

On This Day: March 25, 2002 – Monday Night Raw: The Brand Split

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 25, 2002

Location: Bryce Jordan Center, State College, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 15,550

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

Well as you know there's usually a reason as to why I do these random Raws and in this case this is the first ever WWE Draft. Tonight we split the roster in two to have Raw and Smackdown as independent (yeah right) shows with different owners (Flair on Raw, Vince on Smackdown) in the system we're used to now. This was also 8 days after Mania so we're still kind of transitioning to the new year. Let's get to it.

Linda introduces us to the concept of the Draft where tonight we're only going to have twenty picks, as in ten each. There's a world title match tonight with HHH vs. Jericho vs. Stephanie so none of them can be drafted. Also Austin is undraftable uh...because he's bald. That's as good an explanation as any (the official reason is he had it in his contract. How was that contract written? "In the event that the roster becomes too big to sustain one roster and must be split in half under a concept called the Brand Split I get to not be drafted? Imagine those negotiations. In reality he was having a contract dispute and wasn't signed).

Taz vs. Mr. Perfect

Hennig had made a comeback here at age 44 where he still looked solid out there. He would be gone in like three months after getting very drunk on a plane. He would be dead in less than a year which is mind blowing. Hennig says he'll be the

perfect pick and sounds a bit shall we say buzzed. Jazz and whoever winds up being world champion can be on both shows apparently. Perfectplex but Taz gets the ropes. They collide in the corner and Taz grabs the Tazmission to end this QUICK. Taz says Hennig was JUST ANOTHER VICTIM. He was getting popular around this time too but his neck gave out and he had to retire.

Rating: N/A. Way too short but competitive enough. Perfect was still rather good and looked exactly like he did in his prime. Shame his personal life was more or less a disaster because he could have been used as a solid midcard guy.

The owners are both in their war rooms going over their plans. Vince has the first pick.

After a break we're ready for said pick. We get a brief speech and the #1 overall pick is The Rock. Can't say that's a bad way to go. Hard to believe he more or less had a year left. Rock comes out and Vince runs down a bunch of stuff Rock can't do anymore, namely catchphrases he can't say. Rock stops him from leaving and proceeds to make fun of Vince, leading the crowd in a huge YOU ARE A CENSORED chant. He's just absolutely awesome here. This was rather funny. Rock does one last IF YA SMELL since it's his last night on Raw which is a nice touch.

We're back and it's time for Flair's first pick. With nothing special to say, he picks the Undertaker who was in a big feud with Flair around this time. Wow it's weird to think about Taker being on Raw. He throws some stuff and we get a nice little graphic with Taker's stats on it. Rock got the same.

Vince is ticked and Angle comes in to complain. Taker does the same and threatens Vince. It's very weird to think that Taker started on Raw but he would be on Smackdown in about 4 months and has been there since.

Edge/Diamond Dallas Page vs. Booker T/Christian

These were both singles matches at Mania where both faces won. Edge was getting very hot very fast at this point and probably would have been world champion within a year had he not gotten hurt. Christian has the awesome entrance here with the high pitched singers saying AT LAST YOU ARE ON YOU OWN! I love that. It comes complete with Alberto's current pyro. Christian cost DDP the European Title recently as well. Oh and Angle cost Edge a match vs. Booker.

The Draft Lottery is plugged even though most of the picks meant nothing. Edge and Booker start us off. This is another very short match where the Canadians go to the floor and DDP gets a Diamond Cutter on Booker. Christian with a save and Edge misses a spin kick by a mile but Christian doesn't sell much of it, which I think was intentional. Axe Kick kills DDP for the pin.

Rating: N/A. This was another very short one although it was better than the first match. Nothing all that bad in here but when a match barely breaks two minutes it's kind of hard to say if it was good or not. With such little time how can they get anything going at all? This wasn't bad but it wasn't very good either.

Angle lists off a ton of his accomplishments to Vince in an attempt to be the #2 pick which is rather funny. Vince wants the NWO though, which apparently is drafted as a unit. Vince takes Angle as the second pick after some nice psychology from Angle, but Kurt ticked about not being #1.

Flair immediately hits the stage and says he'll do everything he can do to get Austin on Raw, which he would do. Flair takes the entire NWO (Hall, Nash and X-Pac) in a surprise. Vince is FURIOUS but vows to get Austin. Angle talks to him a bit and Vince takes Benoit who was still out injured. Oddly enough when he came back he started on Raw before moving over to Smackdown.

