Kane chokeslamming Baron. Henry comes back in after being on the floor for six minutes to eliminate Slater and Breeze to get us down to five. Kane and Young (the oddest couple until...Young and Bob Backlund I guess) get rid of Henry before Kane dumps Dallas and Young. Corbin sneaks in from behind though and eliminates Kane to win at 9:43 and set off the NXT chants.

**Rating:** D. This was your annual "hey we still have jobs" battle royal but for once they let someone have the win to elevate them up the card. Corbin hits the ground running and odds are he's going to be challenging for the Intercontinental Title at next year's show. That's how you

introduce a star and it worked very well. The battle royal itself didn't though with too many dead spots, but at least they kept the pace up after the first year's was over thirteen minutes and last year's was over eighteen.

Wrestlemania XXXIII is in Orlando.

Here are the Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders to perform, which is never a bad thing. They're followed by something that's a bit more hit or miss: Rock's annual Wrestlemania appearance. This time it's a bit different though because he has a FLAMETHROWER. He lights a ROCK sign on fire and this eats up even more time on a show already over three and a half hours long with the main event to go.

After the long entrance and some standing around, Rock FINALLY says his first words nearly eight minutes after the cheerleaders started. We get some crowd praising and talk of Rock babies as there's a loud echo on everything Rock says (kind of cool because of just how big the place is) and the new attendance record of 101,763 is announced. Yeah I know it's probably not quite that high and much like in 1987, I really don't care that much.

Rock says it's about to get good...and we've got Wyatts. Thankfully this means we get the Fireflies in the stadium, which was one of the coolest visuals I've ever seen. It actually lit up the ring, which is pretty impressive for a bunch of phones. Bray introduces himself and says he chose Rock because Rock represents a lie. Rock is supposed to be the People's Champion but this is Bray's moment. He's going to eviscerate Rock on the grandest stage of them all and the people have to watch.

Rock mocks the eviscerating line and thinks Bray has been hitting the bong. We get some jokes about Rowan and Strowman (Is this where Rock buried Bray? I never can tell with these things.) before Rock praises Bray for having it all (BURIAL! HE'S BURYING HIM! SOMEONE GET A SHOVEL TO HELP BRAY!) and getting 100,000 people on their feet. Rock accuses Bray of eating Hot Pockets but Bray says he's here to kick the door down. However, Rock has an idea: let's have a match! We get a referee and Rock says pick any Family member as he takes off the workout gear to reveal



trunks.

### The Rock vs. Erick Rowan

Rock Bottom, six seconds. Again, I saw this called Rock burying the Wyatts. You know, because people are worried about ERICK ROWAN needing protection.

The Family surrounds Rock and heeere's Cena for the save. House is cleaned, signature moves are hit and Rock welcomes Cena back (he would be back in about a month) to FINALLY end this, 28:15 after the cheerleaders came out (I'm keeping time for a reason in case you couldn't tell).

It's 11:03pm so let's recap the main event. Roman Reigns was World Champion but HHH couldn't get him to go corporate so it's Austin vs. Vince again. HHH made Reigns defend the title in the Royal Rumble, which he of course entered and won to set up this match. People really weren't all that interested but you knew this was going to happen several months back. You know, because THIS TIME FOR SURE it's going to get Reigns over.

### WWE World Title: Roman Reigns vs. HHH

HHH is defending and here's Stephanie in what I think is a Mad Max look. It's a closeup of her face in front of a barren wasteland as she talks about how this is their world and we're all just living in it. Basically all hope is lost and we need to give up on this ridiculous belief that anyone can save us from the Authority.

Then an army of people in skull masks (NXT wrestlers with Enzo Amore at the front) carrying WWE Titles comes to the ring to set up HHH's entrance where Stephanie gets to show off her legs. Again, just like the last two years, the big face gets to follow this rather cool (and over the top) HHH entrance. But hey, at least we get the annual HHH is Cool moment right?

As ridiculous (and as much as they're begging the fans to boo them instead of Reigns) as this is, it's NOTHING compared to the outright hatred that Reigns receives. The man is booed out of Texas and allegedly the audio had to be turned down in response. If that's true....I really

wouldn't be surprised.

Since these two can't stand each other, they go to a headlock and armbar to start. The fans unload on Reigns when he shoulders HHH, only to get hiptossed to the floor. Back in and HHH works on the arm some more until Reigns shoves him into the corner for more incredible booing. A lockup goes nowhere as this is already starting to look like one of HHH's disastrous main events.

Some hard forearms to the back of Reigns' head put him down. The comeback is so soundly booed that it's almost comical. A Stunner over the top rope sets up the apron dropkick for one on the champ. Stephanie offers a quick distraction so HHH can get in a low blow (FACE POP) and Reigns goes down again. HHH goes with some hard right hands to the face and the spinebuster gets two.

They head outside with HHH sending him face first into the announcers' table (which he did a few weeks back to break Reigns' nose). Another comeback is cut off and Reigns is thrown into the German announcers. Back in and Reigns uppercuts him out of the air and hammers away, only to have HHH bail from the Superman Punch. They trade whips into the steps until Reigns spears him through the barricade for almost no reaction. This is basically the same problem as HHH vs. Jericho in 2002: there's no reason to believe the champ has a chance so there's no reason to care until Reigns hits a spear in the ring.

