WWE Monday Night Raw

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Tonight is the Night!... - We find out if The RyBack has an issue with CM Punk. - We inch, albeit slowly, closer to Hell in a Cell.

Raw begins with a recap video of CM Punk's actions last week, ending with The Ryback staring him down to close out last week's Raw.
Michael Cole and Jim Ross at ringside tonight, and we start with the WWE Champion of wrestling, CM Punk, along with Paul Heyman, walking to the ring. For those updating your 'CM Punk Ring Gear Color' spreadsheet, tonight's color is Yellow. While Punk talked about Cena's cowardice, Heyman in the background tightly gripped the WWE title belt as if it was his own newborn child. Punk said Mick Foley disrespected him last week, and that Punk vs Cena in HIAC is still not going to happen. Paul Heyman then took the mic and talked about how AJ broke an edict from the Boards of Directors last week when she slapped Paul in the face. He asked for her resignation, and said he would be happy to take her place as Raw GM. This brought out Vickie Guerrero and Dolph Ziggler. The four went back and forth about how bad AJ is. Ziggler proposed Heyman and Vickie become co-GM, which brought out the current sole GM, April Jeanette Lee. She announced that she is now on probation, and has been appointed an executive coach to help her in her endeavors.
We're not done, yet. Daniel Bryan's music hit and he came out screaming "Stop It!" He said his beard was great, and was a great catch. Angrily, he said this. He's also the tag team champions. So guess who's next... Kane. We're 20 minutes in right now and nothing has really happened yet. Kane and Bryan argued, which led to Ziggler and Punk arguing, which led to AJ screaming in an awful tone. She made Team Hell No vs Ziggs & Punk for tonight's main event. AJ skipped away as everyone remaining argued in the ring. Bad.
Backstage, Sin Cara & Rey Mysterio were walking backstage as Michael Cole went over the brackets for the WWE Tag Team championship contendership tournament.
Match: Sin Cara & Rey Mysterio vs Primo & Epico Rey and Sin Cara now have matching ring gear, with half/half masks. Sin Cara was in for a minute, and looked awful with Primo. Leading into a commercial, The Prime Time Players came out in suits to the stage to scout the match. After the break, we're back with Sin Cara and Epico working much better together than Cara and Primo. This match got pretty fun late, as Rey matches tend to. Lots of action, finishing with Rey splashing on top of Primo for the pin. Sin Cara couldn't even celebrate properly without looking awkward.
World Championship debate coming later, and tonight's #RAWactive is the WWE Universe tweeting questions for the debate.
Match: Brodus Clay vs Antonio Cesaro Without Aksana, Cesaro intros his five languages gimmick himself, which doesn't have the same effect. Cesaro hit his neutralizer on Clay in about a minute for the win. Looked impressive, which is what matters.

Backstage, AJ Lee introduced her executive coach, Christopher J. Stephenson, to Kaitlyn. Tasteless. By the way, the UN ambassador who was killed in Libya last month was named J.

Christopher Stevens. A little close, no?

Match: The Miz vs Zack Ryder Pretty basic here, with Ryder hitting some of his favorites like the Broski boot before getting beaten by the champion of North & South America, The Miz. First hour had some fine wrestling, or at least interesting. Everything else, though, was quite bad.

Backstage, Booker T appeared to be walking out for his moderation duties in the debate between Big Show and Sheamus.

World Championship Debate: Big Show vs Sheamus w/ Booker T as moderator. Big Show said this debate was ridiculous, and he's right. He said he'd knock out Sheamus during their title match at Hell in a Cell. He cut a babyface promo, or at least it came off that way. Sheamus is grating these days, as he's fully taken on John Cena's promo style. Sheamus continually brought up how Big Show lost his last World title to Daniel Bryan in just 45 seconds. The two guys went back and forth answering twitter questions, while promoting their title match inside the cage in a few weeks. The debate ended with a staredown between the two, before Big Show left the ring and walked out. Nothing bad here, but Big Show came off better.

Backstage, Jim Ross asked what was on the menu tonight as The RyBack made his way through the halls.

Match: The RyBack vs Tensai Tensai won. Not. The Ryback hit his meathook clothesline for the win, after failing twice to hit his normal finisher on the big guy. RyBack recovered fine, but it was unfortunate that the big move couldn't be hit properly as it surely could have been replayed for months to come as Ryback builds up momentum.

Backstage, the Rhodes Scholars mocked Sheamus and the debate.

Match: Eve Torres vs Beth Phoenix They replayed a video of Eve suspending Beth last Friday, followed by Booker retracting the suspension. Beth is mad that Eve accused her of attacking Kaitlyn at Night of Champions, and then for suspending her on Smackdown without authority. Eve won with the Heart Breaker after a somewhat sloppy match, but nothing awful. Brad Maddox was the referee, if that matters at all.