The NWO yells at Flair. Pac, who has been there since Thursday (literally) is now their mouthpiece. Hall says you don't blow us off so Flair makes his #3 pick, who is designed to look after the NWO: Kane. Ok then. In other words on Smackdown we have Rock, Angle and Benoit. On Raw we have Nash (injured), Hall (fat), Waltman (overrated), Taker (AWFUL at this point) and Kane (you know the drill here). Which show would you rather watch?

Trish Stratus vs. Ivory

Ivory is back and this is some kind of a small grudge. Yeah there's nothing to talk about here. Trish wins in about two minutes with Stratusfaction. No rating either. Totally worthless.

Vince comes out again and gets the chant Rock invented earlier. He takes Hogan, who is incorrectly listed as a 7 time WCW Champion. Ah apparently they're including the Bash at the Beach title here. Vince doing Hogan's air guitar is rather funny.

After a break, Flair comes out to take RVD who brings the IC Title with him.

Vince is mad about losing the IC Title so Angle suggests a match between him and RVD for the title tonight so Angle can bring it Smackdown.

Rock is walking around backstage and Hogan comes up to him. The bald one suggests a handicap match vs. the NWO. Well what kind of a huge face would Rock be if he said no?

Vince is here to make his next pick (5th overall if you're keeping track) and he picks Billy and Chuck who are the tag champions.

Tough Enough 2 commercial. I had my first kiss while that show was going on in the background.

Somehow the boot of the week is a chair shot. No one accused WWE of making sense all the time.

NWO vs. Hulk Hogan/The Rock

This is Nash's first match in the company I think since his return. Ah scratch that as I'm wrong actually. It was one of his first though. Hogan and X-Pac start us off here which is a RIVETING match indeed. And Hogan throws him to the floor immediately in a nice power display. Hall comes in and fails also so we switch to Nash. Amazingly all Hogan seems to do is punch.

Hot tag to the Rock and we CRANK it up. We shift from an 80s style to a 90s style and it's much more interesting. Cold tag to Hogan and the crowd just dies. Pac makes the save as it's all breaking down. He breaks out the knunchucks and here comes Kane since he's the guy taking care of the NWO and he clears house, giving the NWO the win.

Rating: D. Weak match but Rock was interesting. This wasn't much at all and with five minutes how big of a match can it be? This is the last match on Raw for Hogan and Rock? This is the best they can do? That's hardly a good sign. This was really rather weak all things considered.

Vince comes into Flair's office to yell about various things. Flair takes Booker. Vince takes Edge. Flair takes Big Show. Vince takes Rikishi. They're going that fast. So in other words: Nash, Hall, Waltman, Taker, Kane and Big Show vs. Benoit, Rock, Angle and Edge. Who do you think wins in the long run here? Keep in mind that the NWO guys would all be gone in the second week of July, this is looking one sided to say the least. Come to think of it, a year after this Rock and Edge were gone too. Help is on the way however, as between now and August WWE would debut guys named Lesnar, Orton, Cena, Batista and Mysterio. Like I said, this was a transitional period for the company. Oh and Shawn came back in the fall

too.

Jeff Hardy vs. Billy Gunn

This is during the gay era for Billy and Chuck, culminating in a mind blowing ending when they were about to be married but the minister was Eric Bischoff with a prosthetic face on, pretending to be a senior citizen aged preacher. It legitimately got me. Another two minute match but Jeff getting a singles run was a new idea back then. Matt and Chuck fighting on the floor cause Jeff to miss the Swanton. Lita TOTALLY botches a rana on Rico but Jeff gets the pin on Billy anyway.

Rating: N/A. I'm really getting tired of these short matches. That botch was a sight though. Her legs didn't even get close to around his head. Moving on.

Flair picks Bubba Ray Dudley so Vince takes D-Von. They actually were going to try to make Bubba a serious challenger, even giving him a world title shot on Raw and giving it time. D-Von became a preacher with a deacon named Batista. I think the latter was a bit more famous.

