

Monday Nitro – December 22, 1997: Run For Your Lives! IT'S NWO NITRO!

Monday Nitro #119

Date: December 22, 1997

Location: Macon Coliseum, Macon, Georgia

Attendance: 7,615

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

Amazingly enough, we're actually at the go home show for Starrcade. This is yet another three hour show which would become the norm soon after this. The wrestling on this episode means nothing at all, due to a certain segment at the end of the first hour which overshadows everything else we would see in the ring on this show. Let's get to it.

We open with a paid announcement from the NWO. Actually it's just Bischoff, who talks for several minutes about what he's going to do to Larry at Starrcade. In short, he's going to humiliate Zbyszko and take Nitro as a result. Well he certainly did humiliate Larry but not for the reasons Eric is talking about here.

Fit Finlay vs. Eddie Guerrero

Apparently this is the arena where Hall jumped the guard rail over a year and a half ago. The fans are all over Eddie to start as he begs for mercy. Guerrero pops up and kicks at Finlay's knee to take him down. A slingshot hilo onto the leg has Finlay in big trouble early on. Actually scratch that as Finlay pops back up and pounds on Eddie without so much as a shake of the leg. Finlay drops Eddie throat first on the top rope before hitting a hard kick to the back for no cover.

Eddie is catapulted into the ropes so he can crash down onto Finlay's knees before the Irishman pounds away with forearms in the corner. A hard clothesline puts Eddie down and Finlay rams Guerrero's face into the side of the ring a few times. Back in and a hard boot to Eddie's face puts him

down but Eddie goes back to the knee which suddenly hurts again. A dropkick to the knee puts Finlay down again but goes up top, only to be caught and superplexed back down. Finlay loads up the tombstone but Eddie bails to the floor...and walks out for the countout.

Rating: C. Surprising lack of selling from Finlay aside, this wasn't a bad match at all. The ending makes sense in a way as Eddie has a title defense on Sunday and wouldn't want to waste his energy before then. Finlay was an interesting character as he would disappear for months on end before returning and getting a pretty big match like this out of nowhere.

Steve McMichael vs. Meng

Please...make it short. This is as a result of the match that didn't happen last week. Mongo wins an early slugout and hits a corner clothesline. The slugout was so interesting the first time so let's do it again a few seconds later. Meng tries a charge into the corner but eats a boot. However since he's a savage and obeying ethnic stereotypes, it has no effect. A powerslam gets two on Mongo and a piledriver gets the same.

Meng goes up top for a splash but picks McMichael up at two. Dude, I watched you for like fifteen years and THIS is what I get in return? Mongo bails to the floor and finds the dreaded wooden chair. As usual it gets destroyed over Meng's head (not a DQ for no apparent reason) to no effect (also as usual), so Mongo instead tombstones him for the pin.

Rating: D. In a weird way, Mongo is fascinating to watch. He had been around for a year and a half at this point and is somehow getting worse over time. That's really quite amazing given the talent he's been in there against. I know Meng isn't exactly Lou Thesz, but he's a veteran who can get someone through a basic match. Mongo looked completely lost here though and it's painful to sit through anymore.

Page talks about being ready for the title match with Hennig, where the champion will feel the bang.

La Parka/Silver King/Psychosis vs. Hector Garza/Rey Mysterio Jr./Juventud Guerrera

The four man version worked so well last week that we get the traditional six man version this week. This is under lucha libre rules again, meaning if you go to the floor it's the same as a tag. La Parka is in the alternate white attire tonight which really stands out in the ring. Garza and Silver King get us going and they immediately bust out the flips with almost no contact being made at all. Garza hits a spinning wristlock off the top to take King down but it's off to Juvy for a big springboard missile dropkick.

Psychosis comes in and pounds Guerrera down as the match slows way down. He wants Rey Mysterio but instead we get Raven's Flock arriving. Juvy speeds things up with a headscissors and an attempted reverse rana, only to land on the back of his head in a scary looking semi-botch. Psychosis misses a charge and hits the post shoulder first, allowing Guerrera to make the hot tag to Rey. Mysterio takes Psychosis out to the floor and sends La Parka into Silver King. La Parka comes back but misses a backplash as everyone starts going up.

Rey cross bodies Silver King to the floor and La Parka dropkicks Psychosis to the floor for some reason. Juvy uses Garza as a springboard for Air Juvy to take Psychosis out again and there's a suicide dive by La Parka to take out Juvy and break the chair he was sitting in. Why he was sitting in a chair I'm not sure but it doesn't matter as Garza hits the corkscrew plancha to take out Psychosis and La Parka. Back in the ring and Rey puts Silver King on top for a reverse rana followed by the yet to be named West Coast Pop for the pin.

Rating: B. It's hard not to love these things as there's no need for a story of any kind of psychology to them. They're quick and exciting with six interchangeable guys going out there and doing all kinds of insane spots. WCW never tried to make these matches anything more than that and it would have been stupid to try. Fun stuff here, as always.

