

Monday Night Raw – July 15, 2002: He's Back And He's Better Than Ever

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 15, 2002

Location: Continental Airlines Arena, East Rutherford, New Jersey

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

This is another request and with good reason: EVERYTHING changes here. Well maybe not everything but a lot of things certainly do. First of all there's the debut of the longest running Raw GM tonight, as well as a stable being thrown out completely. For the life of me I can't believe they just threw this out on Raw instead of having it on a big PPV or at least built up or something, but this is WWE in 2002 so the logic is LONG gone. This is also the last Raw before Vengeance 2002. Let's get to it.

We open in the back with Taker glaring at Heyman. Heyman says that the main event tonight was his idea. It's Taker/Brock vs. Flair/Van Dam. Apparently Brock wants Taker on Sunday but Taker says that's the last thing Brock wants. Taker says he makes the next big things disappear. Oh that's GREAT.

Here's Vince to the NWO music. He says that as of now, the NWO is officially gone and that was the last time that you'll ever hear that music. Until it was 2011 and WWE thought we wanted Kevin Nash in the main event. Vince says the NWO era is now history, which is the case of a lot of previous eras. He lists off some eras, which is kind of cool to hear. However, all of these eras have ended because the company needs to change with the times. That's what's happening now, as we're going to have GM's on each show with complete authority. The Raw GM is revealed tonight and he'll give the fans what they deserve.

Flair has no idea who the GM is but no one outside of a McMahon knows how hard this is.

Jeff Hardy/Spike Dudley/Bubba Ray Dudley vs. William Regal/Chris Benoit/Eddie Guerrero

Jeff is European Champion and beat Regal last week to win it. This is also under elimination rules. The other four meet in an elimination tag on Sunday as well. It's a big brawl to start until Spike and Eddie get us going. Spike gets headbutted in the ribs but a VERY fast rollup with an even faster count gets the pin to eliminate him. Bubba comes in with a quick Bubba Bomb but Regal saves. Off to Benoit who gets chopped in the corner but Regal cheats to take over.

Bubba comes back with the dancing punches and an elbow to Regal's head for two. Eddie comes in illegally and is launched to the floor. Off to Hardy for about half a second before Bubba comes in again. Eddie and Benoit go suplex happy and it's Benoit vs. Jeff. Eddie comes in quickly and picks Jeff apart with shots to the back and neck. Regal is now to slow things down before tagging Benoit back in.

A belly to back suplex puts Jeff down and Eddie comes back in for his spinning eye rake. The heels tag in and out very quickly. Regal catches Bubba not paying attention and things break down. Regal brings in the European Title but Bubba gets it away and clocks William for it, but that's a DQ so it's 3-1. Hardy immediately hits the Swanton on Regal to make it 2-1 as we take a break.

Back with Eddie missing a slingshot hilo so that Jeff can cradle him for the pin to get us down to one on one. After some double teaming before Eddie leaves, Benoit hits a German suplex. Jeff gets sent to the corner but comes out with Whisper in the Wind. Eddie comes back out as a decoy, allowing Regal to pop up and knock Hardy out with the brass knuckles. Crossface goes on and Hardy is unconscious to end it.

Rating: B. This was good, primarily for two reasons. First of all it had time to develop. That's very important as it would have gotten annoying to see five eliminations in about a minute. Also, having Hardy lose by cheating was good as you can't have Hardy beat all three guys but you also want to keep him strong. This was very well done and it worked. I could have seen this being on PPV, which is a rarity for Raw.

Post match Benoit and Eddie set up a table but the Dudleys make the save.

Coach has some suggestions for who might be the GM. Some names floating around are Mick Foley, Vince's brother, and Paul Heyman, who pops up after being asked to meet with Vince. Heyman goes into Vince's office and Coach says he'll wait until Heyman leaves. A production chick literally runs in and says the new GM has arrived.

Post break the new GM comes in and Vince is shocked because it's....Shane? Vince says Shane isn't the GM but Shane yells about how bad of an idea this is. Shane knows who the GM is and says that the new guy is a parasite that is going to screw over the company.

