

Monday Nitro: July 6, 1998 – He Da Man!

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Date: July 6, 1998

Location: Georgia Dome, Atlanta, Georgia

Attendance: 41,412

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Larry Zbyszko, Mike Tenay

So I found a website where I can download every episode of Nitro. This is very helpful since there are some individual episodes I want to review but can't do because it would take months if not years to get up to them going from the beginning like I've been doing. This show is important for multiple reasons. There are 12 matches here on a 3 hour TV card. For one thing, this is one of the very last wins for Nitro. Other than the Warrior weeks of all things and the night after Halloween Havoc 98, Nitro never won again, which was due to more idiocy and cost them millions of dollars but that's another story.

The reason this show is something I've wanted to do is because it has the loudest pop and one of the coolest moments ever. Tonight is the night the Goldberg faces Hulk Hogan for the world title. Now there is a backstory here. Since this is WCW's home area, a lot of the big shots from Turner were going to be there. Hogan thought to himself that if I'm in the main event and we draw a record crowd (they did) then the executives will think I caused it. The idea was to announce a POST show NON title match between Hogan and Goldberg. Somehow this got changed to a TELEVISED TITLE match. This was announced a mere FOUR DAYS before the show. Now let's take a look at why this is very stupid.

Number one: It's HOGAN vs. GOLDBERG. That's the main event of

Starrcade, not a Nitro in July. This was 1998. It's not like the company was completely dead here or Hogan didn't mean anything. This was still Hulk Hogan and he was still a huge draw. Goldberg was undefeated here and had broken 100 wins and was US Champion so he was a huge deal. This is a PPV main event at minimum and the biggest match of the year more than likely. That probably cost them millions and millions of dollars.

Number two: This was announced 4 days before the match happened. With the internet being a very limited factor, if you didn't see Thunder, there's a very good chance you didn't know this match was happening at all. On Rise and Fall of WCW, they tried to make it sound like all the tickets were sold the day the match was announced. In other words, WCW would like you to believe that NO ONE bought a ticket to Nitro until they knew about this match.

Number three: This shows how obsessed Bischoff had become with beating Vince, even for one night. The ratings streak had come to an end and Nitro had lost like 5 or 6 weeks in a row. Bischoff decided that it was worth giving away all that money for a surefire win. The problem was that only diehard fans and the people working for the companies would know this and it wouldn't bring in much money at all. This became a trend for Bischoff as he became obsessed with a quick solution to WCW's problems when there simply wasn't one anywhere.

Number four: This is the last one I promise. This threw off all creative plans for WCW. Keep in mind that Hogan was world champion at this point and all of a sudden Goldberg was going to be. Any plans they had for Hogan, which included matches with Nash and Hart likely coming by the end of the year including Hart at Starrcade, were now being thrown away in favor of Goldberg being world champion. Since there were very few upper midcard/main event heels other than Hogan, this made limited sense. In other words it was perfect for WCW.

Now with that all being said, let's get to the 11 preliminary matches to get to the reason I'm reviewing this.

We open with a video from Thunder of James Jay Dillon making the announcement of the match, four days prior to this. I actually got a chill when he said Goldberg was the challenger. Make no mistake about it: WCW could do drama when they had to.

The place is PACKED as this is where NFL games are played, making this a major PPV size crowd. Wrestlemania 27 will be held there. If I remember right at the time this was the 4th biggest American crowd ever. This is a three hour show and oddly enough the commentators change each hour. The listed ones are the openers.

The Nitro Girls dance us into the show. They were like cheerleaders and would almost all become TV characters eventually. Larry as always does a salute to the crowd.

Hogan actually starts us off with Disciple (Brutus Beefcake), Bischoff and Liz with him. We need to take a moment and honor the herd of cows that died to make all the leather they're wearing. May you moo in peace. Dang now I want a burger. This is the go home show for Bash at the Beach, where the main event was Hogan and Dennis Rodman (basketball player) vs. DDP/Karl Malone (Hall of Fame basketball player who was inducted earlier tonight actually).