Mysterio seemed to hurt his left knee on the reverse rana and is holding it post match.

Chris Benoit vs. Hammer

Benoit's run through the Flock continues but there's no Raven again.

Chris asks the rest of the Flock to get in the ring because Hammer is going to need all the help he can get. A quick dropkick to Hammer's knee takes him down and Benoit chops away in the corner. Hammer is kicked to the floor and Benoit takes him down with a dive through the ropes. Benoit goes over and smacks Saturn in the head, allowing Hammer to take over with some sledges to the back. Hammer knocks him back to the floor but gets whipped into the apron. Benoit gets a chair and here comes the Flock for the DQ.

Rating: D+. This didn't have time to go anywhere but again this was about storytelling rather than the match. They've done a great job at setting up Benoit vs. Raven when it finally would happen, which for some reason wasn't at Starrcade. Either way, this feud is making Benoit look like a star.

Post match Benoit is put in the Rings of Saturn again.

It's time for the start of the infamous segment. Rude, Bagwell, Konnan and Vincent take over the announce table and run off the announcers. Bagwell then goes over to the cameramen and make them say they're NWO and put on the shirts. The rest of the crew is made to put on the shirts too, including the guys in the back. Various WCW signs are taken down as Konnan goes into the production truck and makes everyone put on a shirt.

The big metal WCW letters on either side of the entrance are taken down, as is the WCW sign over the entrance. By the way, there is no resistance to this by any security or WCW wrestlers. To be fair though, I'd be terrified by a guy who can't wrestle anymore, a career jobber, a low level tag team and Konnan. The commentary booth now has a sign that says NWO Monday Nitro. The fans are rapidly getting restless and it's easy to see why. We're at seven minutes of this already and now they're heading to the ring.

Buff runs off the ring announcer and makes the WCW banners in the rafters NWO banners. We take a break and come back with the letters NWO spray painted on the mat. Rude demands and receives some lame fireworks as the NWO all stops to look at the NWO signs. A fairly big NWO sign is lowered from the ceiling as this has been going on nearly fifteen minutes now.

There's an actual NWO Monday Nitro intro video and the graphic in the corner says NWO Monday Nitro. Good thing they had those graphics ready and loaded into the truck on a moment's notice like that.

Here's Bischoff on his motorcycle to FINALLY do something more than have the fans sit around and watch people do construction work. He brings out the entire NWO as this segment somehow keeps going. Even Nash and Hogan are here this week so you know it's a big deal. Eric says tonight is Hogan's night so he's going to get some Christmas gifts.

First of all, Bischoff dedicates the show to Hogan and literally bows down to him. His first gift: NWO leaflets falling from the ceiling. Now he gets a motorcycle. Then he gets a second motorcycle. Then he gets a LONG open top limousine with built in hot tub and his own set of Nitro Girls. Bischoff promises even MORE gifts for him later because this hasn't gone on long enough yet.

In total, all this stuff took about half an hour. Literally, it was half an hour of construction work and Hogan receiving gifts. No stories, no action, no matches, nothing. The viewers left in droves for this segment, to the point where Raw actually won the second hour because they were having ANYTHING but this going on.

JJ Dillon tells Rick Steiner he doesn't have to go out there but Rick wants to.

The NWO sign is actually a big cube sitting in front of the entrance.

Rick Steiner vs. Scott Norton

Bischoff, Nash and Rude have taken over commentary. Rick hits a quick Steiner Line but gets caught by a shoulder block to put him down. They quickly go to the floor with Steiner being rammed into the post and pounded down with CLUBBING, yes CLUBBING I SAY forearms to the back. Back in and they trade clotheslines with Steiner taking over and dropping an elbow. Rick puts him on top for a belly to belly superplex but they TOTALLY screw it up with Rick basically just falling down and Norton landing on top of him. Before they can screw anything else up, Konnan runs in for the DQ.

Rating: D. I'm not sure whose fault that botch was but when a Steiner is having trouble with a suplex, it's time to throw in the towel on the match. Norton continues to be a guy that WCW protects like no other and I'm still not sure why. I know he's a bigger deal in Japan, but Jericho beat Chono on Nitro and I'm sure Chono is a bigger deal than Norton. Anyway, terrible match.

Post match Scott Steiner and Ray Traylor run out for the save, setting up a six man on Sunday.

Nash thinks Giant is going to retire and become a Nitro Girl instead of facing him on Sunday.

US Title: Disco Inferno vs. Curt Hennig

Disco is challenging here but he's TV Champion. Hogan's limo and motorcycles are still in the aisle. The name graphics are now vertical on the side of the screen instead of horizontal on the bottom like they usually are. Curt runs him over a few times to start before hitting a pair of dropkicks to send Disco out to the floor. Hennig pounds away on the floor before throwing Disco back in to continue the beating. Disco fires off some right hands but charges into a boot in the corner. Hennig knees him in the head and rakes Disco's eye and toys with him a bit more until the Hennigplex ends the torture.