Van Dam and Dreamer are in the back talking about the GM stuff. Van Dam is glad it's not Heyman. Dreamer asks about the Van Terminator that Heyman took last week and Van Dam says he had it coming for years. He wants to hit Lesnar for one too. Van Dam leaves and Stevie Richards pops up. He doesn't believe what Tommy has been saying lately so let's make our match a Singapore Cane match. Various jokes are made so here's Goldust for a cameo. Richards hits Dreamer with the cane.

Tommy Dreamer vs. Stevie Richards

Basically there are few rules but Singapore Canes are legal. Dreamer gets in a few shots to start and they head to the floor. Tommy jumps off the steps for a shot to the back of Richards. Stevie gets in a shot to the face (all shots here are with canes unless otherwise noted) and yells at the cane. Dreamer is busted. Richards suplexes him on the ramp but might have hurt his shoulder in the process.

Back inside now for some choking with the cane. Stevie destroys Dreamer with the cane but Dreamer begs for more. Dreamer takes him down and beats on him before hitting a DDT for two. Dreamer goes up for a shot from the middle rope but jumps into a superkick for two. Both guys get canes but Dreamer is quicker and he BREAKS THE STICK over Richards' head. FREAKING OW MAN!

Rating: C+. They knew what they were going for here and the idea worked pretty well: hit each other with some sticks for about four minutes with

some occasional wrestling thrown in. Sometimes that's all that you need and it worked pretty well here. Besides, what else do you expect from these two?

Booker is with Coach (Coach is taller actually) and says that less than a month after he got kicked out of the NWO, the NWO is gone. He feels like celebrating and wants a Coach-A-Rooni. Coach says no and Booker thinks that since Rock is on another show, he's the new announcer abuser. Coach does a HORRIBLE one and Booker rips him apart for it. "You sure you black dog?" Booker is ready for Big Show and does his catchphrase, but Eric Bischoff pops up. Yes, THIS is how they did the reveal.

Here's Vince to no music for some reason. He introduces Bischoff as the new GM in a really underwhelming reveal. Vince and Bischoff hugging on the stage of Monday Night Raw is SO bizarre to see. He comes out to Back in Black for some reason too. Bischoff gets in the ring and says that he's the guy that ran WCW, but not the Invasion version: the REAL WCW. He says he's the guy that Vince was talking about when he mentioned ruthless aggression.

Bischoff was the ruthless one, signing up every big star that WWF had. He signed Heenan and Okerlund just because he could. Eric talks about raiding Vince during the steroid trial and making the war personal. He talks about the tricks that he did during the Monday Night Wars and how that was innovative (if you call stealing stuff that the Poffos did to the Jarretts back in the 80s innovative then sure) which is what made him successful rather than Turner's money.

He talks about Madusa and throwing the belt away which was ruthless and aggressive. Bischoff talks about how he gave away PPV quality main events which is what made Vince change the way he did TV. Then he created the NWO (again, if you call stealing ideas from other companies new then yeah that's true) and beat the WWF 84 weeks in a row. He came this close to putting the WWF out of business.

Then he got a phone call from Vince asking him to run Raw. That makes perfect sense to him because only he could turn this place into a national media powerhouse. The one piece of talent he wanted but could

never get was HHH. You know, the guy he HAD under contract and cut. Great eye for talent there Eric. People like working for him and it's not just about the money. Bischoff is going to put the E in WWE.

Ok so some quick thoughts on this. First of all: WHERE WAS BISCOFF DURING THE INVASION??? If there was a single person PERFECT for running that, it was Bischoff. Apparently he was available at a reasonable price eight months later, and with Flair and the NWO being available three months after Survivor Series, could there be a better leader for a prolonged Invasion? Of course there was: Shane McMahon. Don't you get the connection?

Second, this wasn't the best opening promo in the world. All he said was that he was going to bring HHH to Raw, which is fine in theory but he spent about ten minutes explaining stuff to people that likely didn't care. See, this is one of the BIG problems with the way modern wrestling works: sometimes this behind the scenes stuff works, but this was a good wrestling show so far and they stopped it for this. Yeah this is a huge moment, but talking about "history" is only so interesting to a crowd that doesn't care about a lot of it. This was a good shock value moment, but I'm not wild about the execution.

