

Monday Nitro – July 22, 1997: Maybe The Show Should Be On Tuesday More Often

Monday Nitro #97

Date: July 22, 1997

Location: Jacksonville Memorial Coliseum, Jacksonville, Florida

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Bobby Heenan, Tony Schiavone, Larry Zbyszko

This is a special show on a Tuesday for reasons that weren't given. Anyway the main event tonight is a match I remember pretty well for some reason as Benoit and Flair challenge the Outsiders for the tag titles. Other than that we get to hear if Luger's challenge to Hogan for a title match at Road Wild is accepted or not. Let's get to it.

We open with the Nitro Girls of course. They're certainly better looking than Tony and Larry.

Here are Hogan and Bischoff to really get things going. They have a microphone and are standing in the ring, so Tony deduces that they obviously have something to say. You can't buy analysis like this people. They decide to lay down on the mat and take it easy for this interview. Hogan says that most of the people in this arena and in the back are here because of him. Now that we're in the 90s, he sets the pace for wrestling.

Hogan talks about how Konnan is another step of the way closer to world dominance. I wouldn't exactly call it that but it's his company I guess. Luger wants what Hogan has, because Hogan is the best. Hollywood says he's smarter than Luger is and he wants him in a title match one on one. He accepts the challenge for Sturgis. Hogan seemed to be rambling a lot more than usual here which is weird for him. He may sound crazy most of the time but he usually makes it sound decent.

Konnan vs. Tsubusa

I can only find two other matches for Tsubusa, both of them in six man tags in Japan. He's a masked guy with a shiny cape and that's about it. The 187 and Tequila Sunrise make Tsubusa tap out in about 25 seconds.

TV Title: Ultimo Dragon vs. Steven Regal

No entrance for either guy and Regal is defending. The champ cranks on Dragon's arm but Dragon speeds things up to escape. Dragon has the awesome black and gold attire on tonight so you know he's going to be on his game. Regal gets kicked hard by his challenger before doing his headstand in the corner. Steven takes him down and pounds away on the mat before putting dragon on the top, only to get taken down by a sunset bomb. A reverse suplex puts Dragon down so Dragon comes back with the kicks and a Dragon Sleeper to win the title out of nowhere.

Rating: C+. Dragon is one of those guys that had the skill in the ring and was better than most of the other cruiserweights, but the lack of personality always held him back. Now that being said, this was solid stuff because it was what Dragon was best at: matches where he had someone solid to work with and you got a good match out of it in the process. Solid stuff here, especially for a four minute match.

Here's Flair to announce who the next Horseman is going to be. The choice is....Syxx? Yeah that Syxx. Syxx comes out and makes fun of the Horsemen for being old (the announcers actually bought Syxx as the new member of course) and Flair says Syxx almost cost him his job. Ric belts him in the face and Benoit comes out to stand between Syxx and Flair. Syxx promises Outsider revenge and that's that.

More dancing.

Giant vs. Great Muta

They circle each other for a bit, Giant no sells some dropkicks and grabs Muta by the throat, and Muta mists him for the DQ.

The NWO (Vincent and Savage in this version) comes out for a beatdown but Giant shrugs them off. Luger comes out to help but Giant grabs him for a chokeslam...but puts him down before he chokeslams him. He was blind for that fight and the near chokeslam on Luger. I'm not entirely sure what the point of the Luger stuff was there.

Dean Malenko vs. Steve McMichael

Mongo throws him down to start as we hear about the Nitro Parties, which is exactly what it sounds like: a bunch of people watching Nitro and filming it. Mongo puts on a headlock followed by a shoulder to take Dean down, but a knee drop misses. Steve blocks a sunset flip out of the corner and hits a kind of World's Strongest Slam for no cover. Malenko comes back with a good German Suplex which pops the crowd a bit.

Another powerslam kind of move puts Dean down and here are Debra and Jarrett for a distraction. Mongo goes after him but gets guillotined on the top rope, allowing Dean to hit a dropkick and one of the worst looking small packages of all time (Mongo's fault) for the pin. This was supposed to be an upset because of the size difference, but does anyone buy Mongo as a bigger talent/star than Dean?

