

On This Day: May 20, 1996 – Monday Nitro: The Calm Before The Storm

Monday Nitro #36

Date: May 20, 1996

Location: Monroe Civic Center, Monroe, Louisiana

Attendance: 4,000

Commentators: Bobby Heenan, Eric Bischoff

It's the night after Slamboree and the final one hour show in the history of Nitro. It's also the final show in the pre-NWO era. That being said, not a lot has changed at the previous show other than Great American Bash was set up with Mongo bringing out Kevin Greene to help him fight Anderson and Flair which shocked Flair for some reason despite Mongo talking about him on the previous Nitro. The Bash is only four weeks away so at least the build isn't that long. Anyway let's get to it.

We open with a clip of the same thing I just recapped.

Steiner Brothers vs. Fire and Ice

Scott Norton and Ice Train so for the sake of this I'll go with Norton to call Scott Norton and Scott for Scott Steiner. Train and Scott start us off as I continue to try to figure out what I liked about Ice Train. I think these two had a match at the Bash also. Scott hits a belly to belly and it's off to Norton and Rick. Norton adds a middle rope splash for no cover. Rick is like whatever and hits a German to bring in Scott.

To the floor and Scott drops a forearm off the top to Norton. Samoan Drop by Norton gets two as momentum shifts a bit. Rick and Train come in and it's a double clothesline to put both guys down again. Everything breaks down as apparently this is a 90 minute long broadcast. Maybe this is a preview show for the two hour variety? Not that it matters for this match as the referee just throws it out.

Rating: C-. Not awful here as they did ok for a battle of power. Their match at the PPV had almost twice as long which helped them a bit but at the same time there wasn't much to go on here. Fire and Ice wasn't all that good and no one really cared when they split in the fall. Norton went to the NWO and Train went into obscurity. Not much to talk about here but not bad.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Ric Flair

This should be good. Eddie grabs a headlock to start and takes Flair down with relative ease. They slug it out a bit as Eddie fires away with right hands and Flair of course chops away. Eddie speeds things up and sends Flair to the floor and Flair wisely gets away from any and all corners. Flair goes to his party table and grabs a chair which is taken away from him by the referee of course.

After a quick chase around the ring we come back for a staredown. BIG chops in the corner by Eddie and down goes Flair. We take a break with Flair firing a thumb into the eye. Back and they speed things up a bit with Eddie hitting clotheslines and a top rope sunset flip for two. Eddie actually grabs the Figure Four and Flair is in trouble. Eddie is no Jay Lethal apparently though and there's the rope. Out to the floor and Flair takes over, landing a suplex as I think he wants to damage Guerrero.

Bobby talks about Flair being a 15 time champion and Bischoff says 13, because we're not counting THOSE championships because they're not WRESTLING championships. This guy is a walking comedy show. Flair hammers away but gets caught in an O'Connor Roll for two. Eddie gets a cross body but his knee gives out so he can't cover. Flair Flip in the corner and Eddie dropkicks him off the apron to the floor.

Flair takes over on the floor as this has been a really good match so far. Eddie gets pounded in the corner but grabs a tornado DDT. He grabs him by the hand, walks up the ropes, walks across the ropes and gets a rana for two. Slam sets up the Frog Splash but Eddie hurt his leg again.

Flair....tries a nip up? What weird parallel universe have I slipped into? Now we go to school and it's Figure Four time. Eddie blocked it for a bit but now he's caught. He tries to turn it over but the women help Flair out and Eddie can't get his shoulders up and he's out for a pin. That was AWESOME.

Rating: A-. This might be the best Nitro match in the history of the show and I've never heard anyone mention it. It's Flair vs. Eddie for nearly 20 minutes, making it one of the longest matches in the history of the show so far. Very good match and totally awesome as Eddie gave Flair all he wanted. I loved this.

Flair and the girls come up to Gene at his VIP table and Savage is mentioned to a big pop. That's not an issue apparently so Flair talks about football players for awhile and it's the same stuff he's said for months now. Flair takes the champagne and leaves with it and the ladies.

Back from a break and there are candles, champagne and fruit at the announce table with Flair, Bischoff and Heenan.

Tag Titles: Faces of Fear vs. Sting/Lex Luger

During the challengers' entrance Flair is ranting about how we need a waiter. Luger vs. Meng to start us off. Apparently Liz likes Luger's peccadance. That won't lead to her eventual death or anything right? Meng actually does a drop toe hold as Flair praises him. Bischoff shows his lack of historical wrestling as he asks if Flair has even wrestled a football player, apparently never having heard of Wahoo McDaniel so Flair goes off on him a bit.