Women's Title: Trish Stratus vs. Molly Holly

Molly is defending. The champ gets a quick DDT after jumping Trish for two. Trish comes back, pounding away in the corner and hitting the Stratusphere. Chick Kick hits for two. The handspring elbow is countered into a victory roll for the same. Molly hits a backbreaker for two and Trish starts coming back. She loads up Stratusfaction but gets suplexed down. That and feet in the ropes get the pin to retain. This was nothing.

Flair runs into Bischoff in the back. Bischoff wants to bury their past issues but Flair is skeptical.

Booker T vs. Big Show

NWO fallout. Booker tries to fire away in the corner but Show easily overpowers him. A big delayed vertical suplex puts Booker down but an elbow drop misses. Booker rams him into the corner and superkicks him

into the ropes. The side kick puts Show down and a clothesline puts both guys on the floor. Show's running knee hits the steps and Booker's chair shot misses. Back in the ring Booker has a chair taken from him and Show shoves the referee down for the DQ.

Rating: D-. What in the world was the point here? Oh I got it: to push Big Show because we haven't done that before. Booker was always getting the shaft in WWE as he had the chance to become the guy that was pushed out of the NWO, but instead it's Big Show that gets the push. Don't you see the logic there?

Big Show beats him down with the chair and chokeslams him through the table post match.

Brock is lifting a piece of the set in the back because he can. Heyman seems glad that Bischoff is here. Apparently they have a plan about Undertaker.

A WWE employee has died. Apparently he worked in merchandise.

Hardcore Title: Bradshaw vs. Christopher Nowitski

Bradshaw is defending of course. Chris offers to lay down and be pinned but of course he tries the small package which only gets two. Bradshaw clotheslines him to the floor and the beating begins. Christopher gets taken down with a HARD steps shot and Nowitski runs into the crowd. They head to the backstage area and Bradshaw keeps killing him. And here's Johnny The Bull to hit Bradshaw and steal the title. Unique no?

Big Show and Bischoff chat in the back. It's Booker vs. Show in a street fight on Sunday.

Johnny The Bull comes in to brag to Bischoff and loses the title to Bradshaw in the process.

Taker warns Brock not to screw with him.

Brock Lesnar/The Undertaker vs. Ric Flair/Rob Van Dam

Taker is WWE Champion and is teasing a face turn. Van Dam is facing

Lesnar on Sunday for the IC Title. Flair is here because he might be the top face on Raw. Flair and Taker start us off and Ric is easily overpowered. They head to the corner so Flair can chop him and take over. Van Dam gets a blind tag and a top rope cross body for two. Taker misses a running big boot in the corner and Van Dam fires away with kicks.

Rob kicks the leg and you know that's the call of the Nature Boy. Figure Four goes on very quickly but Taker easily sits up and chokes his way out of it. A low blow gets Naitch out of it and the old school beating begins. There's the chokeslam for two and it's off to King Brock. Lesnar throws Flair around and uses the power shoulders in the corner. He hits the multiple backbreakers and Taker gets in a shot as well. Taker comes in legally so he can pound Flair down in the corner. The jumping clothesline puts Flair down but he comes back with thumbs to the eye.

For no logical reason Flair goes up, but at least they mix it up this time and it's a superplex instead of the traditional slam. Off to Lesnar who pounds on Flair some more and hits a powerslam. Brock charges into the post and Flair manages a suplex to get the hot tag. Van Dam cleans house and hits Rolling Thunder on the tagged in Dead Man. Missile dropkick and split legged moonsault put Brock down for two. Flair breaks up the Last Ride attempt but walks into the F5. While Brock is down he takes the Five Star, but the Last Ride ends Van Dam for the pin.

Rating: C. Just a main event tag match here. I'm really not sure why they had Flair in there as Taker was defending against Angle and Rock on Sunday, but that's what happens in the opening days of the Brand Split I suppose. Not a terrible match but it didn't really change much for the most part.

Bischoff calls Rock to try to steal him to Raw to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. This show dragged its way across the finish line but it worked for the most part. The first hour was great but after the Bischoff announcement it got down to what made Raw boring in 2002: so-so matches and boring stories with older guys getting pushed to the top. Lesnar wasn't ready yet but he was coming quickly.

Here's Vengeance if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2012/07/26/vengeance-2002-the-great-one-is-still-great/>

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