

Backlash 2004: Benoit Vs. Shawn In Canada With Earl Hebner As Referee

Backlash 2004

Date: April 18, 2004

Location: Rexall Place, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Attendance: 13,000

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

We're back to the PPV series again and this time it's Backlash in Canada. The main event is a rematch of the main event of Wrestlemania XX with Benoit defending his newly won title against Shawn and HHH. The original is said to be the best triple threat match ever and a lot of the time the Backlash rematches are even better due to the lack of pressure from Wrestlemania. We're also in Benoit's hometown so if he was the favorite in MSG, this is going to be about 10x louder. There's also a hardcore match between Cactus Jack and Randy Orton which is awesome. Let's get to it.

We open with a video about Benoit winning the title at Wrestlemania, as if it could be anything else. The tagline of "and so it begins again" is nice as it's a play off of the Wrestlemania tagline of "Where It All Begins Again."

Shelton Benjamin vs. Ric Flair

Flair is still in Evolution and Shelton is the hot young singles star looking to make a name for himself. He beat HHH twice in a row, once by pin and once by countout. Flair is here to avenge The Game. Shelton takes him into the corner but Flair comes back with his chops and punches. The Stinger Splash misses but Shelton lands on the top rope and gets down unharmed. Benjamin speeds things up and dropkicks Flair to the floor.

Nothing happens out there so we head back in for a thumb to the eye. Flair goes up and you know how that ends. Another thumb to the eye lets

Flair take over but Shelton will have none of that and pounds away on Flair's old head in the corner. Flair takes the knee out and the momentum shifts very fast. He doesn't work on it long and it's time for the Figure Four. Shelton blocks it for a bit but the leg goes down and the hold goes on.

Flair uses the rope to cheat so the hold is broken. A chop gets two. Flair goes back to the knee but gets caught by the Dragon Whip kick to put both guys down. Shelton whips him into the corner and Flair crashes over the top and out to the floor. Flair pulls out a weapon of some sort but gets splashed in the corner. A top rope clothesline pins the Nature Boy.

Rating: C+. This was fine for an opener. Shelton was a rising star at this point and a win over Flair wasn't going to hurt anything. He would get the IC Title by the end of the year and he would become the next big star that never became a big star for various reasons. Still though, good stuff here and fine for an opening match which got the crowd going.

Orton says Shelton is overrated and we should talk about Randy's winning streak instead. Why aren't people talking about him holding the IC Title longer than anyone in seven years? He's beaten legend after legend and tonight it's Mick Foley's turn. Mick is like an old dog that has to be put down.

Jonathan Coachman vs. Tajiri

You read that right. Tajiri misted Coach a few weeks ago, then Coach cost Tajiri a match against Christian. Coach armdrags him down to start and Tajiri isn't sure what to make of that. Coach keeps trying to tie him up but Tajiri keeps firing away kicks. They go to the floor and Tajiri kicks the post to change the flow of the match. Back in and Coach cannonballs down onto the leg and Tajiri is in trouble. Coach hooks a leg bar but Tajiri reverses into a kind of half crab which is pretty quickly broken up.

The leg bar goes on again so Tajiri kicks him in the back. Another to the face and the hold is finally broken up. Coach goes up and gets crotched, allowing a baseball slide dropkick to the back of the head to connect.

Handspring elbow sets up another dropkick and it's rapid fire strike time. Coach grabs a cheating rollup for two. Like an idiot, Coach charges at Tajiri in the corner and is put in the Tarantula for his efforts. Garrison Cage comes out and distracts Tajiri for no apparent reason and Coach rolls him up for the pin.

Rating: D+. You know, this wasn't half bad. There's no reason for it to be on PPV, but the match wasn't all that bad. Coach kept it simple by going after the legs which is the best thing to do against a martial artist so I can't fault him there. The ending was stupid but this was such a big surprise that it wasn't a big deal.

HHH arrived earlier.

We recap Jericho vs. Christian/Trish which was an awesome storyline. It started with Jericho hitting on Trish which turned out to be a bet between Jericho and Christian about whether or not he could get Trish in bed. Trish found out about it but Jericho said that he really loved Trish, which seemed legit. Christian turned on Jericho in a show of tough love and they had a match at Mania. Trish turned on Jericho to give Christian the win. Tonight it's about revenge.

