

Monday Night Raw – March 20, 2000: The Wrestlemania Main Event Two Weeks Before Wrestlemania

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 20, 2000

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

Something you'll often hear me criticize is a company giving us a match that was on PPV a few days or weeks earlier away on free TV. This show is the opposite of that case, as we're less than two weeks from Wrestlemania 2000 and the main event of tonight's show is going to be the scheduled main event for the biggest show of the year. Let's get to it.

This was a request from a colleague of mine named Adam King. Check out his site at <http://kingsrecaps.wordpress.com/>. He has some very good Raw, Smackdown and Nitro reviews that are worth checking out.

We open in the back with Vince and the Stooges. Cole comes up to ask about rumors of a big announcement, but Brisco talks of a tag team elimination tournament tonight. There are going to be tag matches all night with the winners facing off in a battle royal. The winners are #1 contenders. Vince has another major announcement for later though. Since there were WWF guys on Saturday Night Live two days earlier, LIVE from Chicago, it's Monday Night Raw!

X-Pac/Road Dogg vs. Hardy Boys

I miss the King of Rock theme they used to have. Apparently this is the debut of that song. This is part of the aforementioned elimination

series, the first of four matches in the series. Pac and Matt start things off and Matt gets his head kicked off very quickly. Matt comes back with a powerslam and back elbow before the tag is made to Roadie and Jeff. Jeff sends Road Dogg to the floor and hits a modified baseball slide which gets two back in the ring.

Roadie makes a brief comeback but Jeff knocks both members of DX down with ease. It's back to Matt but he walks into a spinwheel kick from Pac again. Off to Road Dogg again but a DDT lets Matt tag Jeff again. Poetry in Motion hits Road Dogg and Pac is sent to the floor. And here's Kane who wants to kill X-Pac at the moment. Tori, the chick that left Kane to be with X-Pac, tries to save. In the commotion, it's Twist/Swanton to Road Dogg for the pin to send the Hardys to the battle royal.

Rating: C. Good choice for an opener here as the Hardys were fast paced and awesome at this point and DX was able to keep up with them. The Kane stuff had been going on for a long time and would finally be blown off at Mania. It's amazing how much more developed the tag division is at this point than it is in modern times. There are enough teams for an eight team series to face the champions. Think about that.

Tori gets chokeslammed post match.

HHH and Stephanie are here with something to say. Speaking of good music, My Time was another awesome song from this era. HHH demands respect before he'll get to the point. He says he'll beat Big Show and Rock at Mania, but tonight Vince says he has a match that will rock the foundation of the company. "If it's that big, I have to be in it." HHH was awesome in 2000. He calls Vince out to announce the match but he gets Big Show and Shane instead.

Shane says that the big announcement must be HHH vs. Big Show one on one for the title. HHH says no because he doesn't have to defend the title until Wrestlemania. The champ says he'd do it but Big Show doesn't deserve it. This brings out Vince who announces that tonight it's HHH vs.

Big Show vs. Rock for the title, meaning the Wrestlemania main event is happening tonight. Apparently HHH has to say yes so Vince goads him into it, but only if this match never takes place again, meaning no rematch at Wrestlemania. Vince says kiss the title goodbye.

Rock is just getting here.

Godfather vs. Big Boss Man

Good night Godfather is over like free beer in a frat house. Boss Man and Buchanan charge the ring and both guys beat down Godfather. No match.

DX wants to know what in the world HHH is thinking. His response is making Rikishi vs. Kane.

Too Cool vs. Dean Malenko/Perry Saturn

Another Series match. Too Cool clears the ring before they even take their jackets off. Scotty and Dean get things going and the pace starts very fast. Dean is hip tossed down and Scotty moonwalks into a tag. Dean kicks Grandmaster in the face and it's off to Saturn who is armdragged down and punched in the face. A splash in the corner misses Saturn and the Radicals take over.

Saturn puts Grandmaster on his shoulder and rams him chest first into the buckle. A superplex is blocked and Grandmaster hits a middle rope dropkick for two. Off to Scotty who is clotheslined down by Saturn and suplexed by Dean. The Radicalz change again without a tag because they're evil. Saturn goes up but gets knocked down by Scotty and it's off to Grandmaster again. Everything breaks down and Scotty loads up a double Worm, only for Eddie to break things up. A weak tiger bomb from Dean looks to set up the Cloverleaf but Grandmaster superkicks him for the pin to advance.

