

Monday Night Raw – January 6, 2003: If This Show Didn't Kill HHH's Run, Nothing Will

As I said in the start of the 1997 series, there's no need to wait to get this year over with. In short, this is probably the worst year for Raw ever, with Evolution dominating the show from February through the end of the year and making no one but themselves happy. Other than that...there's nothing. Seriously, Evolution DOMINATES this year of Raw and it's nothing I'm looking forward to doing. We'll do looking at two shows each time here as usual. Let's get to it.

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 6, 2003

Location: America West Arena, Phoenix, Arizona

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

We're less than two weeks away from the Rumble and I believe Scott Steiner has been announced as the challenger. If not then that'll come tonight, but I'm pretty sure he's called out HHH and the stupid contests have started. The theory was that the two of them were kept apart to build intrigue, but the reality likely was that WWE was scared of people seeing how bad Steiner was. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about HHH saying that he's not afraid of Steiner. Last week the Game called Steiner out and we got an arm wrestling match. Steiner let HHH get an early advantage then smiled at him like an evil villain. Yeah for reasons that were never fathomed, WWE brought in Scott Steiner, one of the most insane heels ever, as a top face. 2003 was a stupid year.

I miss Across the Nation.

Tonight it's a POSE DOWN! Geez didn't they get that this sucked from Warrior and Rude?

The Dudleys come out for a match but here are Eric Bischoff and his Chief of Staff Morely (Val Venis). Eric promises changes for this year, including one in the attitude. We get a clip of JR/Lawler vs. Lance Storm/William Regal which saw JR get beaten down until the Dudleys made the save, hit a 3D on Regal, and give JR the pin. Eric says that he won't be disrespected like that, so the Dudleys get to have a No DQ handicap match.

3 Minute Warning/Rico/Batista vs. Dudley Boys

Flair is with Batista too so it's basically 5-2. Jamal gets backdropped to the floor as Batista hangs out on the floor. I wonder if D-Von and Batista's past will be mentioned. There's a fast 3D to Rico but the stupid Dudleys don't cover him, allowing Batista to come in and clean house. Bubba gets sent to the floor and Chief Morely gets in some shots of his own. Everyone not named Batista beats on Bubba on the floor and there's a spinebuster to D-Von.

Bischoff and Morely come into the ring and demand that the referee counts D-Von, but Batista pulls him up at two. Bubba gets back in but walks into a suplex from Rosey. Now Flair gets in and puts Bubba in the Figure Four as Jamal hits a top rope splash for good measure. D-Von takes a Samoan Drop and the Batista Bomb finally ends this.

Rating: D+. This was an angle which is fine, but it doesn't really exactly make for an interesting segment. Batista was just midcard muscle with Flair as a manager at this point, but Evolution was coming soon. The Bischoff regime got old in a hurry and here he came off as just another corrupt boss. Not much here but it was a good beating.

Bischoff slaps D-Von post match.

Post break Storm and Regal come out and yell at JR and King. The evil foreigners go down and beat up the Dudleys a bit more. This is officially overkill now. Regal busts Bubba open with brass knuckles.

HHH is admiring his chest in a mirror when Flair comes in. He talks about the project coming along nicely and praises HHH's body. Last week HHH had a bad arm from Armageddon but still competed anyway. HHH admires himself on the cover of Flex Magazine until Steiner comes in to talk trash.

Victoria/Molly Holly vs. Jacqueline/Trish Stratus

Victoria is Women's Champion and has T.A.T.U.'s All the Things She Said as her music here still. Jackie and the champ start things off with Victoria getting kicked in the ribs a few times. Molly kicks Jackie in the back and comes in off the top with an ax handle. Jackie takes a Muta handspring elbow in the corner, followed by a pretty awesome looking Boston Crab/Camel Clutch combo from the villains.

Victoria misses a moonsault and there's the hot tag to Trish. The Chick Kick gets two on the champ and Molly is sent to the floor. Stratusfaction is escaped so Trish tries a rollup, only to have Steven Richards come in and reverse it, letting Victoria grab a handful of tights for the pin on Trish.

Rating: C. This was one of the better Divas matches I can remember in a good while. It's amazing what happens when you take talented people and Jackie and let them do their stuff. Trish and Victoria had a solid rivalry which was as intense as you would get for the girls. Decent stuff here but it was short.

Booker and Goldust talk about how they don't want Bischoff in charge anymore. They'll defend the titles later too.

Bischoff is mad.

Here's Jericho with something to say about Shawn Michaels. Jericho wants to go back to the main event of Wrestlemania this year and he's going to do just that. He knows he's the best in the world and doesn't need the title to prove it. However, Jericho wants the title back so he is officially in the Royal Rumble. This brings out Shawn who says that he isn't here to get on Jericho's nerves but rather to talk to Jericho about their similarities.

Jericho is just like Shawn in that he needs the title to prove that he's the best to the people in the audience, the boys in the back, and himself. If Jericho wants to prove that he's the best, he needs to start the Rumble at #1, go on to win the Rumble, and win the world title at Wrestlemania. THEN, Shawn will think he's the best. We get some flat out lies about history, as Jericho says Shawn is the only man to start at #1 and "last the whole hour" to win the Rumble. That was the year of one minute intervals, meaning from bell to bell the match was less than 40 minutes long.

Jericho says that he won the title by beating guys Shawn could never beat, ignoring that Shawn wrestled the two guys a combined ONE time (he never fought Rock) and the time he faced Austin he had a broken back. Shawn says he'll be #1 to show Jericho how it's done. If Jericho wants to be the best, he has to go through Shawn to do it. Jericho wants to fight right now, but gets interrupted by BREAKING RNN NEWS!

