

On This Day: February 13, 1997 – Monday Night Raw: Raw Should Be On Thursdays More Often

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 13, 1997

Location: Memorial Auditorium, Lowell, Massachusetts

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

This is another special Raw show called Thursday Raw Thursday. This was another special request and my first one through e-mail actually. Anyway the idea here is that there's either tennis or the stupid dog show on Monday so Raw is on Thursday this week. Don't ask me why they say the day twice but it's Vince so I think that explains it. This is famous for two reasons: Rock vs. HHH in a LONG match (for the time frame) and this is where Shawn lost his smile. Let's get to it.

We open with a video on Shawn who is vacating the title, meaning that the winner of the Final Four this Sunday will be the new champion. The opening video is about Sid vs. Shawn which was supposed to be the rubber match tonight. Naturally they say Thursday Raw Thursday about a million times in between this.

Intercontinental Title: Rocky Maivia vs. HHH

HHH is champion here and Rocky is a glorified rookie. Also tonight there's Sid vs. Austin and Bret vs. Vader. For no apparent reason Undertaker is fighting Savio. This is live it seems. It's still Hunter Hearst Helmsley here so there's no

HHH name yet. The curtseying future Game gets a hip block to start us off and is very confident. They do some nice mat stuff which I've never seen before. They have some leg locks and head scissors with impressive counters. Cool stuff.

Off to a chinlock by HHH here but Rocky fights out and hits a dropkick to send him to the floor. A charge misses and Rocky hits the post. Back inside with HHH working on the arm. Rocky fights up but HHH gets a single arm DDT for two. Some chops hit in the corner as we take a break. Back with HHH still in control and just going OFF on Rocky's head with right hands.

Honky Tonk Man comes out for some reason. He was looking for a protégé or something like that. He wound up picking Billy Gunn who became Rock-A-Billy as one of the dumbest gimmicks of all time. HHH has dominated the vast majority of this with a jumping knee to the head and then a sleeper. Rocky tries to reverse into a sleeper of his own but gets rammed into the buckle.

Rocky starts his comeback with right hands (called a chop by Vince for no apparent reason). Top rope cross body, more or less Rocky's finisher, is rolled through by HHH for two. Facebuster sets up a neckbreaker by HHH for a close two. HHH is getting frustrated. Piledriver gets two AGAIN as Vince and Jim can't believe it. Superplex gets two and no one knows what to think.

HHH sets for the Pedigree but Rocky can't stand up long enough for it to go on. Rocky falls flat on his face and is more or less dead. Honky shouts ROLL HIM OVER! HHH finally tries to do just that and gets rolled up by Rocky for the pin and the title in perhaps the biggest upset of all time up to that point.

Rating: B-. This was good but it's really just Rocky hanging in there until the end for the one small package to win the title. That being said, the resilience thing with HHH being

all stuck up and not going for the kill when he could have makes this work more than it should. Also it's Rock vs. HHH so it's hard not to like it at least a little bit.

Rocky cuts his best Boy Scout promo after the match, saying he'll make his fans and family proud.

Ad for Final Four which was a great main event.

Here's Sunny, poured into a little white dress. Ah she's ring announcer.

Headbangers vs. Bob Holly/Aldo Montoya

Montoya is more famous as Justin Credible. We see some clips of some WWF guys on a country music show. Road Dogg got to sing his song on there and Hillbilly Jim played some guitar. Also there was a "match" with the Godwinns vs. Jarrett/the host. Who thought this was a good idea for a match? Mosh vs. Holly to start us off. Holly doesn't so much do things well as much as he doesn't do things well.

In case you can't get it, this is a terribly boring match. It's not that it's bad but there's no point to having it and yet it's here anyway. We're talking about Shawn Michaels anyway which is far more interesting so that helps. I mean really, does anyone want to watch these four guys have a match? The announcers aren't paying a bit of attention to this which I can't blame them for at all.

The Headbangers hit a double Gordbuster on Holly as they take over. Yeah I don't care about this match at all either. The idea is that Shawn might have to have reconstructive surgery. In reality the knee was slightly injured but he could have gone without the surgery but that would have meant losing the title at Mania which he just wasn't going to do.

We might have talked about this match for 20 seconds combined

of four and a half minutes. Thrasher misses a moonsault and it's off to Montoya. We're talking about Brett Favre now. I can't escape this guy. Finally the Headbangers win with a powerbomb/leg drop combination. Sunny says Mosh and Thrash just won. Even she wasn't paying attention.

Rating: D. The match was ok I guess but at the same time this was one of those times where no one cared in the slightest and everyone knew it. WWF in 97 was just bad at some points and this is one of them. Who in the world thought this was something people would want to see? Bad match, but now let's get to something that matters.

Vince introduces Gorilla Monsoon who is going to accept the WWF Title from Shawn Michaels. Shawn limps out and is very sad. Here's the basic idea: Shawn was supposed to return the favor to Bret and lose the title to him at Mania 13. However Shawn didn't really want to do that and "hurt his knee" and couldn't do it. He claimed the doctors said it could be career ending when it was really minor. In short, Shawn didn't want to lose so he forfeited the title and was back in the ring by May. This is the famous Lost My Smile speech and not a lot of the guys in the back bought it to put it mildly.

Shawn gets all teary eyed and talks about his body being beaten up and all that jazz. HUGE We Want Sid, the guy that might have been winning the title that night depending on who you ask. No one has had to endure the schedule that Shawn had over the years etc. This is rather sickening knowing what's actually going on here. Do I think he was hurt? Yeah he was somewhat hurt but at the end of the day he was looking out for himself here far more than anyone else when Shawn as a heel could have worked very well but he was afraid of doing it.

He talks about how he's not going to be around the title for a long time. The doctors aren't sure where his knee is and he may be beyond reconstructive surgery at this point. Shawn talks about riding in leer jets and limousines as I have a

feeling like I've heard this before. You also have to remember that the WWF was in real trouble at this point and had it not been for Austin they would have been dead. He hands the belt to Monsoon and says he's going back home. Shawn says that somewhere along the line he lost his smile. Oh dear.

Overall my thought on this is Shawn knew what was really going on and he put his ego over the fans, the company, the title and the rest of his roster. He had no problem taking all the benefits of being champion but didn't want to do the harder parts of it (like losing) and that to me isn't right. The fans were mixed to put it mildly on this. This would have been fine at its time, but given that he would be back before the summer kills any sympathy this would have had.

Savio Vega vs. Undertaker

Savio turned heel recently and joined the Nation. Taker was feuding with them for lack of anything better to do. He would win the title at Mania so it seems like he got noticed. After a break we're back with Taker destroying him. The announcers talk about Bret vs. Vader but it's not as bad as it was in the tag match. Why in the world am I watching Savio Vega vs. the Undertaker? Who thought this was a good idea?

Taker hits a big boot and stumbles back from it. Leg drop gets two on Savio. Not yet Old School hits as this is one sided for the most part. There are still tickets available for the PPV in Chattanooga. Savio gets a low blow and a set of clotheslines to get two. The other members of the Nation interfere a bit as we're waiting for Taker to end Savio.

The fans chant rest in peace. My goodness how nice does it sound to be able to take a nap and let someone else do this? Or just to not watch this at all? Savio gets a spinwheel kick to put Taker down for two. Since that's his finisher the rest of the match is pretty predictable. Taker is finally bored

with all this and hits a chokeslam to end it.

Rating: D-. Oh dang it all this was boring. Nothing at all was going on here and it never got interesting. It's nearly NINE MINUTES LONG. Why in the world did this need nearly ten minutes? It's Undertaker vs. Savio Vega for crying out loud. Boring match and one of the least interesting things I've seen in a good while.

Nation attacks, Ahmed saves, Nation lackeys are hurt.

Psycho Sid vs. Steve Austin

After Austin's entrance, Gorilla says that the four guys have a golden opportunity on Sunday. Sid will get his title shot and will get it against the winner of the Final Four match this coming Monday. Sid would face Bret and win the title. Sid was mad over to say the least. Austin jumps Sid to start and the fight was on. Jerry picks Austin to win the title on Sunday.

Austin kicks Sid low and does Sid's taunts as this is a total battle from the bell. Fans are TOTALLY behind Austin which is saying a lot considering how over Sid was at this point. Austin sends him into the post and takes him down in the ring with an elbow. This is pre-neck injury for Austin so he's a completely different guy than the brawler he would become. Abdominal stretch by Austin but Sid gets a sleeper. And never mind as Austin suplexes him almost immediately.

Off to a front facelock so they can call some spots. JR says it'll be Austin as well on Sunday while Vince says it'll be Sid. You know, the guy that isn't in the match Sunday? Sid hammers him down and misses a legdrop so Austin tries a failed Sharpshooter. Big boot takes Austin down and then Bret comes out to fight Austin and it's a DQ win for Stone Cold.

Rating: C+. This was a brawl with the fans telling you a lot about what they wanted. You had a crazy dude in Sid and Austin being the anti-authority figure that everyone wanted to see. Thankfully Vince listened and everything turned out well in the end. This was a fun brawl and that's all it needed to be.

Bret and Sid fight while Austin laughs.

Vader stumbles through an interview where he says he's beaten everyone in the Final Four match recently.

Lawler talks about sending his mom money for Valentine's Day. This is being written on the night Lawler faced Miz for the WWE Title at the Elimination Chamber where Lawler was talking about his mother passing away the previous week so that's kind of sad to hear.

We replay part of the Shawn speech about losing his smile. Did you check under that copy of "How to Fake a Knee Injury?" When Vince hugs Shawn you can see him thinking "You bastard!!!"

Tag Titles: Farooq/Crush vs. British Bulldog/Owen Hart

Bulldog and Hart had the titles forever in one of the longest title reigns in history. No one since has had a longer WWF/E tag title reign that I can remember. That doesn't count the Smackdown tag titles made in 2002 mind you. Owen vs. Crush to start and the Canadian gets a cross body for two. Over to Bulldog as Crush throws Owen around a bit.

We take a break just after Farooq tags in. Vince says that if anything significant happens while we're gone it'll be shown. Nothing is shown so that means nothing of note is happening during a title match. That sounds like blasphemy to Vince to me. Owen and Bulldog had been having issues lately and they do here as well, resulting in Bulldog being in trouble.

Bret is watching the match and says that what Shawn said was

sad. We got split screen to do this of course so we can barely see the match. Bulldog is getting beaten down here if you're curious. Bret says that there's no way around Vader so Bret will have to do something different than he did last time when he lost. It's Hitman Time, not Vader Time.

Ah hey it's the full match rather than the split one. Owen starts a Bulldog chant even though the Bulldog is getting crushed out there. Hey that was funny and wasn't even supposed to be! I kill myself sometimes. Crush gets a bodyscissors. Vince: "Speaking of body scissors, how would you like to be bodyscissored by La Femme Nikita, coming up next on USA!" That man is a natural salesman if there has ever been one.

The fans chant what sounds like Bulldog/Owen but it's not really clear. Maybe if it was in a town bigger than Lowell, Massachusetts that would go a bit better. Bulldog reverses a bearhug with a belly to belly but can't get a tag. Owen gets tagged but it's not seen in a classic tag team move. Smith finally gets an enziguri to bring in Owen who cleans house. Missile dropkick to Crush gets two and it all breaks down. We hit the floor and Owen might have injured his knee. Injured or HBK-ified, it's good enough for the count out to end this.

Rating: D+. I just wasn't feeling this one at all. The idea was to plug the whole fighting amongst themselves champions and while that happened this felt rushed and a bit forced. Not a terrible match but it just kind of came and went. The knee injury never went anywhere that I can remember.

The Nation beats down Bulldog post match while Owen tries to fix his knee. Bulldog helps him out but Owen limps back to get the belts. That's nice subtle heel stuff.

Vader vs. Bret Hart

Main event time here. Before we get started though Taker comes

out to watch. Oh and he's got a loud mic. He hates to interrupt but Taker gets no respect anymore. This is a very un-Deadman like promo. He's talking fast and sounds more like Biker Taker than Deadman Taker. Vader jumps Bret as Taker leaves and Hart is in trouble early on as we take a break.

Apparently just after they went to a break Austin came out and stomped on Bret some before being sent to the back. Vader goes up and Bret catches him in a POWERSLAM??? WHAT THE HECK??? Bret pounds away and gets a terrible looking Russian Leg Sweep for two. It might have helped if he actually, you know, swept the leg? BRET SLAMS VADER!!!! WHAT IN THE WORLD AM I WATCHING????? He picked him up like he was a cruiserweight and just turned him over for a slam like it was nothing. WHAT THE HECK?????

Bret can't get the Sharpshooter. Well I guess he was in Power Bret mode or something. Dude Bret Hart slammed Vader. I can't get over that. Why not a belly to back suplex too? Bret is throwing Vader around like he weighs 180. Bret low bridges Vader and there's the Sharpshooter but Vader grabs a rope. Austin pops up in the balcony to yell at Bret and Vader drills the Canadian from behind. Vadersault misses and Bret gets the easy pin to end the show.

Rating: D+. Not bad but it was ok I guess. I really can't get over that slam. Bret Hart just picked Vader up like he was picking up a Slurpie. This was just a match to set up the PPV for the most part with nothing special going on at all. Austin's interference felt rushed as did Taker's at the beginning. Either way the match at the PPV was great.

Overall Rating: C-. Well there's certainly a lot of history here but the delivery isn't that great. Shawn's speech doesn't really mean a lot anymore as he more or less just took a vacation. This wasn't that bad though and considering the card had to be shuffled earlier in the week as did the PPV, this was pretty solid. Not great, but good enough for what it was.

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