Back in again and Reigns is holding his arm but HE'LL CONTINUE! And without a thirty minute nap like at the Rumble! Oh he's got his working boots on tonight. HHH puts on a Fujiwara armbar of all things because the main event of Wrestlemania with a match that's supposed to be based on hatred is built around a bad arm. See, when Daniel Bryan did that, it was entertaining. When Reigns is doing it, the fans are cheering the evil villain.

Reigns powers out of something like the Rings of Saturn but can't knock the confetti off of HHH's head. It's back to the armbar until Reigns FINALLY gets the break with a powerbomb. That goes nowhere so WE HIT ANOTHER ARMBAR BECAUSE THIS MATCH NEEDS TO BE ALL LONG AND EPIC AND

STUFF! Another powerbomb breaks the hold again but the spear is countered into a Pedigree which is countered into a backdrop to the floor.

The fans start singing to placate their boredom until the spear gets...no count because Stephanie pulls the referee out. Now Stephanie gets in to yell at the referee, earning herself a spear and turning Reigns into the biggest star in the world (for about thirty seconds). If my memory serves me right, she hasn't taken a bump in nearly a year since then, or really had anything bad happen to her that lasted more than a day or two.

The Pedigree gives us the first hot near fall of the match and it's the Superman Punch to drop HHH. The second spear is broken up with a knee and Stephanie hands HHH the sledgehammer (She took a spear less than four minutes ago so OF COURSE she's capable of doing that. This woman is scary.). Not that it matters as another Superman Punch and the spear give Reigns the title back at 27:04.

**Rating:** D. And a lot of that is just for having the guts to go out there and do a match this boring in this spot on this show. This match was twelve minutes of HHH working on the arm and then getting into the main event style that went exactly where we knew it was going. The lack of drama or really anything interesting (save for that Stephanie spear) killed this and there was no recovering given how long the thing ran.

This needed to be about fifteen minutes shorter and we would have had the same result: Reigns winning and getting booted out of the building because people just don't want to see him in this spot. There was a total lack of hatred and violence here and it really dragged things down, which is far too often the case for any given HHH match. It's one of the worst Wrestlemania main events ever and there's really no way around that.

A quick celebration sets up the traditional long music video to wrap things up.

**Overall Rating:** D. I can't think of a single show that is so completely different from the first half to the second. The worst thing about the first few matches is the booking with the worst match being a somewhat dull six man tag. If you cut this off after the Women's Title, this is one of the better pay per views I've seen in several years.

Then the Cell was lowered, kicking off the last “four” matches (counting Rock vs. Rowan) and the long segment. When you add up the Cell, the Rock segment and the main event, they all combined for over two hours. That’s two REALLY bad matches and a segment that went on far too long (but was entertaining at times) adding up to an episode of Smackdown. Clip off fifteen minutes from Shane vs. Undertaker (and another five from the intro/post match stuff), ten from Rock’s stuff (say, him playing with a flamethrower) and AT LEAST ten off the main event and this is instantly a less horrible show.

Unlike most pay per views, Wrestlemania is almost exclusively remembered for two to three matches more often than not. Therefore, it’s a major problem when your two main matches are long and rather horrible. It was hard to keep interest in this show even sitting in the stadium and that should not happen. There’s a lot of good stuff in the first half though and switching the order up would have helped out a lot. Unfortunately that’s completely the opposite of what they did as it was all stupid booking overshadowing the good and then REALLY bad stuff covering the rest of the show.

It’s easy to see why this show is remembered so poorly when the second half is just such a wreck. It felt like a huge way to have the fans get annoyed while WWE laughs and says “we’ve got all your money”. You shouldn’t leave Wrestlemania talking about how bad the show was when there was so much good going on. The bad completely outweighs the good here and there was no way anything else was going to be remembered. Awful show that lives down to its reputation.

### Ratings Comparison

Zack Ryder vs. Stardust vs. Sin Cara vs. Sami Zayn vs. Kevin Owens vs. The Miz vs. Dolph Ziggler

Original: B

Redo: B

AJ Styles vs. Chris Jericho

Original: B

Redo: B

New Day vs. League of Nations

Original: C-

Redo: D+

Brock Lesnar vs. Dean Ambrose

Original: D+

Redo: C+

Charlotte vs. Becky Lynch vs. Sasha Banks

Original: B+

Redo: A-

Shane McMahon vs. Undertaker

Original: D

Redo: D-

Andre the Giant Memorial Battle Royal

Original: D

Redo: D

The Rock vs. Erick Rowan

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

HHH vs. Roman Reigns

Original: D

Redo: D

Overall Rating

Original: C-

Redo: D

Oh yeah I was still feeling the in-person vibe when I watched this back the first time. A C- is WAY too generous.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2016/04/08/wrestlemania-xxxii-strap-yourselfes-in-this-is-a-long-one/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the NXT: The Full Sail Years Volumes I and II, now in PAPERBACK. Check out the information here:

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