This was Orton's gimmick at the time as he had an injured shoulder and would cut into the broadcasts with updates about his injury, ranging from how well he could move it to updates on his chaffing from the sling. He's actually in the arena tonight and says that his shoulder is at 93% mobility! Orton says he has a better comeback story than Shawn and he's the new sexy boy as a result. A single punch takes Orton down and Jericho takes Shawn down. RVD comes in for the save but Orton pops up and Van Dam gets double teamed. Now Christian comes in but Kane is out to even the odds and clear the ring.

Raw Tag Titles: Lance Storm/William Regal vs. Goldust/Booker T

Goldie and Booker are defending. Booker and Storm start things off with the champion slamming him down and dropping a knee for no cover. Off to Goldie for a forearm off the top but Storm hits him in the face to bring in Regal. Goldust shoulders him down as Bischoff is watching in the back. Back to Booker for more punches in the corner until Storm makes the save.

We hit a chinlock as the match is already going nowhere. A running knee to the side of Booker's head allows Storm to come in for a cravate. Booker finally fights out and kicks Lance down, allowing for the not hot tag to Goldust. House is cleaned and a powerslam gets two on Storm. Everything breaks down and Goldust takes both guys down. Storm gets caught in a modified Hart Attack but Regal takes the referee out.

The champs and referee are both out on the floor and we take a break. Back with Storm kicking a charging Booker in the face. During the break Chief Morely took over as guest referee. Storm accidentally superkicks said guest referee but there's no one to count. The third referee runs in to count two on Storm after a Booker spinebuster. Off to Goldust for his hard slaps in the corner but the challengers bail to the floor.

Goldie charges after Storm and runs into a clothesline from Regal. This match continues to be dull stuff. Regal pounds away on Goldust a bit more until it's off to Storm for another chinlock. This one doesn't last long and it's off to Booker for hopefully the last hot tag of the night. Mr. T. cleans house and there's a Spinarooni followed by an ax kick for two on Storm. Morely pulls the third referee out of the ring and a brass knuckles shot from Regal knocks out Booker for the pin and the titles.

Rating: D. It was long, but MAN was this boring. At the end of the day it was pretty clear that the titles were going to change here due to the odds and Bischoff needing to dominate the entire show, which makes it even worse. As usual, a team loses in a joke last week and wins the titles the next week. Also, how overbooked was this match? Nothing to see

here.

Post match the new champions suck up to Bischoff and Morely.

A famous Raw moment (for the ten year anniversary) is Sabel removing a sack she had to wear to reveal a bikini.

Test vs. Christopher Nowitski

Nowitski has D'Lo Brown with him because Brown is an intelligent black man. Seriously, that's the explanation we got from him. Nowitski goes after the arm to start as Stacy (Test's manager) plays cheerleader. Test sends him into the corner and starts his comeback, takes out Brown, and wins with the Test Drive (Cross Rhodes). I would say nothing here but Stack is rocking a blue dress.

Brown takes Test out post match.

Christian tells Jericho that he's in the Rumble too. Jericho says that means Christian can help him win. This leads to an argument over who is better and who has better tattoos. Orton comes in and says chill because he's in their corner for the tag match against RVD and Kane tonight. Orton stops to admire himself in a mirror after the Canadians leave.

Scott Steiner was on the cover of a muscle magazine two and a half years ago.

We recap the arm wrestling stuff from two weeks ago.

HHH oils himself up.

It's time for the pose down because that's what we need for the major segment of this show. HHH brags a lot and picks six "fans" from the front

row to judge this. They have scorecards of either HHH or Steiner so it's just winner and loser rather than scores. What do you want me to say for this? They pose, Steiner is better, they do another pose. All six judges vote for HHH so Steiner yells.

HHH wants a PUSH-UP CONTEST now, so Steiner gets on the mat and gets beaten up before he fights all six guys off. You wouldn't think this took seventeen minutes would you? Well it didn't. It took seventeen AND A HALF minutes. Seriously, that's all I had to say about it. Oh and good to see Steiner beat up six fans. I can't wait to sit through his arraignment, LIVE!

Kane/Rob Van Dam vs. Christian/Chris Jericho

Shawn and Orton are the seconds here. We come back from a break to start the brawl, which sees the good guys clearing out the ring. Van Dam gets launched over the top onto the Canadians until we officially start with Jericho vs. RVD. Christian comes in and takes Van Dam down with some choking before it's back to Jericho. After a kick gets two we hit a bow and arrow hold on Rob.

Jericho pulls him down by the hair and it's back to Christian. Rob gets sent to the floor where a melee breaks out, resulting in Shawn superkicking Orton. Jericho sends him into the steps in retaliation as we continue to fly through this match. RVD causes Jericho to go shoulder first into the post and kicks Christian down before making the hot tag.

Everything breaks down and Chris breaks up the chokeslam. Christian gets two off a reverse DDT but a Conchairto misses the masked one. Shawn pulls Jericho to the floor and they fight into the crowd. Rob hits a top rope kick to Christian's face and there's a chokeslam to set up the Five Star for the pin.

Rating: C-. It was exciting but it went way too fast. I guess this is supposed to be a Rumble preview match or something but it didn't work at

all due to how little time they had. Gee, I'm sure there was nothing else they could have cut to make more time. I know it was a letdown after the posing but they tried out there.

Bischoff says it's Regal vs. Lawler next week but he gets a phone call. Apparently Vince is going to be here next week.

Overall Rating: D. Let's see: no good matches, two storylines dominating the show, and seventeen and a half minutes spent so HHH could show off his physique. We're in 2003 all right. This is only going to get worse over the next few weeks as Steiner vs. HHH would somehow get TWO PPV matches together. Hopefully things pick up with Vince back next week.

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