

Monday Nitro – September 4, 1995: Let The First Shot Be Fired!

Monday Nitro #1

Date: September 4, 1995

Location: Mall of America, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Commentators: Eric Bischoff, Steve McMichael, Bobby Heenan

So nearly three years after Raw got going, WCW woke up and realized that being on Saturday nights at 6:05 for your flagship show was freaking STUPID so they decided to go head to head with Raw by debuting Monday Nitro. Their first episode aired when Raw wasn't on that week which really was the right thing to do when you think about it.

It's just one hour tonight for no apparent reason, but they manage to pack a good bit in here, including a very important thing that I'll get to later on. This is a show I've seen at least 5 or 6 times so I remember it being not bad. Let's see how it was.

I always liked the intro video for Nitro as it was a street more or less blowing up with pictures of wrestlers and a great song. It really was cool and I liked it better than Raw's for a long time. I don't think anyone knew who McMichael was outside of Chicago, but when did that really bother WCW?

Jushin Thunder Liger vs. Brian Pillman

I can't wait to do SuperBrawl 2 as their match there could rival Bret vs. Owen for best PPV opener ever. Liger is just coming back from a broken leg so he might be a bit rusty, meaning he'll be better than 95% of the wrestlers in the world. Naturally, they start off hot. This is another one of those pairings where it's hard to mess it up. We're two

minutes in and Mongo and Heenan are already calling each other names.

This could be a really long night. Eric is pitching the company like no other which is fine here as it might be the first show for a lot of viewers. We get the surfboard which is a move that I always mark for. Bobby has a great line: "I never go surfing. I always have people do it for me." I love that. McMichael is trying but he's just lost out there. For the life of me I have no idea why they thought he was a good idea.

Liger gets a hurricanrana from the top rope which was a move that no one had seen for the most part. And no, the Frankensteiner doesn't count as it's nowhere near as fast or as crisp. These two were WAY ahead of their time out here as the Cruiserweights wouldn't rise to prominence for over a year. Out of nowhere, Pillman hooks a rollup for the pin.

Rating: B. This is based on being the first match in the new era of the company. They set the pace for the show as they had a fast paced and exciting match. What else can you ask for from a debut match? These two simply didn't have bad matches, which makes sense given their talent and styles.

Sting is ready for Flair.

WCW Hotline ad.

Ad for Batman Forever for the SNES. That game SUCKED. You use Down + R to use the grappling hook yet X and Y aren't used at all. See the problem?

We come back from break to see...hang on I need a moment here. Ok I'm good. We come back to Hulk Hogan at Hulk Hogan's Pastamania. Hulk Hogan had a pasta restaurant in the Mall of America, complete with a dish called Hulk A-Roos. You can't make this stuff up at all. He cuts a generic promo but the kids around him are loving it. The guy was great with kids,

I'll give him that. This was one of the biggest jokes in wrestling history though, but it did show how huge and mainstream Hogan was.

US Title: Sting vs. Ric Flair

I'll give Nitro this: they got the card spot on for the first show. You have a cruiserweight match that's going to be awesome and was, you have this which is more or less impossible to screw up, and Hogan vs. a big man in the main event. They played things safe here and that's all they needed to do. And now we get the defining moment for Nitro until Hall showed up: Lex Luger walks down the aisle and stares at Sting and Flair.

Now that doesn't sound very interesting does it? The thing you have to remember, Luger had been in a WWF ring wrestling the day before. This was the first big shock and since the internet was more or less a non factor for the most part back then, this was a shocking thing. No one knew this was coming and it really did set the tone for Nitro and WCW in the future as Luger was immediately in the main event picture.

The announcers have no clue what to say to this and even though Bischoff knew it was coming, he's playing it off well. Sting was the perfect choice to put on the show here as he had the speed, the power, the mat wrestling ability, the look, the charisma and the talking ability to be remembered really well. He didn't have to do much as he hits his third gorilla press, but the crowd is eating it up. Why mess with what works? Make that four of them.

His strength is overlooked quite a bit. We go to a break and when we come back we have a wide shot of the Mall and it looks VERY cool. It's a three story mall and you have all kinds of people shopping around and we just happen to have a major wrestling show going on. Arn Anderson walks out as Sting misses a splash. Arn and Flair had been having a lot of

problems lately and would finally fight at Fall Brawl.

They play up the shock value to a T here about Luger and the unpredictability aspect of the show. Sting hits a top rope suplex. The announcers' reactions: Bischoff says the ring moved two feet, McMichael says his monitor nearly fell off the table and Heenan says his monitor went black. I wish I was making this up. Flair gets the figure four but Arn comes into the ring for the DQ and he and Flair go at it.

Rating: C+. Again, this is hard to get wrong. It wasn't one of their better ones, but it wasn't supposed to be. It got them in front of a TV camera and showed the fans what they had coming. This was a lot like the debut of a new promotion in a lot of ways as no one really knew what to expect here.

They kind of had to restart a lot of things in the early weeks to give the people a feel for what they were all about. The match was fine and they did their regular good stuff, but this was about angles and not the match and that's fine.

Scott Norton comes out to yell about not being on the show despite having a contract. Savage comes out to yell at him. They set up a match for next week. It's so adorable that Norton thinks he means something outside of Japan.

Sabu is coming. Dang it.

Some guy from Alabama wins a sweepstakes. This took 10 seconds of ring time.

Ad for Saturday Night, featuring a double main event: Johnny B. Badd vs. Dick Slater and Sting and Macho vs. the Bluebloods. And people wonder why the fans were very happy Nitro debuted.

Mr. Wallstreet is coming to WCW. It was IRS going JBL's gimmick. This went badly. He even mentions the IRS. Seriously?

WCW Title: Hulk Hogan vs. Big Bubba Rogers

Rogers is Big Boss Man's 15th or so gimmick. We go to a commercial before Hogan's entrance and we get a SLIM JIM AD! Oh and there's one for Hot Pockets too. Jimmy Hart has stars and stripes pants and a jacket. He looks like a walking barber pole. The fans are going nuts for Hogan if nothing else. What are you expecting here?

It's Hogan vs. big man 101, Like I said earlier they're playing it very safe and that's fine. Bubba gets in his offense and Hogan makes a comeback and slams him before the leg drop ends it in about five minutes. A clean pin on Nitro. That won't happen that often.

Rating: C. It's exactly that: average. There was nothing special here but it wasn't unwatchable or anything. No one was expecting an epic showdown here as it was just Hogan defending his title in a token title defense. Nothing wrong with that.

The Dungeon of Doom which had been feuding with Hogan hit the ring and Luger makes the save. Macho and Sting show up to calm them down. This would be your main event at Fall Brawl. Sting, Hogan, Luger and Savage vs. Shark (Earthquake), Zofdiac (Beefcake) Meng and Kamala. I wonder who wins that.

We go to commercial and see an ad for the Muscular Dystrophy Association which sponsored Fall brawl for some reason. That's just odd. There's also an ad for the Eagles vs. Cardinals game. DAng that would have sucked.

Luger says he wants a title shot. Hogan says sure but says he'll be champion forever and a day. I love delusions of grandeur that almost came true. They make the match for next week and that's it.

Overall Rating: B+. For a debut show, this was great. They advanced a lot of stuff and set up next week and the future pretty well. With only an hour they did quite well but remember there was no Raw tonight. The ratings were good but they lost for a good while. The wrestling was ok and we got

three kinds of matches and angles were advanced so I'd say very good job here. Things would get far worse for awhile though.