He talks about all the fans and the PPV on Sunday while saying exactly what you would expect him to say. Hogan says the name of his opponent tonight and says the match isn't happening. It should be noted that Hogan says jabroni here, which may predate Rock saying it, but I'm not sure. Hogan says he has an NWO guy coming in that Hogan has to beat first. Cue the chant, which is deafening and might be legit given that it's his hometown.

Ad for the Hogan shirt, which really was cool looking.

We talk to a guy that won a NASCAR racecar last year and they're giving away another one. We're only 15 minutes into the show now with no matches but whatever.

TV Title: Dean Malenko vs. Booker T

Expect a lot of matches that have no point and are really just there for the sake of filling up the show. Booker is TV Champion at this point but no word if that is a title match yet. Booker is WAY over here, but wouldn't get pushed for like two years. Apparently it's on the line. Ok then. Bret Hart, the HUGE signing from WWF a mere 7 months ago, has a shot at the winner on Sunday. That sums up their second set of problems.

The mat is dark gray which is weird to see and makes it seem like a really weird atmosphere. Both guys do standard stuff and then crank it up as Booker misses a Missile Dropkick, which was his finisher. Cloverleaf is blocked and a bunch of kicks put Dean down. We hit the floor and Jericho pops up with a mic. His distraction is enough to let Booker hit the Axe Kick to Dean for the pin to retain.

Rating: B-. For a quick TV match this was pretty good. Did you expect anything less from these two though? Dean and Jericho would feud for awhile over the Cruiserweight Title that Jericho had and while the matches were good, nothing ever came of it of course since WCW couldn't push guys that were young and talented right? This was solid enough for an opener and I would love to see more of these guys.

Goldberg can do pushups.

Karl Malone is ready for the PPV.

Kanyon vs. Raven

Kanyon has just recently lost the Mortis mask and is feuding with the Flock now for the sake of feuding with the Flock I

guess. Ah ok Canyon/Mortis wanted to be in the Flock and Raven said no. It's on in the aisle and Canyon takes over. We're on the floor again already. Dang they're moving out there tonight. Canyon gets a reverse F5 onto a chair which was kind of cool.

Lodi, who was pure awesomness back in the day, crotches Canyon on the top rope. After a SICK suplex onto the open chair, Saturn runs in, which is somehow a DQ after all the stuff with the chair. He and Canyon are teaming on Thursday and he accidentally hits a Death Valley Driver on him here. Saturn does a huge dive onto a table onto Raven which doesn't move AT ALL. Canyon takes down Saturn afterwards.

Rating: C+. I liked this but then again Canyon's offense back then was great stuff. This was really just to further the angle on Thursday. You have to keep in mind that a lot of stuff was going on with Nitro and WCW back in the day as they had the same amount of TV that WWE has currently but it was one show. That meant a lot more was going on at the time and you had to pay more attention to everything. This was opposed to WWF where there was Raw and Sunday Night Heat. Smackdown didn't come into existence for over a year after this. Match was good but just furthering an angle and rather short.

Buff Bagwell is here. He had his neck legit broken in a match with Rick Steiner and is in a wheelchair. We get Judy Bagwell, the first OCW Champion as well.

The Nitro Girls dance to what would become Stacy's theme song.

We see last week where Malone and Page drove to the arena in a semi-truck. The NWO was waiting with a bunch of weapons for them and amazingly enough a semi-truck coming straight for them is enough to scare them off. Malone slams Hogan and has the longest arms I've ever seen.

Malone and DDP come out. Given that he was a celebrity that never wrestled before, Malone actually did quite well in the

ring at the PPV. It helps a lot having a guy that is a full time athlete out there because you don't have to worry about conditioning or anything like that which gets a lot out of the way. Page was just awesome at this point and had been for like a year. Malone putting his arm around Okerlund is funny for some reason. He can't really talk but he's trying.

Ad for the DDP shirt, which I remember very well.