Christian/Trish Stratus vs. Chris Jericho

Evil Trish was HOT. Jericho slaps Christian down and glares at Trish who runs. The chase is on but Christian's sneak attack is broken up with ease. The evil ones have to tag here so the guys start. Jericho hits a vertical suplex and the posing cover (POP) for two. The crowd keeps chanting SL** at Trish and Christian missees a charge to send him to the floor. The springboard dropkick puts Christian on the floor and Jericho stands tall.

Trish can't sneak in a Chick Kick and the guys head back in for a top rope back elbow by Jericho, getting two. Jericho gets sent into Trish but gets draped over the top forp to give Christian control. He does the same thing over the barricade and it's off to Trish. She slaps Jericho and gives us a great cleavage shot at the same time. Chick Kick gets no cover so it's back to Captain Charisma. A quick Walls attempt is countered but Jericho's head winds up between Christian's legs ala Sting.

Jericho comes back with the sleeper drop for two. Trish slaps Jericho, allowing for an elevated reverse DDT out of the corner by Christian which gets two. Trish tries to come in but gets spanked for her troubles. That's a lucky Jericho. Christian hits the Unprettier out of nowhere but Trish's cover only gets two.

Trish tries to come back in but gets clotheslined down. Christian takes Jericho down and now only the referee is on his feet. Trish rolls to the floor and Jericho hits the running hip attack while Christian is in 619 position. Lionsault gets knees and Christian puts on a Texas Cloverleaf. Jericho escapes and tries the Walls but instead he catapults Christian into Trish. The running enziguri gets the pin on Christian.

Rating: B-. Another good match here and it evens the score in this feud as it was supposed to do. This was a very well constructed feud and it made sense all the way through. This would lead to a cage match on Raw where Christian would be hurt, putting him on the shelf for four months. Again I'd like to reiterate: evil Trish is HOT.

Eugene has a magazine and wanders into the women's locker room where Gail freaks out. Regal gets him out.

We get a video about Chris Benoit Day in Edmonton which I think was on Hard Knocks. Benoit's family is here. This is kind of hard to see now.

Women's Title: Victoria vs. Lita

Victoria is champion and is looking good here. Lita tries to speed things up to start but gets thrown to the mat with a kind of armdrag. They both tumble out to the floor which goes nowhere. A bad looking backslide gets two for Victoria. They do a pinfall reversal sequence which goes nowhere. Victoria slams her down and hits her dancing moonsault for two followed by a chinlock. A floatover snap suplex gets two for the champ.

This has been a really slow paced and dull match so far. A surfboard goes on and Lita is in even more trouble. The spinning side slam is countered and Lita knocks her down with some clotheslines. Lita hooks a hurricanrana and then puts on a sleeper which transitions into a kind of triangle choke. That gets escaped pretty easily and the spinning side

slam gets two. Victoria's moonsault misses (as in Lita rolled too slowly and the arms hit her) but the Twist of Fate is countered and a small package retains the title.

Rating: F+. This was one of the worst matches I can remember with the girls in a long time. It was REALLY slow paced and the botches were noticeably bad. The division was in big need of something fresh, which is why we got Lita vs. Trish again, as both of them were just awesome at what they did. Horrible match.

Gail and Molly beat down the other girls post match.

We recap Orton vs. Foley. The idea here is that Orton is young and awesome and Foley is old and not so awesome. Orton was the Legend Killer and Orton wanted to take him out to prove that it was his time now. Foley didn't want to fight and walked away for months, before returning at the Rumble to destroy Orton. Evolution helped Orton out so Foley brought in The Rock to even things up a bit. Evolution won at Wrestlemania so now Foley wants a rematch on his terms: hardcore. Foley says that hardcore is about doing it for the fans, but there's a tiny part of him that enjoys this. He's going to love what he does to Orton tonight.

Intercontinental Title: Cactus Jack vs. Randy Orton

Hardcore of course. Foley comes out as Mick Foley and has the Mankind music, but screw that. He's in Cactus Jack attire and this is a hardcore match. He has the barbed wire ball bat called Barbie with him. Orton holds up a trashcan to defend himself but Foley knocks it out of his hands with the bat. They go to the floor and there goes a cameraman. Orton drop toeholds him into the steps and gets the bat but they fight over it.

Orton gets kicked away but he finds a trashcan from somewhere and cleans Mick's clock with it. Mick shrugs that off and BLASTS Orton with it. Back in the ring and Foley hits the running knee lift followed by a legdrop for two. Back to the floor again and Jack hits a swinging neckbreaker but Orton moves before the middle rope elbow can be used. Randy, who is still in his t-shirt, tries to walk away but Foley chases after him. A belly to back suplex by the champion gets two on the ramp, as does a backslide.