Rating: D. The best way to sum this match up is in four words: Mongo bad, Malenko good. Really that's all there is to it. McMichael tried but he just never got better no matter how long he was in the ring for. He couldn't even get rolled up without it looking terrible. When Dean Malenko can't carry you to a decent match, it's clear you're not that good.

Post match Gene asks Malenko why he's associating with Jarrett. Dean doesn't answer because Mongo comes up. Security takes him off and Jeff pitches a partnership idea to Dean. Malenko says ok and Debra runs her

mouth because WCW feels we haven't suffered enough tonight. Jarrett runs his mouth a bit more and apparently Dean is going to think about it some more.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Hector Guerrero

Hector takes him down with a headscissors but a dropkick misses. Eddie starts stomping but we head to the floor for a chase. Back in and Hector uses a side roll to roll Eddie around the ring about four times for two. Eddie comes back with some biting but another headscissors sends him to the floor. Hector hits a big plancha on the floor but back inside, Eddie powerbombs him down and hits the Frog Splash for a fast pin.

Rating: C. This is the same problem I've mentioned before: Hector is a talented guy, but other than his name, he doesn't mean much to most WCW audiences. I get what they were going for here with the sibling rivalry thing but it's hard to care here because Hector isn't a guy we know as far as his stuff in WCW goes.

Post match Dean comes in to beat up Eddie. He puts him in the Cloverleaf but Hector breaks it up. Dean then beats up Hector as well.

Hour #2 begins with no pyro again.

JJ Dillon says he's got a major talent acquisition to announce. Dancing Stevie Richards comes up to say that he's signed a contract. JJ wants to talk about Raven so Stevie says he needs to go see Raven in the front row. Dillon offers Raven the contract, saying that everything he wanted is in the deal. Raven is confused but Richards says that he negotiated Raven's contract himself. Apparently Bird Boy is almost making as much money as Richards and gets a rental car with a tape deck. Raven goes on another rant and rips up the contract. Oh and he hits Richards too.

Lex Luger vs. Scott Norton

Bagwell and Vincent are here with Norton. Luger hits a hip toss to start but Norton comes back with a clothesline to take over. Luger comes back and here's the NWO run-in to give Lex the DQ win.

Luger cleans house and Racks Vincent. Lex talks a bit until Hogan comes out to exchange some brief insults.

The Outsiders arrive and Konnan is here to meet them.

La Parka/Psychosis vs. Mortis/Wrath

Tonight it's Hall/Nash vs. Benoit/Flair, presumably for the titles. Before the bell, we cut to the back to see Hennig and Flair talking. Apparently it was supposed to be Hennig coming out earlier when Syxx appeared. Wrath and La Parka start things off with the skeleton man (La Parka) taking over with some kicks. He goes up but jumps into an elbow so it's off to Psychosis vs. Mortis. Mortis stomps away in the corner but Psychosis breaks free and goes up....and falls without being touched at all. Ah the perils of live TV.

Psychosis comes back with a dropkick and everyone falls to the floor, where La Parka hits a big corkscrew plancha to the floor. Psychosis slides in to try to dive on Wrath, only to get caught and slammed onto the floor. Mortis suplexes Psychosis back in for two but misses a top rope backplash. Onoo and Vandenberg get in a fight, as do Wrath and La Parka. Psychosis rolls up Mortis for two but there's no referee to count. Wrath picks up Psychosis for a powerbomb and Mortis makes it a powerbomb/neckbreaker combo for the pin.

Rating: C+. This was WAY better than you would have expected and got pretty entertaining by the end. The botch was bad but it happens every now and then and there's almost nothing you can do about it. La Parka and Psychosis didn't look like jobbers here, but rather a tag team that got beat by a better one. This was a surprisingly fun match and I liked it way more than I was expecting to.

Post match La Parka breaks a wooden chair over Mortis' back but Wrath kicks his head off to stand tall.

