

Monday Night Raw – August 26, 2002: The Beginning Of Modern WWE

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 26, 2002

Location: Madison Square Garden, New York City, New York

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

It's the night after Summerslam and for once a lot has happened. Lesnar is the new world champion and Rock is gone until about February. On top of that, Shawn beat HHH but HHH destroyed Shawn post match, likely ending his career. Naturally that's not what happened but at this point that's the working theory. Also tonight we have a big change at the end of the show which set up things to be like that are in modern times. Let's get to it.

Here's Bischoff to open the show. He talks about how historic the show is going to be tonight, talking about things like the Hardcore title being unified with the IC Title and the presentation of a lifetime achievement award to someone. But first, here's the new world champion Brock Lesnar, along with Heyman of course. Heyman is very proud to be in MSG but says that Lesnar is a bigger deal than Sammartino, Graham and Hogan combined. He told us this would happen, but none of us would listen to him.

Heyman lists off all the things he said would happen and says maybe now the fans will listen to him. Brock gets the mic and says that he's only 25 and he's already world champion. He says no one can beat him...and here's Shawn Michaels? Oh wait it's HHH screwing with us. Ok HHH doing the Shawn dance is funny stuff. HHH insists Shawn is gone forever and will never get in the ring again.

Remembering that Brock is still in the ring, HHH says that he wore down

Rock last week for Lesnar, and now HHH wants the title shot that he himself said Lesnar should give him. Brock takes the belt off and HHH asks if Brock is man enough to play the game. Well we know he's man enough to have a boring match with HHH that main evented Summerslam in 2012 but we'll get to that later.

Cue Undertaker to get in on this shindig before the boring begins. Taker says he should get the first shot at Lesnar, who doesn't object at all. HHH jumps Taker and it's a two on one beatdown for a few seconds before HHH stares at Lesnar some more. Taker jumps them both and knocks HHH to the floor before slapping Lesnar and kicking him out as well. HHH gets back in but bails a few seconds later. Lesnar looked like a total afterthought here.

Eric makes HHH vs. Taker for the main event for the first shot at Lesnar.

Booker T vs. Christian

This is one of those "tag teams are feuding so here's a member of each in a singles match" deals. Booker takes Christian down to start but the Ax kick misses. The reverse DDT gets two for Christian and the Canadian takes over. We hit the chinlock and there's the USA chant. Booker comes back with some elbows and a spin kick for no cover. The spinning sunset flip out of the corner gets two but Christian rolls him up for two with his feet on the ropes. Another elbow puts Christian down and Goldust takes out an interfering Storm. Unprettier is countered into the ax kick for the pin for Booker.

Rating: D+. Nothing much here as it was already known that Booker and Goldust were the more entertaining team, but for some reason the title change didn't happen last night. This was your usual Raw match where not a lot was changed, which would be the case for these guys for awhile. The titles would change hands two more times before Booker and Goldie got them, which caused the crowd to not care when it happened.

We get a video from some political event from earlier in the day.

Christian yells at Storm in the back when Test shows up. He's got something planned involving an American flag.

Bubba Ray Dudley/Spike Dudley vs. Christopher Nowitski/William Regal

Molly is with Regal and Chris for some reason. Actually we get a video of HORRIBLE acting of Chris asking Molly to come to the ring with him. Apparently Chris wants to get lucky. His words, not mine. Bubba and Chris start things off with Bubba pounding away in the corner. Off to Spike with a top rope double stomp, one of the moves that always makes me cringe. Regal and Molly crotch Spike on the post and it's almost immediately the hot tag to Bubba who cleans house. Molly tries her Molly Go Round but winds up taking What's Up instead. Spike throws in a table but before it's used, the Bubba Bomb pins Regal.

Rating: D. Another nothing match here which appears to be a theme tonight. The new version of the Dudleys never worked at all and the original team would reunite at the Survivor Series, in this same building actually. Nowitski was all character and no substance, which is the same problem someone like Sandow has to overcome today. This is one of those matches where the best thing you can say it as least it was short.

Nowitski keeps Molly from going through a table so Regal goes through it instead via a Bubba powerbomb (since the Dudley Dog didn't work).

Bischoff talks to a special guest that we can't see. That's up next.

Molly thanks Chris in the back and gives him a hug.

The special guest is Jimmy Snuka who is here to receive a lifetime achievement award. We get a highlight video from his career which is pretty cool stuff. Eric presents him with the award but keeps cutting

Jimmy off. Bischoff says the magic words: 3 minutes. Snuka's eyes bug out in a funny visual but here are Jamal and Rosey for the big beatdown on Jimmy.

While Jimmy is being taken out of the ring, here's Jericho to put him in the Walls of Jericho. Jericho runs his mouth about how he should be receiving the award. Jericho compares Snuka to Ric Flair who he made tap last night. Flair was in the ropes so it didn't count but why let that get in the way of a good story? Since Flair interrupted the concert last week, Jericho is going to sing New York New York right here acapella. It's a little modified but what are you going to do? We take a break and come back with Jericho STILL singing. He's finally interrupted and we get this.

Chris Jericho vs. Jeff Hardy

Jericho takes him down to start with a suplex but Jeff pounds away in the corner to take over. The Canadian misses a dropkick and gets catapulted out to the floor. Jeff hits a HUGE dive to take Jericho out before running the barricade, only to charge right into a powerslam. Back in and Jericho hits a backbreaker before choking Jeff with his hanky. Jericho puts on a bow and arrow to stay on the back, making sure to tell the referee to ASK HIM.