Rating: D. Was there ANY need for this to be the TV Champion? Brad Armstrong wasn't available tonight? Disco has been on a roll lately but instead of letting him continue that and make the TV Champion look good, we have to see Hennig pick him apart because Hennig is part of the NWO and therefore awesome.

Heenan comes out to being hour #3 by begging to be allowed back on the commentary booth. He sucks up to Nash and Bischoff and is allowed back in before Bischoff gets a headache.

Harlem Heat vs. Scotty Riggs/Lodi

Heenan is offering to buy Rude dinner to prevent pain and agony. They stand around for a long time to start until it's Booker vs. Riggs. Mike

Tenay joins in on commentary again to give us Bobby, Mike and Rick. Booker easily takes down Riggs and they trade wristlocks. Scotty takes him down with a dropkick to give the Flock its only advantage of the match, but Booker spin kicks him down with ease. Off to Stevie Ray who misses an elbow and it's off to Lodi for the first time ever.

Ray immediately clotheslines him down as the punishment continues. A backbreaker keeps Lodi down and it's off to Booker for the ax kick. The Heat hit a double suplex for two before Stevie chokes with his knee. A bicycle kick gets two on Lodi as the Heat are barely breaking a sweat here. Stevie hits what would become known as the AA as Riggs walks out on his partner. The Big Apple Blast (Hart Attack with a side kick from Booker instead of a clothesline) ends this massacre.

Rating: D. Unless you're a big fan of Harlem Heat, there's no need to see this match. It felt like they were intentionally filling in time with nothing special at all. Harlem Heat didn't even have a match on the upcoming PPV yet they get a ten minute segment here to destroy a pair of jobbers? That doesn't do much for me.

Buff Bagwell vs. Chris Jericho

Jericho immediately backdrops Bagwell to the apron and hits the springboard dropkick to knock Bagwell to the outside. A kick to the head has Buff in trouble but he manages to take down Jericho as the Canadian comes back in. Jericho is knocked to the floor and we take an early break. Back with Bagwell taking over after a brief slugout so he can choke away a bit more. Jericho charges into a boot in the corner and it's time for the chinlock.

The announcers of course suck up to Bagwell because we have to make sure that every NWO guy on the team looks as amazing as they can. Jericho fights up and dropkicks Bagwell a few times before getting a near fall off a powerslam. Bagwell pounds him down again and goes up top, only to miss an elbow. Jericho tries a rana (I think) but they just collide and Jericho comes straight down instead of doing anything to Bagwell. After a double underhook backbreaker, Jericho looks for a superplex, only to be shoved down and hit with the Blockbuster for the pin.

Rating: D. ANOTHER lame match tonight with notable botches on moves that shouldn't be that hard to pull off. Also another match here with a guy with nothing to do on Sunday and a guy in a match no one cares about on Sunday, but hey he's in the NWO so we must be interested in him right?

Bagwell knocks out the referee for fun.

Here's the NWO again because we need to give Hogan more presents. Bischoff gives him a ring (make your own jokes) shaped like the WCW Title and various posters to commemorate major moments in his career. That's another six minutes I'll never get back.

Lex Luger vs. Randy Savage

Savage comes in like a crazy man (perfect for the role) and gets beaten down as a result. A hard clothesline in the corner has Luger in control but he charges into Savage's boot to put him down. Savage pounds away and chokes a lot before sending Luger to the floor. Luger goes face first into the steps but blocks a shot into the barricade.

Lex throws him into the crowd for a quick beating before we head back inside, where the referee is bumped by Luger's steel forearm. Savage hides behind Liz as Luger makes his big comeback and of course here's the NWO, led by Bagwell, for the big beatdown. The big elbow ends Luger in a worthless match.

Rating: D+. I'm trying to like some of these matches but they're not making it easy on me. Luger and Savage fought on and over for years and the matches were only good once in awhile. The best I can make of this is they wanted Bagwell to cost Luger a match here to give Luger a reason to want to beat him on Sunday, again working on the assumption that anyone cares about Buff Bagwell.

Here are Hogan and Bischoff YET AGAIN to finally close things out. Hogan talks about how many people he's beaten over the years and how Sting is going to be stung, but there's another gift for Hollywood. Eric says this isn't from him and here's Bret Hart in the limo. Hogan opens the box to reveal...a Hogan head. Sting shows up on top of the NWO sign at the entrance and ziplines down to the ring to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. I've seen a lot of dull go home shows before, but this one was absolutely horrible. This show barely promoted Starrcade at all and was all about the NWO taking over Nitro. I've read rumors before that the NWO was originally going to get Nitro but this show was such a ratings disaster that the plans were changed to WCW keeping it. That's how big of a flop this show was, but I guess since so many people had already been sold on Starrcade that it didn't make much of a difference.

Here's Starrcade if you're interested:

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