Randy slams Jack's head into the ramp with a THUD for two. Back in the ring (I've been saying variations of that a lot tonight) and Orton tries to drive Barbie into Jack's face, but Cactus counters with a low blow. Here's Socko but Foley isn't sure whether to use that or Barbie. He takes the sock off and Barbie connects with Orton's head. Blood is literally flowing down Orton's face. Another shot hits Orton's head and Foley is in complete control.

Mick pounds Orton down in the corner and hits the running knee to the face. Back to Barbie as Mick has that look in his eyes. Now he just drives the bat into Orton's face and there goes the t-shirt. Foley puts the bat between Orton's legs and drops a leg on it which is just painful in a lot of ways. Mick goes to the floor and pulls out....oh geez he pulls out a gas can and a lighter.

He covers Barbie in gas but here's Bischoff to say do that and the show ends here. Foley throws it down and for the life of me I have never gotten what the point of that sequence was unless it was somehow legit. Either way, Foley throws it down and finds a whole board covered in barbed wire. He knocks Orton near it but Orton comes back with a slam onto the board, drawing a LOUD holy chant from the fans.

The board gets placed in the corner and after some nice reversals on the Irish whip, Foley goes into it face first. With Jack down in the ropes, Orton shoves the board down onto him in a simple but good move. Orton finds a bag full of thumbtacks. The RKO onto them is countered and the look on Orton's face when his back hits the tacks is PERFECT. A rollup gets two for Foley as Orton goes to look for medical attention. Jack will have none of that and they go up the ramp.

They head backstage but come back before we can get a camera back there. Foley throws him off the stage and through a bunch of tables. Since it's Cactus Jack, you know he's gonna drop the elbow onto Orton on top of that. After the referees seem ready to stop it, Foley drills them both and there's the elbow. Mick is a bit too dead to cover though so after the delay, Orton SOMEHOW kicks out.

Back to the ring and Orton looks completely out of it. Double Arm DDT

gets two and Foley isn't sure what else he can do to pull this off. Orton goes to the floor while Foley puts the barbed wire board up in the corner. While he's doing that though Orton gets Barbie from somewhere and lays in a few shots on Cactus. Foley finds Socko and grabs the Claw to stop a big shot to the head with Barbie. A low blow gets Orton out of the hold and the RKO puts Foley down but it only gets two. Another RKO onto Barbie FINALLY gets the pin.

Rating: A. It's not quite as good as the match with Edge but DANG this was great. Orton is now a made man as he somehow not only survived this but he won it. Up to this point he was a pretty boy, much like HHH vs. Jack in 2000 at the Rumble. That seems to be what they were going for here and for the most part I'd certainly say it worked. Foley would go away for awhile while Orton feuded with Edge and then won the title in the fall. Great match here and Orton looked great during the whole thing.

HHH says that Orton has become a legend rather than a legend killer. Also Benoit won't get lucky again tonight and HHH will get his title back.

La Resistance vs. Hurricane/Rosey

This is what we call a filler match to bring the crowd back down. It isn't even for a title. Conway and Hurricane start and the crowd goes almost completely silent. A headscissors takes Conway down and it's off to Rosey. That's really only so he can throw at Conway and it's back to the storm guy.

Conway hits a swinging neckbreaker and powerslam before tagging in Grenier. Grenier puts on a powerslam and here's Eugene. Hurricane tags Rosey as Eugene plays with the flags. Rosey misses a corner splash but Hurricane dives on both French dudes on the floor. Eugene runs the ropes but does nothing else. Eye of the Hurricane gets the pin on Grenier.

Rating: D+. The match could have and probably should have been on Raw, but dang I always feel sorry for the people in this match. They know no one is really interested in seeing them out there but they have to go out and work a match anyway, which no one wants to see and that no one is going to talk about, but they do it anyway. This was fine and Eugene didn't add or subtract anything.

We recap Edge vs. Kane. Edge is back from neck surgery and needs an opponent, so he gets Kane, end of recap.

Edge vs. Kane

Edge has a broken wrist or arm or something too. Edge fires off a right hand (the good hand) for no effect. He gets Kane into the corner as JR is talking about football for some reason. Middle rope clothesline looks to set up the spear but Kane heads to the outside. Kane finally wakes up and rams the bad arm and hand into the steps to take over.

Back in and he hammers on the hand some more as the fans chant that Hebner screwed Bret for the millionth time in this match alone. Lawler amuses himself by singing the Mountie's song Sidewalk slam sets up a missed elbow and Edge comes back with a spinwheel kick. He takes Kane down again but Kane sits up. The referee is sent to the floor so a cast shot to the head and a spear get the pin.