Rating: C-. Sorry for all the play by play in this but it was as much of a paint by numbers match as I've seen in a very long time. It wasn't a bad match or anything but it wasn't interesting for the most part with both teams just doing their thing. That's the usual problem with tournaments: there's no story to the individual matches and you get stuff like this a lot of the time: technically fine but not that interesting.

Kane vs. Rikishi

These two will be teaming up against Road Dogg and X-Pac at Mania for reasons that seem to be unclear to everyone. Rikishi has a bad ankle although it's good enough to hit a Samoan Drop on Kane. Not that it matters as Kane chokeslams him down, only for DX to run in for the DQ.

Rikishi beats up DX almost on his own but the numbers catch up with him.

Benoit doesn't like Angle and is going to prove his hatred for Kurt by beating up his #1 contender, Chris Jericho.

Rock doesn't feel anything about the main event. He does however feel that Cole should suck on a monkey's nipple. "What are you waiting for? Go find a monkey!" Rock says bring it tonight if we're having the main event for Wrestlemania tonight. He's always ready no matter when it is so let's do it.

Angle comes out for commentary.

Chris Benoit vs. Chris Jericho

Jericho runs his mouth before we get going and Benoit jumps him from behind. They fight on the floor and then inside as Kurt says he'll defend the title in a triple threat. Benoit takes over with a backbreaker for two. Jericho counters a belly to back suplex into a cross body for two of his own followed by a butterfly backbreaker for the same. Benoit suplexes

him down again to get the advantage back and a clothesline gets two.

Off to a chinlock which doesn't last long. Jericho tries to fire off some punches but Benoit knees him in the ribs and drapes him over the top rope. Jericho ducks a clothesline and hits the flying forearm to put Benoit down. Bulldog gets two for Jericho and he dropkicks Benoit to the floor. Benoit gets in a fight with Angle and walks into a dropkick from Jericho. Angle throws Benoit back in and hits him with a belt, allowing Jericho to hit the Lionsault for the pin.

Rating: C+. Not the best match these two have ever had but any combination of these two and Angle is always worth checking out. Their triple threat was a great match and set up a whole summer of these guys fighting each other. The ending helped set up the three way in a few weeks so there was some long term value to this as well. Good stuff.

Post match here's Bob Backlund for no apparent reason. Jericho beats him up but walks into the Angle Slam.

Backlund and Angle celebrate in the back.

Head Cheese (Al Snow and Steve Blackman) have an odd moment with Benjamin Franklin. That's not a metaphor or anything. A guy in a Franklin costume comes up and talks to them.

Holly Cousins vs. Al Snow/Steve Blackman

I can't call them Head Cheese in good conscience in a match. Snow and Crash (Hardcore Champion) start in match #3 of the Series. Crash tries to get on Snow's shoulders but gets caught with some headbutts instead. The Champion (Crash is the only one in the match) catches Al with a rana but Blackman kicks him in the back and comes in. Back to Snow as Lawler tries to explain hip hop music to JR.

Off to Hardcore who slams Snow and everything breaks down. The Hollies seem to screw up a double flapjack and here comes Taz with a referee. He beats Crash into the crowd which is somehow not a DQ and the tag match is now a handicap. Blackman kicks Snow down and we cut to the back to see fans trying to see the Hardcore Title stuff. We cut back to see Blackman holding Holly over his knee as Snow hits a middle rope legdrop for the pin to advance to the battle royal.

Rating: D+. The Hardcore Title constantly made matches a mess and this was no exception. The Hollies were former tag team champions but that was never really talked about for the most part. Head Cheese was a comedy team and it worked for awhile but thankfully they dropped it relatively soon after this. This wasn't much of a match due to stuff other than the match getting the focus.

Edge/Christian vs. Acolytes

Christian dives on both Acolytes as they come to the ring. He and Bradshaw starts and the Canadian gets his head kicked off to give Bradshaw the advantage. Farroq comes in with a spinebuster for two and Christian is in trouble. A very weak clothesline puts Christian down again but he comes back with a reverse DDT. Here's Mideon who wants to be in the Acolytes and it's off to Edge who takes Farroq down with a top rope clothesline. Everything breaks down and Mideon hits Bradshaw with a mop by mistake, sending Bradshaw into the Downward Spiral from Edge for the quick pin.