Jericho stays on the back as Jeff isn't selling as well as he usually does. He's just kind of laying there instead. Jericho hits a backsplash for two and an uppercut puts Hardy down again. Jeff's comeback lasts for about two punches before Jericho hits a sleeper drop to take him down for two. Chris goes up for something off the ropes but jumps into a dropkick before we can figure out what it is.

The Whisper in the Wind puts Jericho down and Jeff starts using his standard stuff. Hardy's sunset flip is almost countered into the Walls but Hardy escapes into a small package for two. The Lionsault hits knees and it's the Swanton for two as Jericho grabs the rope. Hardy tries a

standing rana on Jericho for no apparent reason and there's the obvious counter into the Walls. Jeff gets the rope but Jericho won't let go of the hold, drawing a DQ.

Rating: C-. It was clear at this point that Jeff needed to take a break as he was doing nothing but signature stuff and had no fire in him at all. Thankfully that's what he did soon into the new year, leaving the company for like four years. Jericho was trying here but he had nothing to work with across the ring.

Flair doesn't make the save.

Heyman and Lesnar don't care who Brock faces at the PPV.

Test is going to burn an American flag later tonight.

Apparently that's right now as here are the Un-Americans to burn an American flag. They load up the blowtorch, Kane's pyro and music hits, Kane doesn't come out, so Goldust and Booker make the save. They get beaten down, Lawler gets up to save it but now Kane comes out. Gee that first time was pretty stupid wasn't it? Kane is noticeably slimmer here as he would be for a few more years. JR says that's an American chokeslam, even though it's a Spaniard chokeslamming a Canadian. Kane also has the half mask now, meaning he can say he's going to properly do a Spinarooni, which he actually does. Ok then.

Hardcore Title/Intercontinental Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Tommy Dreamer

This is a unification match in the series of "let's get all the titles together so HHH can be CHAMPION OF EVERYTHING" title unifications. This will be under Hardcore rules and is allegedly the final hardcore match ever on Raw. JR says these two have wrestled in "other promotions." You guys OWN THE COMPANY. I think you can say the name. They take it to the mat to start with neither being able to hit anything. It's a standoff and

the fans chant for ECW.

Van Dam hits some running shoulders to the ribs in the corner and a Russian legsweep gets two. We head to the floor with Dreamer pulling out a ladder. Van Dam superkicks it into Dreamer for two and sets the ladder up like a bridge between the ring and the barricade. Dreamer tries to bulldog Rob off the apron onto the ladder but Van Dam shoves him face first into the ladder. FREAKING OW MAN!!!

Rob puts Dreamer on the barricade and jumps off the ladder to kick him in the face. Van Dam picks up a chair and heads back into the ring to crush Dreamer with the chair for two. The split legged moonsault hits chair but Dreamer's DDT onto it is countered into a northern lights suplex for two. There's the DDT but not onto the chair which gets two as well.

The ladder is brought back in and a side slam onto the ladder has Van Dam in trouble. Dreamer's middle rope elbow hits only ladder and the Rolling Thunder onto the ladder onto Dreamer gets two. Dreamer gets crotched on the ladder, kicked with a chair and Frog Splashed for the pin.

Rating: C+. Entertaining enough but did anyone believe that Van Dam wasn't winning this? That's ok I guess but it would have been nice if this had been Jericho or someone like that. As for this, the match didn't work all that well but it wasn't terrible I guess. Van Dam would lose the title to I think Jericho soon after this.

Here's Stacy to say she's going to keep Trish from interfering in the next match. Howard Finkel says, and I quote, "Right now you're interfering with something in my trousers." My childhood is scarred forever.

Lillian Garcia vs. Howard Finkel

This is part of some Fink is a chauvinist deal and it's a tuxedo vs.

evening gown match. The winner is permanent ring announcer for Raw. Howard says she looks good but he thought hookers were banned from this city a long time ago. This goes as well as you would expect. Howard says blondes like her should be on their backs. Stacy and Trish come in and strip Howard down to give Lillian the win.

Some guy named Criss Angel is going to live underwater for 24 hours. Ok then.

HHH vs. Undertaker

The winner gets the shot at Lesnar. Naturally it starts as a big brawl on the floor with HHH taking over. We head inside for the bell and a countered Pedigree. Taker pounds away in the corner and hits the jumping clothesline for two. HHH kicks him in the face and gets glared at. Old School hits for two and Taker pounds away and hits the Snake Eyes but the high knee blocks the big boot. Out to the floor and Taker's knees go into the steps.

HHH pounds away on Taker's head against the barricade as this is clearly not going to last long. The Game pounds away even more and it's off to a sleeper because that's what HHH wanted to make a big move. This thing goes on FOREVER until Taker suplexes him down. They slug it out with Taker getting the advantage again. The referee gets squished because that's EXACTLY what this match needed. A big boot puts HHH down and there's the chokeslam, but here's Lesnar for a distraction. HHH hits Taker low but the Pedigree is countered. Lesnar knocks out Taker with the belt and HHH steals the pin for the title show.

Rating: F. It went eight and a half minutes and it was so boring I could barely stand it. A minute of this was spent in a sleeper and the rest was either punches or signature stuff. When you have Undertaker and HHH in there, anything worse than a watchable match is a failure. It's amazing how much better these guys got over the years.

Stephanie is in the back and Eric tries to throw her out, but she's here to say that Lesnar is exclusively on Smackdown, setting up the need for two world titles. Oh and that last match means NOTHING.

Overall Rating: D. And so it begins. Next week HHH would be handed the title that Sheamus currently holds because the world wants more HHH more than anything else. The problem with that is HHH in 2002 and 2003 was pretty awful, barely being able to pull out a good match if his life depended on it. Anyway, this was a pretty dull show with Lesnar being treated like nothing and the whole show being about HHH. Bad show, making last night an anomaly for the year.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews