

Monday Night Raw – September 22, 1997: One Of The Best And Most Historic Raws Of All Time

Monday Night Raw

Date: September 22, 1997

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

Attendance: 14,615

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Vince McMahon

This is yet another request but in this case there's at least a great match on here. We've got HHH vs. Cactus Jack in a street fight which is considered one of the better hardcore matches of all time. They would go on to have one of the best matches of all time period in the same arena in about two years and three months, so this is pretty much an appetizer for that. Also there's something happening for the first time ever here. Let's get to it.

We open with a video on the history of the WWF in Madison Square Garden. According to this, Gorilla vs. Sammartino sold the place out SEVENTEEN STRAIGHT TIMES. That's NUTS. Really cool video here.

Intercontinental Title Tournament First Round: Rocky Maivia vs. Ahmed Johnson

He isn't quite the Rock yet. Commissioner Slaughter comes out behind the Nation to make sure there are no shenanigans. The winner of this gets Farroq next week in the semi-finals. Johnson knocks Rock to the floor and launches him to the corner via a choke. Maivia finally gets a breather and hits that spinning DDT of his for two. Captain Lou Albano wanders out and takes some notes. Ahmed runs over Rocky again but gets

thrown to the floor by Rocky.

Rock, being the ham that he is, does Ahmed's pose which would be a bit more intimidating if Rocky's trunks weren't a bit bejeweled. Ahmed gets whipped into the steps and his hand is sliced open. That may have been an old wound that just got exacerbated here. Rocky keeps pounding away but gets caught in a spinebuster by the original Ezekiel Jackson. They both hit shoulder blocks at the same time and go down as the fans boo. Back up and Ahmed easily hits the Pearl River Plunge (tiger driver) for the pin to advance.

Rating: D+. Nothing much here but I was always a fan of Johnson's. The guy was a monster who was allegedly going to win the WWF Title but he couldn't stay healthy. Granted with him not around things wound up going pretty well with the whole Border War thing so it's hard to complain much. Rocky would get a lot better as I'm sure you guessed.

Here's Austin and the place ERUPTS. He's up in the crowd and promises to beat someone up tonight. That's it. It didn't take twenty minutes. He didn't have to cut some big promo. It took a minute and we know that he's going to go after someone. LEARN THIS WWE!

We get a stupid commercial for a lazer tag thing with Sable on a secret mission or something.

Floyd Patterson is here. Look him up rookies.

We recap Shawn winning the European Title from Bulldog at One Night Only in England, which was pretty much Shawn pulling a political move and taking the title which he didn't need from Bulldog because he could and wanted to stick it to the Hart Family.

Speaking of Shawn, his next major match is inside something called Hell In A Cell. Here's his opponent for that: the Undertaker. This was an

awesome and perfectly done feud as Shawn was guest referee back at Summerslam and accidentally hit Taker in the head with a chair, costing him the world title to Bret. Taker wanted revenge but Shawn kept running. The solution? Lock them inside Hell. Vince conducts the interview and says the winner of the match gets Bret at Survivor Series.

Taker says that he can never rest in peace, which is bad for Shawn. He'll enjoy watching Shawn burn though. Cue Shawn who says that he thinks the WWF is trying to give Shawn the shaft. He talks about being put in a no win situation again and that's not cool with Shawn. He's won every title there is in the company, and therefore he doesn't lay down for anyone. Michaels is going to be ready and all Taker has to do is show up.

Sunny comes out to be ring announcer.

Legion of Doom vs. Farrooq/Kama Mustafa

During the LOD's entrance, we get what can only be described as a bizarre scene from FOX News Now with the LOD in full gear doing a weather forecast. Animal and Kama start things off and trade power moves until Animal hits a powerslam to take over. Off to Hawk vs. Farrooq and it's more trading of the power moves. Back to Kama so Hawk can hit his jumping fist drop. Everything breaks down and the LOD both hit clotheslines on Farrooq in the corner. They load up the Doomsday Device but the rest of the Nation runs in for the DQ.

Johnson tries to make the save but the Nation is too big so the referees have to break it up.

We get a classic moment of Snuka's cage dive.

Intercontinental Title Tournament Semi-Finals: Owen Hart vs. Brian Pillman

Owen has a restraining order against Austin so he comes out with a big group of security guards. Pillman has possession of Terri here and has her all sexed up. In this case, that's a GOOD thing. Her as a reluctant woman here is a good look for her and the story was supposed to be that Terri was going to leave Dustin for Pillman, but Pillman would be dead in 13 days. Pillman claims to have broken his arm while changing positions with Marlana (Terri) last night so he has to forfeit.

Slaughter comes out and says he knows nothing about a broken arm and hasn't seen an x-ray or heard anything from a doctor. He throws the mic to Pillman and Brian catches it with the arm in a sling, so the match is on. Both guys keep over dramatically breaking in the corner and going at about 1/3 of their usual speed as we take a break. During the break, Marlana apparently hit Owen with her purse and things got a bit more intense. Pillman gets two off a clothesline and they collide when both try cross bodies...and here's Goldust for the DQ. Too short to rate but Goldust hit Owen so he's in the finals.

Post match Austin charges in and attacks Owen. Vince says don't arrest Austin and gets in the ring to yell. Vince tells Austin that people care about him and that he needs to go with it. Austin gets the mic and cuts a pretty famous promo, saying that he's the best in the world and there's nothing Vince can do about it. Vince has told Austin to work within the system, but Austin wants nothing to do with the system and for the first time ever, Austin hits the Stunner on Vince, launching perhaps the greatest feud in company history.