Backstage, AJ Lee introduced her executive coach to Wade Barrett. Wade was upset that he didn't have a match tonight. He told AJ she's doing a horrible job, while AJ smiled back blankly. Mr. Stephenson, the horribly named coach, was intimidated by Wade, and AJ noticed.

John Layfield was shown on the top of Mt Kilimanjaro.

Match: Heath Slater vs Santino Marella Drew McIntyre and Jinder Mahal were at ringside in support of their pal, Heath. Cole and Ross were perplexed as to what those three have in common. Santino went for his cobra shot, hit it, but Mahal and McIntyre immediately rushed in to beat up Santino to cause the DQ result. Slater, Drew, and Mahal each got a one liner promo after the beatdown and the segment ended with them celebrating in the ring.

Match: Damien Sandow vs Sheamus Cody Rhodes was on commentary. Damien bailed from the ring when Sheamus was using illegal tactics, such as going for a closed fist punch or grabbing Sandow's beard. After commercial, Sandow had control for much of the match. The match wrapped around the 10 o'clock hour, and lasted a good amount of time. Nothing short here. Both guys looked good here. Damien was able to counter Sheamus' first attempts at the Brogue Kick and White Noise. Code got involved leading to the finish. I was actually hoping they'd do a non-finish here, since Sandow had looked really good with a bigger name, and probably shouldn't be losing clean right now. But... Sheamus threw Cody in the ring, then

Brogue Kicked both Sandow and Rhodes at the same time. Sheamus pinned Sandow.

Nice build up for the brand new tag team... getting beaten up by one guy leading to their tag tournament proceedings.

Jim Ross Appreciation Night This can only end badly, right? Michael Cole introduced Jim Ross warmly. CM Punk cut off Jim Ross immediately. He cut another promo about respect. Jim Ross called Punk a jackass, saying he's embarrassed himself week after week lately. Punk mentioned Stone Cold a lot here, and earlier in the night as well. It's been a noticeable trend. He is either surely on board for a match with Punk, or they want us to believe he is. Punk demanded Ross call him the best in the world. Ross said he won't do that unless Punk accepts Cena's HIAC challenge, and walks out the WWE Champion. Punk responded by stomping on JR's hat. Punk told JR that if he doesn't leave the ring, Punk will beat him up. JR went to leave, but Punk stopped him. He told JR that his night of commentary is over, because Punk doesn't want him spewing disrespect to Punk. As Ross was leaving, The Ryback came out. The two grapplers stared eachother down, with Ryback seething, and the crowd chanting "Feed Me More!" loudly. Punk bailed.

Match: Kofi Kingston vs Alberto Del Rio Alberto Del Rio won with the armbar. Ricardo was ringside on commentary.

Backstage, the excutive coach was giving AJ pointers on how to be a good GM. AJ told off the coach, and sent him packing. Well that was wasted time then.

Match: Kane & Daniel Bryan of Hell No vs Dolph Ziggler & CM Punk of Best In Show. AJ Lee was the special guest referee. How is she supposed to follow the Board edict of not touching a wrestler if she's inside the ring trying to keep order? JR called the entire AJ Lee story a page out of 'Days of our WWE Lives'. The match started just before 11pm, yet we still had a commercial break within it. Hoping someone will make a drop of Jim Ross saying "AJ got down in a very nice position" at some point. AJ booted Vickie and Heyman from ringside, and Dolph left with Vickie, leaving Punk alone. Cole and Ross called back to Punk leaving Dolph alone a couple of weeks ago in their tag match on Raw. The distraction of Ziggler leaving allowed Bryan to hit a dropkick on Punk, followed by a Kane chokeslam. Kane pinned Punk for the win. Kane and Bryan argued about who was the tag team champions as the show went off the air.

Final Thoughts: This show is too long each week to have any final thoughts afterwards. Overall, I can't give the show a thumb's up because it was unentertaining for the most part. But, we did see a lot of build for the PPV and the tag division (such as it was). I also think that tonight's commentary work, all around, was the best of the year for Raw. First hour was fine for wrestling, but the non-wrestling stuff sucked. Second hour had the start of the fun Sandow-Sheamus match, the debate that didn't do much for anything, and The Ryback's fail. So nothing great there. Third hour was all CM Punk. We're going in two directions with Punk now, one with Cena and another with Ryback. Is Ryback just a backup plan in case Cena can't go? Or is Ryback potentially Punk's Survivor Series opponent buffering between Cena and Rock? I guess we'll find out as WWE Raw heads further into Autumn!

@missmayim