Mongo talks about joining the Horsemen, which he was awful at but he tried at least. Mike Ditka makes a cameo. He wants them to reform the Horsemen. We'll get to that.

We're 42 minutes into this without even counting the commercials of which there have been at least 3 and we've had two matches.

Scott Putski vs. Scotty Riggs

Oh just make it short. When Riggs is by far the better worker, you know you're in trouble. Yep they're just talking about the potential Hogan vs. Goldberg match. I can't say I blame them here though. We actually talk about the match a bit as Riggs is dominant. Larry talks about Ivan Putski, Scott's dad, who was pretty awful.

Both guys hit cross bodies at the same time to get us back to even. Putski plays to the crowd to no reaction and then hits his dad's move, the Polish Hammer. It's a double axe handle to the chest but instead of covering, he tries to get the crowd to care and picks Riggs up. Crossface Chickenwing (Riggs' finisher) is blocked into a sitout spinebuster for the pin by Putski. Sweet merciful pig meat this was bad.

Rating: F. Why did these guys get five minutes? The match was horrible and no one cared. Riggs is somehow the far better and more successful of these guys. Putski was somehow worse than his dad, which means he's in the running for worst wrestler of all time.

Goldberg headbutts a locker which was one of his signature things.

We look at his first win which was over Hugh Morrus, which was a legit shocker.

Scott Hall is the surprise opponent for Goldberg.

Chris Jericho vs. Ultimo Dragon

Not sure if this is for the title or not since they won't tell us that. I'd bet on a Dean run in here but I'm not sure. Jericho says Rey is the #1 contender for some reason and here's Dillon. He's commissioner more or less if that wasn't clear. Dean comes out and Dillon is taller than both of them. There's no contact between them and if there is, no match. Jericho tries to bait him and eventually gets him by implying his parents cheated on each other.

And now we actually get the match. They actually did go with Rey vs. Jericho at the PPV which is odd. You can't say it was bait and switch though so they're clean on that. That corner handstand that Dragon did was always cool looking. Dean runs in about two minutes in and jumps Jericho, pulling out some of his hair.

Rating: N/A. I'm not sure if we ever got the showdown between these two which sucks as it could have been awesome.

Dean gets taken away in handcuffs.

The Nitro Girls dance and Heenan joins commentary with I think both other guys leaving so it's him and Tony.

Chavo Guerrero vs. Johnny Swinger

Swinger was in ECW later on and was at Hardcore Justice recently. Tenay is still on commentary so Bobby replaced Larry so far. Swinger cuts a really bad heel promo to start. Chavo has short tights and a hard hat. He's crazy at this point and

wants to cut Eddie's hair. He's going to wrestle in the hat. Ok then.

We get the announced attendance: 39,919. Now here's the odd thing. That's 1,300 people LOWER than it really was. Yeah for some reason they cut down the potential over 40,000 people attendance number. WCW continues to astound. The hat comes off and the fans are pretty bored. Tornado DDT ends it in like 90 seconds though so at least it didn't last long. Chavo cuts some of Swinger's hair afterwards. Hair vs. hair is announced for the PPV with him vs. Eddie.

We see Goldberg's 25th win in a row, which was over Glacier.

Goldberg keeps warming up.

Disco Inferno/Alex Wright vs. Public Enemy

I didn't know Public Enemy was around this long. Wow they were there for the entirety of 97? I never knew that. Tokyo Magnum, a Japanese dancer, follows Wright out and dances too. Brawl to start with the Public Enemy dominating. The more famous team is wearing Braves jerseys for cheap pops as they're on a street that would get them almost to the World Series if I remember right.

Tony talks about Thunder in Wyoming of all things. The heels dominate here as we're told that Magnum is a fan of the Dancing Fools (later named the Boogie Knights). Grunge comes in and beats up Disco as we have two tables set up on the floor. Disco and Wright run off and Magnum goes through the pair of tables. Here they are again with weapons to beat down the Public Enemy for a DQ I guess.