The four teams are the Hardys, Edge/Christian, Too Cool and Snow/Blackman.

Test vs. Val Venis

Trish is with Test and debuted last night, selecting him as her first talent. Val gets an early advantage but walks into a full nelson slam. That doesn't seem to have much of an effect as he pounds on Test in the

corner, only to be whipped into the other corner incredibly hard. The pumphandle slam is countered by Val into what I think was a botched belly to back powerbomb of some kind. Trish gets up on the apron and unbuttons her coat to show Val her abs, allowing Test to roll up Val and use trunks for the pin.

Post match Val beats up Test until Albert makes the save, I guess officially forming T and A. Trish gets a mic and calls her boys off Val and names the team. Test gives her perhaps the most awkward hug ever and that's it.

Video of Rock hosting SNL this past week. This was a huge deal as the first time had been to promote the original Wrestlemania with Hogan hosting. Rock got to show off some actual talent though, including singing a bit. Big Show, HHH and Foley were there too.

Tag Team Battle Royal

Hardy Boys, Edge/Christian, Al Snow/Steve Blackman, Too Cool

The winners get the Dudleys at the PPV and the champions are at ringside. Everything goes nuts to start with Too Cool having an early advantage. Scotty hits the Worm on Blackman and is thankfully eliminated by Snow, meaning Too Cool is eliminated. Edge dumps Blackman so we're down to two teams in about a minute. Jeff takes down Edge but Christian takes down Jeff. Matt takes down Edge and Jeff Swantons Christian but Edge spears Jeff. Then the Dudleys get in and hit 3D on Edge and Matt. It's table time and Jeff is powerbombed through Christian through a table. The match ends with no winner.

WWF World Title: The Rock vs. HHH vs. Big Show

HHH is defending. We start fast with Rock taking Show down for two and a slam gets the same on HHH. Rock knocks HHH to the floor and Vince decks

the champ. Rock Bottom gets two on Big Show as HHH saves. He gets sent to the floor again and this time Rock follows to hammer on him. Rock and HHH fight into the crowd and Show eventually follows with right hands to the Brahma Bull.

Back to ringside with HHH being thrown into Big Show. They head back into the ring and Rock is double teamed down into the corner. Show chokes away as HHH directs traffic. HHH drops a knee on Rock's head (clearly missing by a good four inches) for two. While Big Show is arguing with the referee, Rock fires off some right hands on HHH but the Game punches him down.

Out to the floor again with HHH being sent into the steps but he goes back inside and is immediately stomped down by Show. A low blow keeps Rock down and one from HHH is just cruel punishment. HHH clotheslines Rock down and it's finally time for the bad guys to get in a fight. You knew it was coming. Big Show beats on HHH but it allows Rock to come back with right hands for the champ and a DDT on Big Show.

A Samoan Drop gets two on HHH and the crowd is getting WAY into this. Chokeslam takes Rock down but HHH makes a last second save. A facebuster puts Show on the floor and HHH follows, only to get chokeslammed on the outside. Rock hits a spinebuster on Show but Shane hits Rock with a chair to break up the Elbow. Vince takes Shane down but HHH hits Vince and takes a chair from him. The chair goes upside Show's head and the Pedigree retains the title for HHH.

Rating: B-. This was energetic and pretty fun but it's a very good thing they didn't go to Wrestlemania with this as the main event. The way they went wasn't much better, but at the end of the day the only match that would have worked would have been Rock vs. HHH. Still though, for a Raw main event, this was certainly fine.

HHH and Stephanie are leaving and here's Linda. She announces that the main event of Mania is now a fourway including Mick Foley. One thing I

never got: why should Rock and Show be involved still? They lost clean to HHH here as triple threats are no DQ, so why should they get the shot again? Anyway, Foley's pop is off the charts and he beats up HHH to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. Not only did we have a show long competition which would eventually set up a triple threat ladder match, but we literally got the Wrestlemania main event on Raw. What more can you ask for from a free TV show? The return of Foley was HUGE and the whole show came off like it was leading up to the biggest and most important show of the year, which is exactly what they were shooting for. Very good stuff here.

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