Buff Bagwell vs. Booker T

This is before Booker means anything as a singles guy. Buff armdrags him down and things speed WAY up, resulting in a hiptoss to take Booker down. He immediately spins up and kicks Bagwell down to take over before knocking Buff to the floor. Back in and Bagwell chokes away a bit and slaps Booker in the back of the head. A clothesline turns Booker inside out for two.

Bagwell and referee Nick Patrick get in a shoving match and Bagwell hides in the corner. HHH and Earl Hebner used to do the same spot at house shows. Booker comes back with a big forearm to the face and some atomic drops for no cover. The Harlem Side Kick gets two but Patrick gets hit in the side of the head. Norton clotheslines Booker down and the Blockbuster gives Buff the pin.

Rating: C-. Bagwell was a low level NWO guy but he had a pretty good finisher which I would like to see make a comeback as someone signature move. Booker would get way better in the next year or so before becoming the company's top star in just a few years. Decent match here but it was a little boring.

Mysterio is here on crutches, saying he's refused surgery on his bad knee. He talks about how he's not scared of anyone or anything, but here's Konnan to kick the crutches away. Some luchadores come out to defend Rey but Konnan says he's got the Wolfpack watching his back.

Curt Hennig vs. Michael Wallstreet

Wallstreet is still doing his "I hate WCW thing". Of all the people you waste an idea like that on, you pick Wallstreet? The fans want DDP who

hasn't been here tonight I don't think. It's officially Hennig vs. Page at Road Wild. The PerfectPlex wins this in about 35 seconds.

Here's Page to slug it out with Hennig but Page gets sent into the buckle to give Curt the advantage. The PerfectPlex is countered into a Diamond Cutter and the place goes nuts.

The Nitro Girls dance to Alex Wright's music.

Tag Titles: Outsiders vs. Ric Flair/Chris Benoit

I'm pretty sure this is a title match. Tony says it is, and while this is probably a bad idea, I'll go with it. Pay no attention to the Steiners winning like 84 #1 contenders matches in a row prior to this. We start with a brawl and Flair vs. Hall get us going in the ring. The Horsemen stand tall (not as tall as the Outsiders but tall in the metaphorical sense) until we officially start with Benoit and Hall.

Scott tries to pound him down but Benoit hits a dragon screw leg whip and a northern lights suplex for two. Hall bails so it's off to Nash for a try at the Canadian. Actually make that the Carolinian who is immediately shoved down by Big Kev. Nash does all of his usual stuff in the corner but Flair comes back with punches to the face. Syxx pops Flair in the back of the head, giving Nash two off a side slam.

Back to Hall for the fallaway slam for two more. Nash comes in for some more high quality choking and the running crotch attack while Flair is throat first across the middle rope. Hall hits a running clothesline in the corner to keep Flair in trouble. Nash hits a big over the shoulder Snake Eyes on Flair before it's back to Hall. Flair grabs a sleeper out of nowhere but Hall reverses into one of his own, only to have Flair quickly suplex out of it.

There's the hot tag to Benoit who cleans house on both Outsiders.

Clotheslines put both guys down and Flair stops Syxx from breaking up the Swan Dive. The headbutt gets two on Hall until Nash makes the save. Benoit punches out of the Jackknife but a Hall distraction lets Nash hit the big boot for a pin out of nowhere.

Rating: C+. I remember this match being a lot better. The ending seemed very rushed and likely happened because they were out of time. If you gave this match another five to seven minutes, it could go way up in quality. Benoit getting a chance to shine is always a good thing, as he was really starting to come into his own at this point. Not a bad match but nothing great either.

Syxx puts Flair in the Buzzkill on the bad arm until Mongo makes the save. The Steiners come out to stare at the Outsiders as we go off the air.

Overall Rating: C+. This was a better episode of Nitro as you can see Road Wild's card coming together pretty well. Tonight had some good action and a lot of it too, as we had ten matches on a single card. This worked pretty well as WCW is starting to roll a bit heading into the biker PPV. Pretty good stuff here tonight.

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