Rating: D. Just a match to set up the whole big table spot at the end which was indeed cool looking. Public Enemy never went anywhere in WCW once the NWO showed up although they did win the tag titles almost two years before this. Not a good match or anything and not really even a match, but it did the job it

was supposed to do so mild points for that.

Gene brings out Bagwell in his hometown. He comes out to the NWO music and has his mother pushing him in the wheelchair. There's something hilarious about that. He's a total face here which implies to me he'll be turning soon. Bagwell talks about how he and Scott Steiner need to go their own ways and that he loves his mom.

Goldberg beats up some guy named Rick Fuller and is 50-0. His match with Hall is next.

US Title: Goldberg vs. Scott Hall

The bald one has to win to get the REAL bald one for the title. I'm not sure if the chants are piped in here or not. Ok apparently this is a US Title match. They really need to work on making it clear what matches are for titles. Hall hits those shoulders that he's kind of known for. Naturally they don't work as it's all Goldberg. To say this match is sloppy is an understatement.

It never ceases to amaze me how they managed to screw up Goldberg. Hall is clearly not someone that needs to be in the ring at this point as he was really messed up with substance abuse etc. It's also his first televised match in two months which likely isn't helping him. Then again I find him incredibly overrated. Goldberg beats him up and Hall calls down NWO guys.

Cue Disciple and Vincent but DDP and Malone pop them with chairs and it's back to one on one. Hall calls for the Razor's Edge and is LAUNCHED onto his back. Spear sets up the Jackhammer and the roof is partially gone since it's on for later tonight. Again, HOW DID THEY MESS HIM UP?

Rating: D+. Bad match but that's not the point here. This was about setting up Goldberg as the unstoppable force for later tonight which was kind of overkill but it fit Hogan pretty

well I guess. This was relative dominance and it worked rather well. Hall just wasn't worth a thing at this point though and it didn't look pretty.

The Nitro Girls dance again. You might be getting the idea here. One is Whisper, who would marry one Shawn Michaels.

Juventud Guerrera vs. Psicosis

Juvi has no mask at this point since those things bringing in money was just not going to be tolerated. This is a bring down the crowd match after the whole insanity just a few minutes ago. With time this could be awesome but if it goes past four minutes I'd be stunned. AWESOME back splash off the top onto the floor on Juvi which looked painful. There are some moves that are going to hurt no matter what you do, this one included. Like 40 seconds later the Juvi Driver and 450 ends it. The Flock comes in and destroys him for no apparent reason.

Rating: C-. Just didn't get enough time to really do anything. These two could be completely awesome but they didn't get the chance to. I don't get the Flock thing but I'd assume a one off match that never meant anything past like the following week. The back splash spot was cool though.

Goldberg's 75th win was over Raven for the US Title.

We hear about a PPL show, as in Pay Per Listen. You can't see it, but you can listen to the commentary for like \$10. That's not a horrible idea actually.

Video about the celebrity tag match on Sunday. There is way too much happening on this show. This is proof that three hours is WAY too long for one show.

The Giant vs. Jim Duggan

See what I mean about the three hour deal? This is the kind of stuff you get when it's this long. Giant does a hip swivel in

the corner but misses. Chokeslam ends it in like 90 seconds. Again, no point to this other than to fill in time. Giant says the football player he's fighting on Sunday is pathetic. Oh ok it was supposed to be a tag match but they're changing it to a singles match because of Goldberg. Not said here of course but you get the idea. Greene, the football player that no one cared about, comes out and spits at Giant.

Malone says he'll get Rodman on Sunday.

Diamond Dallas Page vs. Jim Neidhart

See what I watch for you guys? Page is in jeans as usual and brings out Malone with him. Two more minutes, one more Diamond Cutter, match over.

Goldberg's 100th win is over Konnan in a nothing match at Great American Bash.