Flair is having a ball on commentary, singing and making jokes about Debra. Back with Barbarian vs. Sting and down goes the painted one. Bischoff shows the replay of the PPV which was absolutely terrible. Barbarian gets a BIG kick off fear for two. That looked great if nothing else. Belly to belly release suplex off the top which looked AWESOME also. Barbarian is looking great here.

Double top rope headbutt and I think Sting may be dead. Luger comes in for the delay so Sting somehow kicks out at two. Heenan and Flair are cracking me up here as they're debating which party to go to and having sandwiches. Sting dives for a tag but still can't reach it either. He finally avoids a top rope headbutt from Barbarian and dives at Luger for the hot tag and everything breaks down. Sting knocks Barbarian off the top and a top rope splash by Sting sets up Luger for the pin.

Rating: C+. Pretty good little tag match here as Sting sold like a master and it allowed for a decent match to come out of it. Luger's sneakiness

was dropped in favor of other stuff in about a week which is fine because I couldn't handle another backstabbing angle. Anyway pretty good match here and fine for what it was.

Flair is told Savage is here and isn't exactly happy.

Savage is still trying to get in so Flair laughs a bit. Apparently Savage's future is being discussed by WCW officials. Savage says make the right decision and is thinking about running through the cops to get at Flair. They shove him back again with ease and that's about it for this part.

Glacier is still coming.

Diamond Dallas Page vs. Brad Armstrong

Page has his normal music here now minus the Self High Five part. Oh and he's Diamond Dallas at this point for some reason. He won Battlebowl the previous night and has a benefactor and a ring now apparently. Armstrong tries some basic stuff to start so Page bails into the corner. Considering there's no way that Armstrong can win here we're kind of wasting time at this point.

Nitro moves to two hours next week apparently. Page stomps away and we take a break. Back with Page holding onto a chinlock as I have a feeling this is going to be rather boring here. Backslide gets two for Armstrong and that's about it at the moment. Page hits a spear in the corner but the second misses and the arm hits the post. Flair praises Armstrong actually as he rams Page into the buckles and then the mat. Top rope

cross body by Armstrong gets two and there's the Diamond Cutter to end this. He didn't have it mastered yet though so he kind of ran with it at this point. He'd get better though.

Rating: D+. Pretty weak match here but at the same time Page was still getting better. That's why they put him with Eddie later to give him some real experience like they did here but Eddie was an actual feud. Anyway, not much of a match here but they had to get him on the show, if nothing else for this next part.

Gene talks to Page who praises himself for a good while. His foot was on the floor at one point so they're taking the title shot from him and giving it to Luger. Page keeps the ring though for no adequately explained reason. Page rants a bit and wouldn't get the title shot for like two years.

WCW World Title: Arn Anderson vs. The Giant

I could listen to Anderson's Horsemen music forever. Kevin Sullivan is with him for some reason. When do you ever see him getting world title shots anyway? Jimmy Hart and Sullivan argue a lot before the match. Anderson tries a go behind to start and Giant is just like dude, no.

Arn hammers away in the corner and that goes about as well as you would expect it to. Slam puts Arn down and Giant isn't even sweating. Anderson is sent to the floor and this somehow goes even more slowly. Giant gets crotched on the rope as he comes back in and Anderson manages to take him down. DDT is attempted and Giant is again like dude, no. He lifts him up and the chokeslam ends this clean.

Rating: D+. I'd go with an N/A here if I used those anymore but that's really all there is to say here. It ran about 3:40 and had about two minutes of action in it. Giant destroyed him here other than a few shots. The problem was Giant was a guy that was totally awesome in theory but he was green beyond belief. He was slowly getting better but it took a few more years before he could work a match longer than five minutes without someone great in there with him. He was trying though and he actually improved slowly though, which is what made him worth the time.

Heenan tries to steal all the stuff Flair brought him to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. This was a pretty good show overall but they didn't know how to fill in an hour and a half show yet, which is why the NWO was absolutely required when they made the move to two hours the next week. This had a great match and another decent one on there as a lot of stuff started to shift. Anyway, next week is probably the most famous moment in WCW history so this doesn't mean much in comparison.

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