European Title: Rikishi vs. William Regal

As Regal is coming to the ring, some HUGE muscle guy comes in and beats the living tar out of Rikishi, hitting a spinebuster and a SICK fireman's carry spinout facebuster. You may know the move as the F5 and the guy as the current UFC World Heavyweight Champion: Brock Lesnar. I told you this was a transitional period. No match obviously.

Jazz is evil in New York.

Vince tries to get Brock but it's not his pick so Flair takes him. Great to see that D-Von pick working for Vince. Vince takes Mark Henry. I actually laugh when I think of the comparison between those two. Flair takes the European William

Regal so Vince takes Maven, the Hardcore Champion. Flair takes Lita. Those are the last two picks. Let's stop for a minute here and go pick for pick and look at these selections with Vince's coming first.

#1: Rock vs. Undertaker. That's a tossup I guess as Rock was bigger at the time but Taker is better long term.

#2: Kurt Angle vs. NW0. Do I even need to make fun of this one?

#3: Chris Benoit vs. Kane. Vince wins this based on in ring work alone.

#4: Hulk Hogan vs. Rob Van Dam. Have to go Vince here again as RVD was never really that important in WWE. Close one though given the money Hogan probably commanded.

#5: Billy and Chuck vs. Booker T. Comedy team vs. future world champion. Hmm I wonder.

#6: Edge vs. Big Show. Vince gets another one.

#7: Rikishi vs. Bubba Ray Dudley. Everyone loses.

#8: D-Von Dudley vs. Brock Lesnar. Actually you could make a case for Vince winning here as like I said Batista debuted shortly after this as D-Von's enforcer. On paper though it's really Flair in a landslide as Brock was a once in a lifetime find.

#9: Mark Henry vs. William Regal. Flair wins again.

#10: Maven vs. Lita. Eyebrows Huffman vs. a great rack. Flair finishes strong.

Vince has the better core and I think wins pretty easily here, especially since Brock was on Smackdown within 8 months. Also Raw wound up being boring as HECK soon after this.

Vince makes fun of Flair picking Lita because it's going to be awful and a cesspool.

Intercontinental Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Kurt Angle

Angle grabs a German immediately. DAng Angle was good back then. RVD makes a short comeback to some very solid cheers. He

sets for the Five Star but Angle hits the floor. And then Angle pulls the referee in front of the dropkick for the DQ. Edge comes down for the save.

Rating: N/A. Dude we can't have these two get TV time? Are you kidding me? Where is the time going in this show considering how fast they're making picks?

Stephanie says she's going to win the title.

Undisputed Title: Stephanie McMahon vs. HHH vs. Chris Jericho

This is a triple threat and if Stephanie is pinned she's out of the company. Jericho sends HHH to the floor and Stephanie lays down for Jericho but HHH makes the save. HHH won the title 8 days before this mind you. Totally boring match as the two wrestlers have to be on pins and needles so Stephanie doesn't get exposed as being NOT A WRESTLER.

Stephanie slaps Jericho for some reason and they argue. Jericho goes for the Walls as this match needs to end. We know HHH isn't losing so quit teasing us about it. HHH knocks Jericho down and stalks Stephanie. Pedigree is set up but Jericho hits a dropkick to stop it. Jericho grabs a title and a chair and through some odd stuff both HHH and Jericho get belt shots. Stephanie comes in and covers Jericho for two. She does this weird thing of lifting her leg on covers.

HHH gets caught in the Walls but Stephanie jumps on Jericho's back. Pedigree gets two on Jericho and Stephanie makes the save. Spinebuster ends her and she's gone...for four months until she became Smackdown's GM. Security literally drags her away.

Rating: D-. Just horrible stuff here as HHH and Jericho more or less did nothing while this was about Stephanie all over again. What a shock right? She was the focus of just about everything for a good while and this would only get worse in 03/04 when Smackdown was ALL about her and Vince and their

stupid feud for power. This was a glorified house show main event though and was really quite stupid.

Overall Rating: D-. Just a bad show overall with the main event being the only thing to break 8 minutes. The picks are odd at best and stupid at worst with nothing really making that much sense at all. This was a bad show and the whole thing would just get worse as the year went on with Raw becoming the HHH show and no one really paying attention to how awesome Smackdown was. Oh and Shawn would come back and be instantly pushed to the top of the roster because he's Shawn and a 4 year layoff is easy to come back from right? Bad show but huge for historical purposes.

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