Sting/Lex Luger vs. Sick Boy/Kidman

Flock vs. Wolfpack here which shouldn't be much of anything. Yeah 7 months after the biggest match ever in WCW, Sting is smiling and laughing and in the NWO which he swore he would destroy. Don't you love WCW? Nash, the leader, says nothing at all. Neither does Konnan. Apparently no one knew the opponents as Kidman and Sick Boy are surprising for some reason. Less than a minute, Luger with the Rack. In the Dining Room. And Colonel Mustard with the Revolver.

WCW World Title: Goldberg vs. Hulk Hogan

Immediately you can see why the match with Hall was a bad idea as the pop is solid but nowhere near what it should be. The fans have already seen him once tonight so the excitement is limited. Hogan gets booed out of the building. Naturally we're 6-7 months removed from Starrcade and Hogan has the belt again. He's held it since late April so for about two and a half months. Sting's reign was like two months or so. After

the match tonight, Hogan would have it AGAIN in less than 6 months, which we'll get to later.

The bell gets a pop. This is one of the hottest crowds I can ever remember as the people are salivating over everything. In a funny line, Tenay says WCW is the third biggest wrestling company on the planet. This stuns me, until he says "after the two NWO factions." So in other words, 6 months after Starrcade, not only does Hogan have the belt again but there are TWO NWOs instead of the original one being gone. And you wonder why they went out of business.

Just basic power stuff here to start as they're feeling each other out a lot to start. Hogan takes over with some punches and whips Goldberg with his weight belt. Goldberg gets a full nelson but takes a low blow. There's a great energy here which is making this awesome. Hogan takes a clothesline and the place POPS. The match itself is pretty bad but much like Hogan/Andre, that's not the point.

We hit the floor and Hogan gets a chair shot in but there's no DQ called. There's the chant and the legdrop is treated like any other move. Hogan hits two of them and here's Curt Hennig. THREE legdrops gets a two count as Malone pops up to hit a Diamond Cutter on Hennig. Goldberg more or less no sells the leg drops and spears the heck out of Hogan. Heenan is LOSING it here. Jackhammer hits and the place goes NUTS. Goldberg is the world champion, and the image of him standing on the stage holding up both his titles is very cool.

Rating: A+. Like I said in the Hogan vs. Andre at Mania 3 review, this wasn't about the match in the ring and if you think it was you're an idiot and don't get wrestling. Goldberg looked awesome here and Hogan put him over 100% clean. That was the key thing here: Goldberg didn't have to have some screwy way to win the title. He hit his two big moves and pinned Hogan after kicking out of the legdrop. This is how you put someone over and amazingly enough, Hogan never got this

one back, even though this was the plan. Hogan had made a deal that he got to beat Goldberg when the time was right, which is more nonsense but at least they would get this one night. The payback would evolve into the Fingerpoke of Doom, which we'll get too soon enough.

Overall Rating: C+. The main event aside, this just wasn't interesting at all. Three hours was just too much for the TV shows as you get stuff like Duggan vs. Giant which does nothing at all and the minute long squashes just to fill time with the entrances and such. Once they went to three hours they dug their own graves because the first hour was never good enough to get people to stick around so they put their good stuff in the first hour and then the other two hours sucked and people watched Raw. WCW was dead and didn't know it yet though, especially given the stupidity that they would bring out later on. Good show, but only because of the amazing moment at the end.

Again though, as great of a moment as it was, there is very little gained for it since there was nothing to follow it up with since they blew everything here. Goldberg's win got them one big victory in the ratings, but it didn't make much money when it could have made millions. That's simply bad business and being shortsighted, which is never a good thing.

Also the handling of Goldberg was just awful because do you remember his first title match? It was the following Sunday against Hennig and went less than 4 minutes. He wouldn't have a serious challenge until DDP in October and then would lose the belt to Nash in the idiocy that was Starrcade 98. This was a great moment, but that's all it was. It's a single moment that meant nothing after it because WCW is freaking stupid. This had FOUR DAYS of buildup. See why it made no money and could have made a much higher rating if done right? Great moment, but I don't see how WCW is responsible for much of it, which is their eventual downfall.