Bulldog Bob Brower, a legendary wrestler in Kansas City, died over the weekend.

Hunter Hearst Helmsley vs. Dude Love

This is falls count anywhere, which means hardcore for all intents and purposes. HHH wraps a chain around his hand but Dude pops up on the monitor. Love says that the pinfalls in the hot dog stands aren't his

thing, but he knows someone that does dig them, and he brings in Mankind to talk to him. Mankind says he isn't up for this, so here's Cactus Jack. They're all on the same screen at the same time talking to each other, which is some awesome trick photography. The end result is this.

Hunter Hearst Helmsley vs. Cactus Jack

MSG, in a word, explodes as this is the first time ever that Cactus has been in the WWF. The ECW chant starts and Cactus hits HHH with a trashcan and a swinging neckbreaker on the concrete for two. Cactus pounds away some more but Chyna hits him in the back and clotheslines him into the crowd. HHH and Cactus brawl into the back and the camera follows them through the curtain. Notice how much more realistic this makes things, as there's no camera waiting there for them.

HHH rams Cactus into a wall for two and heads back into the arena, but Cactus pulls out a fire extinguisher and blasts HHH into the barricade. The railing is broken down and they head into the ring only to send HHH over the corner and back out to the floor. Cactus tries the elbow off the apron but hits the trashcan from the beginning. Chyna sends him into the steps and we take a break.

Back with HHH beating Jack with a mop and snapping his neck over the ropes to send Jack to the floor. They both head to the apron and Cactus kicks HHH low to send him to the floor. There's Cactus' old running sunset flip off the apron for two. Chyna hits Cactus with a chair and gets glared at, but HHH shoves Cactus into Chyna (not knowing she's there), crushing Chyna against the steps.

The guys fight up the ramp and HHH hits a suplex on the steel for two. HHH finds another trashcan to blast Jack in the head with and there's a snow shovel for more shots to Jack's back. The fans want a table but they get HHH slamming Cactus' head off the steel instead. NOW we get a table, but it's more like a slab of wood on legs. It's bending as they get on it and a low blow breaks up the Pedigree. Cactus hits the pulling piledriver

through the table and pins HHH to a BIG pop.

Rating: A. This is the match that basically introduced the WWF to hardcore wrestling and the relationship worked well for the next...oh five years or so, with these kind of matches almost always being around in one form or another. On top of that, it was AWESOME with Cactus going insane and HHH channeling the inner evil that would define his character for years to come. This would also be blown away by the same match in the same building in January of 2000. Also note that JR sold this like a war was going on, which you never get anymore.

Video on some sweepstakes.

Andre the Giant slammed Big John Studd at the first Wrestlemania.

We look at the Stunner again. I know it looks bad, but that makes it better as Vince shouldn't know how to take a move because he's an announcer/owner.

More stills from One Night Only with Shawn beating Bulldog.

Here's Shawn with the chair that started everything with Undertaker. Shawn says he's going to tell us a story about how he became the first and only Grand Slam Champion. Oh cool I love stories about backstage politics. That has to wait though because Shawn wants Undertaker out here right now first. We take a break and come back with no Taker. Taker finally comes out and is immediately blasted from behind by HHH, allowing Shawn to hit Taker with the chair again. Rude joins in and it's a big beatdown along with Chyna. Taker shrugs it off and chases them off with the chair. The Cell sounds good right about now.

Bret Hart vs. Goldust

Non-title even though Bret is WWF Champion. Before the match, Bret says

he doesn't care who wins in the Cell because he's not afraid of Taker and he wants to get his hands on Shawn. Goldust is all ticked off because of Pillman and pounds Bret into the corner to start. A clothesline gets two for Goldie but Bret grabs the arm and kicks at Goldust's leg. Goldust comes back with a rake to the eyes and a slap to the face, but Bret takes the leg out again and goes to work on it as only he can. Or Ric Flair too but this is New York so most people don't care.

Bret flips off a fan and bends Goldust's leg around the rope. He snaps the leg over and puts the Figure Four on around the post. Referee: "LET HIM GO!" Bret: "WHY?" Shawn pops up on the ramp and we take a break. Back with Bret working over the leg even more with some punches to the knee. Goldust comes back with a suplex as Shawn is conducting the crowds' chants about Bret.

They slug it out (Bret and Goldust, not Shawn and the fans) but Bret goes right back to the leg and cannonballs down onto it. Goldie kicks Bret over the top and we head to the floor for more brawling. Bret gets sent into the steps and back inside the bulldog gets two, but Goldust charges into a knee in the corner. The Sharpshooter ends this quick.

Rating: C+. This was one of those matches where you knew who was going to win all along, but they at least had some energy out there. This was around the last time that Bret would ever be motivated in his career, as once he hit WCW it was clear that he didn't care anymore at all. Goldust was in over his head here but didn't do badly at all.

Shawn immediately charges the ring and the brawl is on. HHH and Chyna come in for the beatdown but Owen and a limping bulldog come out as well. Rude and Neidhart come out and cancel each other out, but heeeeeeeere's Taker. House is cleaned and Taker chokeslams Shawn and Bret at the same time to end the show.

Overall Rating: A. Not only did we get a great and famous match, not only did we get a famous moment, but I want to go watch Bad Blood now. AWESOME

show as the WWF is starting to click again after coming off the awesome Border War (seriously, check that thing out. It's AMAZING) and WCW is starting to slip a bit as everything is building to Starrcade, but they're sputtering along the way. Great show here and one of the best episodes of Raw ever.

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