

Monday Night Raw – December 28, 1998: We Close It Out With Shawn

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 28, 1998

Location: Pepsi Arena, Albany, New York

Attendance: 11,928

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

It's the final episode of the year and it only took me two years to get through 1998. I don't remember what happens here, but my guess is that it's not as good as what happens next week. Tonight we're likely going to have more on Kane joining the Corporation and what the next move for DX is. Also there's a turn coming but I'm not sure if it happens tonight or not. Let's get to it.

We open with the Corporation saying they're taking care of Mankind tonight. They go looking for him in what looks like the boiler room and after awhile Mankind runs out and jumps one of them. You can't see anything because of the lighting but eventually the numbers get the better of him. Vince shouts that Mankind is fighting for the Hardcore Title tonight. Also Vince is going to fire Michaels when Shawn gets here. Ok then.

Hardcore Title: Road Dogg vs. Val Venis

That's not a misprint. The winner of this faces Mankind for the title later tonight. Val does the same joke he did every December: this leg is Christmas and the other is New Year's, so come see me between the holidays. The important thing though: he got to say it, which is more than a lot of people can say today. Val jumps him to start but Roadie comes back to a big reaction. After a minute or so of not much, here's the Corporation to surround the ring. Test comes in and bulldogs Val for a DQ. In a Hardcore Title match. Love that Russo!

Val gets destroyed on the floor until DX comes out for the save. Vince comes out to the stage and says Roadie gets to defend against Mankind. As for the rest of DX, they're all going to pay. As soon as Shawn gets here, he's fired. So basically we're reiterating what was said five minutes ago.

Al Snow is still covered in blood from last week.

Kane gets a member of DX tonight.

Al Snow vs. Edge

Edge has his more familiar music now and comes through the crowd instead of doing the circle of fire entrance. Snow goes off on Edge on the floor to start but stops to have another psychotic break. Back inside and Edge pounds away, causing Snow to shout LOOK WHAT I'VE DONE. Snow slams him down and hits a moonsault for no cover. He heads to the floor and gets a chair but Edge drives Snow chest first into the chair instead. Snow comes back with the headbutts to Edge's chest before hitting Edge with Head for the DQ. Typical Snow insanity.

The Brood and the JOB Squad get in a fight post match.

Dennis Knight (Phineas Godwin) is here for no apparent reason.

Women's Title: Sable vs. Spider Lady

A fan comes into the ring to give Sable a yellow rose. The fan would later be named Tori and she would mean nothing until she became X-Pac's girlfriend. Spider Lady is a reference to an incident called the Original Screwjob. Wendi Richter had been Women's Champion back in the 80s and was facing a masked woman named Spider Lady. It was actually Fabulous Moolah in a mask and Moolah shot on her and took the title, basically throwing Richter out of the company because of a real life contract issue.

Spider Lady destroys Sable before the match and there's no bell. Sable gets whipped by a belt until the Oddities make the save. Spider Lady is unmasked as Luna. No match but I guess this is what passes for a lower card swerve. If ten people in the arena got the reference, I'd be shocked. Luna says it's about her.

European Title: X-Pac vs. Big Boss Man

Power vs. speed here with power controlling to start via a powerbomb to counter an X-Pac rana. Off to a bearhug to the champion which is broken pretty quickly. Pac misses a charge in the corner and crotches himself on the middle rope which gets two for the challenger (Boss Man). Off to a chinlock followed by a backbreaker for no cover for Boss Man. Boss Man misses a top rope splash and Pac kicks him down a few times. The Bronco Buster hits and here comes the Corporation. Val Venis also comes out for the save and it's a DQ win for Boss Man.

Rating: D+. This was barely long enough to rate and that's what holds it down. Boss Man is a good size opponent for X-Pac as he's a big guy but not big enough that it's ridiculous like Big Show or Kane. Val coming in was a nice touch as he has a reason to be mad at the Corporation after what happened earlier tonight. This could have been a bit better with some more time.

We get a Vince training montage with him drinking raw eggs set to a Rocky sounding song.

Goldust/Steve Blackman vs. Jeff Jarrett/Owen Hart

This feud will not end. Jarrett and Goldie start things off and Jarrett gets two off a powerslam. Goldust comes back with a clothesline and loads up Shattered Dreams but Jeff escapes thanks to Owen. Jarrett goes after the arm and hits a double clothesline with Owen's help again. A LOUD nugget chant breaks out and there's the tag to Blackman, who is immediately taken down by an enziguri and a spinning heel kick for two. There's the Sharpshooter and here comes Dan Severn in a neck brace. The distraction lets Godlust roll up Jarrett for the pin. Another nothing match in a nothing feud.

The Acolytes are kidnapping Dennis Knight and put him in the trunk of his own car before driving off in it.

Intercontinental Title: HHH vs. Ken Shamrock

The crowd is all over Shamrock to start. HHH hits an atomic drop and

neckbreaker to send Shamrock to the outside. Cole goes into an explanation about rights of free speech and taking obscene signs away for some reason. Shamrock hits a spinning elbow to take over but HHH comes back with a gordbuster and a baseball slide to take out Test. Shamrock gets in some shots to the knee and HHH is down.