Rating: D-. What a horribly uninteresting match. Edge didn't get out of the funk that he was in for the better part of a year and Kane had to marry Lita to get anything going. I didn't like this at all and I don't think many other people did either. Let's go with this: Tajiri vs. Coach was a much more entertaining match. Let that sink in for a minute.

We recap the main event, which is just a rematch from Wrestlemania but here in Benoit's hometown. It should be entertaining at least and there isn't much else to say.

Raw World Title: HHH vs. Shawn Michaels vs. Chris Benoit

Benoit's pop is INSANE. He puts the title in both of their faces during his entrance which is a nice touch. The champ goes after HHH to start and doesn't want Shawn to get any of the Game for some reason. HHH is sent to the floor so Shawn and Benoit can chop it out. The Game comes back in and hits the flying knee to Shawn. Benoit is thrown to the floor and it's the DX explosion. After a quick fight they knock Benoit back to the floor, drawing a ton of boeing.

Benoit comes back in and hits Germans on both guys. Jerry says it's hard

to see who is doing what to who. No not really King, not really. Shawn gets flipped in the corner and out to the floor to get it back down to two. HHH jumps into the Crossface but Benoit lets it go to stop Shawn. Shawn's back is rammed into the barricade twice to keep him down on the outside. Benoit goes up but HHH punches him in the jaw to slow him down.

HHH loads up a superplex but Shawn makes the save. Benoit literally falls off the top rope all the way to the floor. That's a much scarier sight given what we know now. Shawn drops HHH in an electric chair for two. HHH comes back with a facebuster and Benoit's Swan Dive gets two on HBK. The Game goes to the floor and Shawn's forearm takes out the referee. Shawn goes to the floor now so we get both a Pedigree and Sharpshooter counter. The second attempt at the Sharpshooter works on HHH but Shawn makes the save. His save is countered into the Crossface but there's no referee, so we better let go of the hold right?

Now Shawn puts the Sharpshooter on Benoit and Earl Hebner comes out to be the second referee. Ha Ha Ha it's like Montreal yes WE GET IT ALREADY! Shawn swings at Benoit but gets caught in the Crossface again, only to have it broken up by HHH. A HHH DDT gets two on the champion. Benoit throws him over the corner and it's back to HBK vs. Benoit. Chris gets thrown to the floor, landing on top of HHH.

Shawn tries to dive on the both of them but crashes through the table in a good explosion. Back in the ring Benoit's shoulder goes hard into the post and then it does it a second time. Instead of going after the arm, the Cerebral Assassin puts on a camel clutch. The fans FINALLY drop the Bret stuff and chant for Benoit. HHH pounds away in the corner but gets caught in snake eyes to put him down.

It's basically a one on one match at the moment. Benoit ducks a right hand and puts on Rolling Germans. The Swan Dive misses and there's a Pedigree but HHH's cover takes awhile, allowing Shawn to come back from the dead for the save. With Benoit down, Shawn hits the forearm to put HHH down. The top rope elbow hits but again Shawn can't cover. Shawn loads up the superkick but instead kicks Benoit off the apron to make him PURE EVIL in Canada.

HHH hits a low blow for two on Shawn and everyone is down. Pedigree is countered by a backdrop to the floor but the fans won't cheer Shawn period. HHH comes back in with the sledgehammer, drilling it right into Shawn's back. HHH sets for another hammer shot to Shawn but Benoit makes the save, only to get sent into the steps. The Game sets for a Pedigree onto the steps but Benoit counters with a slingshot to send that nose into the post. Back in, Chin Music is countered into the Sharpshooter and after a LONG time, it's finally over with Benoit retaining by submission.

Rating: B+. I really couldn't get into this one as much as the other one. There was a lot more laying around this time, but this was a different kind of match. This was all about having a Benoit showcase instead of having a masterpiece. Considering the situations here, it's hard to argue with them going that route. It worked well enough here though and it was a great match.

Overall Rating: B. With two very good to great matches here, the rest of the stuff can be overlooked. This was a very Canadian heavy show which is the right idea as, you know, it was in Canada. Unfortunately Benoit would fall through the floor after this because HHH and Shawn decided to completely dominate the show for the summer, having a 55 minute match at Bad Blood. You know, because that's what people are begging for here clearly. This was a show with great parts, rather than a great show if that makes sense, but it's still good.

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