

Monday Night Raw – April 1, 2002: Only An April Fool Would Like This Show

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 1, 2002

Location: Pepsi Arena, Albany, New York

Attendance: 9,000

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

This was requested for some reason that I can't remember. It's the first show after the Draft and Flair is officially in charge. I'm assuming that's the reason, but why anyone would want to see a show from 2002 is beyond me. Anyway, the main thing tonight is finding out where Austin is signing, and considering that pretty much EVERY face of value is on Smackdown, the answer shouldn't be that hard. Let's get to it.

If you're interested in seeing how this show was set up via the Draft, here's the review of it:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/10/11/monday-night-raw-march-25-2002-first-wwf-draft/>

We open with Flair in the back holding the Undisputed World Title. He says this is the beginning of a new era and he's going to do everything he can to ensure Austin signs with Raw. Also he's going to present the new title belt to HHH.

Across the Nation debuts as the new Raw theme song.

The Titantron is the tilted one now instead of the regular rectangle. I think you call that a parallelogram.

Intercontinental Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Booker T

Rob is defending. The idea that everything is new is being pushed strongly here. Feeling out process to start with Rob taking over via a hurricanrana. The stepover spin kick puts Booker down again but Rob charges into a hot shot to give Booker control. A knee drop sets up a chinlock by the challenger as things slow down. Van Dam comes back with some forearms and a monkey flip followed by the top rope kick for two.

Booker gets in a shot to the ribs but the ax kick misses. Rolling Thunder misses as well and there's the Spinarooni and a side kick for two. The twisting sunset flip out of the corner gets two and a superkick puts Van Dam down. Booker loads up a superplex but gets knocked off and the Five Star retains the title. That was a quick ending.

Rating: C-. This was pedestrian to put it best. The match wasn't bad or anything but it felt like they were just a step ahead of going through the motions out there. It's not a bad match or anything like that, but even for a TV match this wasn't that good. The ending didn't help anything either.

Post match Eddie Guerrero returns after being off TV for almost a year earlier to beat up Van Dam.

Here's Vince because he was gone from Raw for over six days and that's too long. He's here to pitch to Austin about coming to Smackdown. Security comes out but Vince won't leave, so here's Flair. Vince says money will talk with Austin so Flair throws Vince out. Vince won't leave, so Flair says he'll get Austin to come to Raw and we get a poll from the audience. Vince still won't leave so Big Show comes out and carries him to the back. This accomplished nothing other than wasting about five minutes.

After a break we see more of Vince being carried out. What is the point of this? Vince has a mic with him for no apparent reason. He tries to

take it back but Show literally throws him out of the building.

William Regal vs. Spike Dudley

Regal is European Champion but this is non-title. Regal is doing the brass knuckles thing at this point and slips them into a turnbuckle. Nick Patrick steals them back when Regal isn't looking, so I'd bet on a fishy ending. Regal pounds Spike down with ease and beats him up for a bit with Spike trying to use speed where he can. A half nelson suplex sends Spike to the floor which goes nowhere. Back in Regal goes for the knuckles but can't find them. Spike hits the Dudley Dog out of nowhere for the pin.

Rating: D. Another dull match here as no one cared about the European Title at this point. Not that the title was on the line, but it set up a rematch for the belt next week which Spike would win before dropping it back to Regal a month later. The title would be gone in July so it's not like this mattered for the most part. Nothing match either.

The NWO goes to what used to be the APA's office and take it over. Keep in mind that the APA broke up on Smackdown and left their office in disarray and it's in the same kind of disarray here on Raw, even with the cards on the floor.

Crash tells Bradshaw what just happened and he's not pleased. Jackie leaves with Bradshaw and no one cares.

Trish is getting ready by bending over when Terri comes in. Trish is on the cover of the Divas magazine and Terri isn't happy. Flair comes in and makes a paddle on a pole match.

Debra is outside Austin's locker room and says Austin will decide tonight.

Bradshaw tries to beat up the NWO but the numbers catch up with him.

Hardcore Title: Raven vs. Bubba Ray Dudley

Raven is defending. Bubba takes over to start and drops some elbows before sending Raven to the floor. Our first weapons: a bag of oranges. Bubba stops to juggle and then blasts Raven in the head. Bird Boy comes back with a crutch and we head back inside. The Bubba Bomb is countered by a low blow and Raven beats on Ray with trashcan lids. A sleeper from Raven is countered by a stop sign shot as Lawler talks about the paddle match. Apparently the girls will be in bikinis.

Ray gets two off a Samoan Drop but Raven sprays him with a fire extinguisher while Bubba is loading up the backsplash. Ray doesn't get down though and after a trashcan lid shot to Raven, the backsplash ACTUALLY HITS but only gets two. Not that it matters as the Bubba Bomb gets Bubba the title a few seconds later.

Rating: C. To give you an idea of what the Hardcore Title was doing in 2002, Ray won his first title here and would win his seventh before May. The title would change hands over 140 times in 2002, and it was retired in August. Think about that for a minute. Anyway, this was the start of Ray being built up over the summer before being fed to Lesnar and HHH, which probably was the right move.

Vince is on the phone in his limo. He says he's not leaving and he's signing Austin tonight.

Here's Flair with the Undisputed Title to present to HHH. Flair talks about how important the title is and asks HHH to come out here but instead it's Undertaker. He doesn't like what's going on here because Flair is insulting him by doing this. Taker says he should be champion because he beat Flair at Mania. Uh...ok. The fans give him the WHAT chant so Taker says to say what if you like to sleep with your own sister. Audience: WHAT! Note to self: don't go to Albany to pick up women.

Oh wait there's another reason Taker should be champion: he beat HHH at

Mania, a year ago to the day actually. Taker thinks that's showing him up and disrespecting him. The big man takes off the coat but here's HHH. I've always liked the Undisputed Title but the big eagle one, as in the Attitude Era title and the Big Gold Belt are just perfect looking.

HHH says he's the champion and that Taker can't beat him again. Taker asks for a title match at Backlash and HHH says it's on. HHH wants to fight now but Taker bails. The match would never happen because Smackdown got the first title match on PPV. Obviously that begs the question of why this segment took place, and the obvious answer is it's 2002 Raw.

Hardy Boys vs. Mr. Perfect/Big Bossman

That's quite the heel team. The Hardys' music sounds faster here. Apparently it's just Boss Man now. Jeff is sent to the floor and the two dead guys double team the brothers. Boss Man and Matt start with the Hardy in trouble. Boss Man misses a charge in the corner and starts drooling. Off to Jeff and the Hardys botch a double team move on Boss Man. To say this isn't clicking is an understatement. A spinebuster from Boss Man gets two on Jeff as Matt saves. Perfect is sent to the floor and the Twist/Swanton pins Boss Man.

Rating: D. This was probably the worst Hardys match I can remember in years. They just weren't clicking at all out there and the match was a total mess. It's hard to suggest that Perfect and Boss Man were the problem as they aren't known to be sloppy. Nothing to see here at all and the match basically sucked.

Post match, Brock Lesnar comes out and destroys the Hardys. He had only debuted two weeks ago so this was still new stuff.

Terri vs. Trish Stratus

Paddle on a pole. They're in bikinis and I think you can figure this one

out for yourself. Trish wins in like 80 seconds. Nothing of note happened in between.

Molly comes out and beats up Trish with the paddle before Terri can get spanked. This is a heel turn for Molly.

Vince still can't get back inside.

Austin wants Flair to let Vince in the building so he can hear Vince's pitch.

We get a clip from Smackdown with Rock, Hogan and Kane getting ready for a six man. Kane: "Rock are you ready tonight?" Rock: "Well..." Kane: "IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU'RE READY!" Rock's reaction is priceless, as is his reaction when Kane calls his fans Kannanites.

Kane vs. X-Pac

Pac attacks in the corner but Kane slams him down with ease. A gorilla press has X-Pac bouncing off the mat but he comes back with an enziguri to take Kane down to his knees. A sidewalk slam from Kane looks to set up a top rope clothesline but a distraction from Hall stops the big man. We head to the floor so the NWO can double and triple team Kane which somehow doesn't get noticed by the referee.

Back in and Kane launches X-Pac through the ropes on a kickout, which is the problem with X-Pac wrestling guys Kane's size: it's almost ridiculous to think the offense is going to work. A missile dropkick puts Kane down and with Hall's help, the Bronco Buster hits. Kane powerslams Pac down after shrugging off the offense and hits the top rope clothesline. Not that it matters as the NWO runs in for the DQ before the chokeslam hits.

Rating: D+. I know the guy is talented, but man alive I'm not a fan of X-Pac against bigger guys. This just didn't work at all, just like their

matches in 1999, as it's hard to buy X-Pac as a physical threat to Kane when Rock can barely knock the guy down. Nothing to see here and the NWO never went anywhere on Raw.

Bradshaw makes the save post match. Kane's pyro takes like 15 seconds to go off for some reason.

Vince is back inside.

Here's Flair with a contract to offer Austin. Vince comes out with a contract of his own and I don't see this being much of interest. Vince talks about his intellectual sperm inventing pro wrestling (I kid you not he actually said that) and talks about inventing Pay Per View 16 years ago (it was 17 when their first PPV aired but whatever). Austin finally comes out to shut Vince up.

Vince immediately sucks up to Austin by praising the new WHAT shirt. Austin doesn't care but asks about Vince's contract. We get the WHAT stuff for a bit when it was still relatively new. Austin reminds Vince of all the issues they've had in the past and asks Flair if Flair wants Austin to come to Raw. After doing his best Daniel Bryan impression and saying YES about ten times, Flair gets nowhere. Both offers intrigue Austin but he agrees to sign with Vince. Vince gloats but Austin reminds him that it's April Fool's Day and there's a Stunner for Vince. Austin and Flair drink, Flair gets stunned, Austin signs with Raw to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. Read those last two paragraphs. That took almost thirteen minutes to get through. That sums up this whole show: a lot of time being wasted with almost nothing at all being accomplished. Raw in 2002 was nothing but a nightmare with Austin being the only top face on the show and he was a shell of his former self. The Brand Split took a long time to work and it never got to a point where it was great at all. Terrible show here with short and bad matches and an ending that doesn't mean much of anything, given how obvious it was that Austin was coming to

Raw.