HHH comes back with a hard whip into the corner and a right hand to the back of the head. The jumping knee takes Shamrock down but it hurts HHH's knee even more. There's the facebuster but HHH has to take out Boss Man. The distraction lets Shamrock put on the ankle lock but HHH makes the rope. Shamrock won't let go and it's a DQ.

Rating: C+. This was REALLY hot while it lasted with the fans losing it on every move HHH hit. The ending sucks but it's almost 1999 so you can't expect a clean finish. The DX vs. Corporation feud went on for a long time until the Ministry rose up to be the real villains in the whole thing for awhile.

DX comes out for the save until Kane reluctantly clears the ring.

Shamrock and Gunn yell at each other.

Here are Henry and Brown with something to say. Henry apologizes to Chyna for what happened and says it was completely wrong. He gets down on his knees to beg her to come back but he gets PMS instead. They say they have plans for Henry but Brown says back off. Cue Chyna who gets in PMS' faces and says stay away from her man. Brown is STUNNED and Henry starts jumping up and down. Jackie makes fun of Chyna and gets choked down for her troubles. She says she'll see Mark later and smiles a bit.

The Corporation is looking for someone.

We look at the year in review, which is pretty well done. It's a highlight package from the whole year. There's a long section on the Cell and I can't argue a bit with that. Austin vs. McMahon gets a lot of time as well.

The Corporation is destroying....the Godfather? Apparently he's facing Billy Gunn next and that's not cool.

Billy Gunn vs. Godfather

There's no Godfather so here's his replacement.

Billy Gunn vs. Kane

Kane is here against his will because he was let out of the insane asylum on the condition that he helps the Corporation. Billy goes after him but gets pounded into the corner. Billy hits the yet to be named Fameasser out of nowhere but Kane is up first. A clothesline puts Kane on the floor and here's Shamrock with some cheap shots on Billy, including the ankle lock. There's the chokeslam but Brisco says do more. There's another chokeslam but Patterson asks for another. HHH and X-Pac run in for the save and the DQ.

Rating: D. This was a squash with another dirty ending. That's the same kind of thing you get in almost every match and it's really tiring after awhile. I know Russo likes this kind of stuff but it's hard to sit through and it's only going to get worse next year. Billy never had a chance in this.

Rock comes out for commentary on the main event.

Hardcore Title: Mankind vs. Road Dogg

Shawn arrives with like fifteen minutes left in the show. The match is joined in progress after a break. Rock rips into both guys and is on fire tonight. Roadie is in control to start but the Cactus Clothesline puts both guys on the floor. They head up the ramp with Mankind in control, hitting a suplex on the stage for no cover. Mankind pulls out a table and suplexes it onto Roadie for two.

Road Dogg takes over and they head back towards the ring. That lasts for about two seconds as Mankind drops him face first onto the apron. Mankind pulls out a toolbox but it gets knocked out of his hands. Some cookie sheet shots put Mankind down as security puts a rowdy fan down. Back inside a chair to the back puts Mankind down as does a Russian legsweep onto the chair which gets two. Mankind comes back with a pulling piledriver for two and takes over again.

Another piledriver on the chair gets another two and we head back to the floor. They head into the crowd and Mankind knocks him behind some hockey boards. A shot with a monitor misses Road Dogg and he knocks Mankind through a production assistant into some boxes. Mr. Socko comes out of nowhere and the Claw puts Roadie down as Rock leaves the announce table. Mankind drops an elbow on Roadie on the table but Rock lays out Mankind with a Rock Bottom on the concrete, allowing Road Dogg to get the pin to retain.

Rating: C+. This was when they were starting to get the Hardcore Title formula down and it got a lot better. Road Dogg turned out to be really good at this stuff and the matches were entertaining enough to keep the fans fired up. This was mainly to set up Rock vs. Mankind though which would be a big deal the next week.

Road Dogg is mad about winning it like that. He didn't see the Rock Bottom when he got the pin.

Here's Vince to fire Shawn to end the show. He calls out Shawn who doesn't seem angry or nervous at all. Vince talks about making Shawn Michaels and then hearing Shawn say he didn't need Vince anymore. We get a clip from March of him saying just that, talking about how Vince needs Shawn. Then last week Shawn held back the Corporation while Shane was getting beaten up. Vince says he doesn't lay down for anybody and fires Shawn as Commissioner. Shawn superkicks Vince to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. This one dragged a lot because there's really only one major angle going on for the whole show. The DX vs. Corporation feud was going on strong but they had a BIG change the next week which changed everything for the company. It's also my all time favorite moment in wrestling so that makes it even better. Not a great show here but it wasn't terrible.

That's all for 1998 and somehow it took me two years to get through it. The company had spent most of 1997 growing up and they reaped the benefits of it this year. Once the spring hit, there was nothing WCW could do to hold back the eruption that the WWF was having. With DX and Austin rising up and taking the wrestling world by storm, there was no

way this company wasn't going to go straight to the top. They took over and they kept the pressure on WCW for months on end. The next year would be the year when the WWF put their foot on WCW's neck and pressed hard, but we'll get to that soon enough.

I'll be starting 1999 soon and I've already done the first episode. Here's next week's show if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/04/24/monday-night-raw-january-4-1999-foley-wins/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews