

On This Day: March 4, 1996 – Monday Night Raw: Yes, Raw Existed In 1996

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 4, 1996

Location: Cincinnati Gardens, Cincinnati, Ohio

Attendance: 8,500

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

Have you ever noticed that you never hear anything about Raw from 1994-1996? It strikes me as odd that no one every talks about it so why not take a look at an episode from one of those years? We've got four weeks from Wrestlemania here and Shawn Michaels is on the way to the main event to face Bret Hart for the world title. Let's get to it.

We open with a quick preview, which says we're going to get an announcement on the Ultimate Warrior, a film from Goldust in Piper's Pit, plus Shawn vs. 1-2-3 Kid and Bret vs. HHH.

Shawn Michaels vs. 1-2-3 Kid

Kid tries to charge at Shawn but gets backdropped out to the floor for his efforts. The match actually starts and there's a headlock from Kid to get us going. Kid is heel here and I believe is part of the Million Dollar Corporation, or at worst just left them very recently. Shawn speeds things up but gets elbowed in the ribs to slow him down. Kid poses a lot and gets caught in a sunset flip for two followed by a gorilla press. A clothesline puts Kid on the floor and Shawn skins the cat back in.

Bret is shown watching in the back and says some of the stuff Shawn is getting away with here wouldn't work on him. A headlock takeover puts Kid

down and Shawn cranks on the head for a bit. Back up and Kid hits a BIG spin wheel kick to take Shawn's head off and a dropkick puts Shawn on the floor. A springboard dive over the top takes Shawn out and the Kid pounds away for good measure. DiBiase (yep Kid is still in the Corporation) gets in a cheap shot which doesn't please Bret.

Back in and Kid stomps away and hits a quick running dropkick in the corner for two more. We take a break and come back with Kid getting two off something we didn't see. Off to a chinlock but Shawn fights up. Kid hits an enziguri to puts Shawn back down and it's off to the chinlock again. Back up again and Shawn hits a running clothesline and there's the nip up. Shawn pounds away and hits a moonsault onto a standing Kid. The top rope elbow looks to set up the superkick but Kid bails to the outside. Back in again and the Kid kicks him down but a guillotine legdrop misses. Sweet Chest Music hits and we're done.

Rating: C+. This wasn't exactly Bret vs. Kid from a few years ago but it was still pretty good stuff. This is the kind of stuff you don't get anymore: a main eventer getting to beat up a midcarder that he doesn't have much of a history against. The midcard guy gets to look good because he has nothing to lose and the star gets a win over someone credible. And before you ask, no this doesn't count when it's the same match over and over again. Then it's just repetitive and boring.

Post match Shawn dances with a little girl in the ring. This match is on the My Journey DVD.

We get a look at a film by Marlina called Piper's Pit. Goldie is in a kilt and on the old Piper's Pit set. He quotes Sunset Boulevard and says that he's always admired Piper over the years. We hear about Piper's lips and this is getting uncomfortable, which is the idea of the character. This goes on for a bit longer and we get the point already. Goldust plays the bagpipes and that's that.

We look at the career of Ultimate Warrior, who is coming back at

Wrestlemania.

Hakushi vs. Justin Bradshaw

Yeah it's that Bradshaw. Roddy Piper calls in to keep us from having to watch this match. Of note to 2013 fans: Bradshaw has Uncle Zebekiah with him, who is currently known as Zeb Colter. Vince thanks President Piper for bringing back the Warrior and the opponent will be announced next week (it's HHH). Bradshaw is running over Hakushi as we're firmly in squash land here.

Piper promises to be in San Antonio for Raw next week as the beating continues. Hakushi gets in a few kicks but Bradshaw kicks him in the face to stop that cold. A powerslam on the floor puts Hakushi down and it's back inside for a boot and the lariat for the pin. Total squash here that is barely too short to rate, thank goodness.

Bradshaw and Zeb hogtie and brand Hakushi post match.

Mankind talks about being a dangerous child and wondering about some evil man. This guy scared me to death as a kid.

Hunter Hearst Helmsley vs. Bret Hart

Non-title here. We get going with HHH taking over via a knee to the ribs. Apparently HHH is undefeated on Raw so you can tell this is early in his run. Bret comes back with a snapmare and pounds away on the ribs. Off to an armbar and other arm work as Shawn walks out to sit at ringside. We take a break and come back with Back with Bret going right back to the arm where he can stare at Shawn.

HHH fights up but gets caught by a cross body for two. Hart gets thrown to the floor right in front of Shawn who does nothing at all. Bret yells at him anyway because he's a paranoid nutjob and even manages to stop a

diving HHH with a punch to the ribs. Vince thinks Shawn and HHH might be working together. Nah that could never happen. Bret controls the arm again but HHH hits the jumping knee to put Bret down again.

HHH pounds away in the corner and Vince is starting to panic. Bret gets whipped HARD into the corner twice in a row followed by the Flair knee drop for two. We take another break and come back with HHH jumping off a rope into a raised boot from the Hitman. Vince says it was from the middle rope before calling an atomic drop a spinebuster. Bret comes back with a bulldog and it's time for the Five Moves of Doom. The elbow gets two and Bret is frustrated, allowing HHH to get two off an O'Connor Roll.

They fight to the floor again with Bret taking control again. Trips backs away but suckers Bret in for a boot to the ribs. Not that it matters much though as HHH goes up to the middle rope and dives right into the Sharpshooter for the submission. It's rather amusing now to hear Vince talking about his future son-in-law and the future boss of the company the way he does here.

Rating: C. Not bad here with HHH doing what he could to hang in there with Bret. You could see the flashes of skill coming through but this was about Bret getting to dominate a guy as only he could. Shawn being down there was a nice mind game being played which wasn't something you often got outside of Undertaker back in the day.

Now it's time for a shot at WCW as we get TV Trivia, with the contestants Billionaire Ted and some annoying chick. Basically it's a bunch of disrespectful lines from Turner used to make fun of him. It isn't funny and I don't think most of the fans got the joke, nor did they care. The girl keeps beating her by making more jokes at Ted's expense. There's also a fake Randy Savage. You know, the guy that got thrown out by Vince and then was a big deal in WCW later on? Stupid, stupid, stupid and thankfully it ends the show.

Overall Rating: C+. Pretty good show here as we focus on the main event

of Wrestlemania as we should. The rest....it exists. The squash was exactly what it was supposed to be and the TV Trivia bit was dumb and no one cared. Vince was about to be in more trouble than even he could get himself out of, but we'll get to that eventually.

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