

Monday Nitro – December 29, 1997: The 1998 Preview

Monday Nitro #120

Date: December 29, 1997

Location: Baltimore Arena, Baltimore, Maryland

Attendance: 12,196

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

We're into a new era in WCW now as Starrcade 1997 is finally over. We round out the year with this show, where the story is who is actually the WCW World Champion. Sting did win the title, after being pinned by Hogan by way of a "fast" count. The problem is the count wasn't exceptionally fast, therefore making it look like Hogan won clean. Tonight is allegedly a huge night for WCW but I wonder how they manage to screw it up. Let's get to it.

We open with stills from last night of Sting winning the title.

Purple and yellow balloons are dropped because WCW is awesome!

The Nitro Girls dance to start.

Larry Zbyszko gets a bit entrance for saving Nitro for WCW. Tony suggests that NWO fans watch Cartoon Network once their moms go to bed. Larry says now he wants Hall.

Glacier vs. Goldberg

Glacier jumps Goldie to start so Goldberg punches him square in the head. A release slam puts Glacier down again and it's spear/Jackhammer to end it.

Gene brings out Bret Hart for a chat. During his entrance, the announcers think that they jumped the gun about Bret joining the NWO. Bret talks about actions speaking louder than words and how yesterday was about justice. As for the NWO, Bret agrees with a fan by saying they suck. The NWO is a bunch of scum and they remind him of the scum he just left. Could it be because most of them used to work there?

Bret is glad to see the rise of WCW because he looks forward to matches with Luger, Sting and Giant. He runs down some of the prominent members of the NWO, saying that Hogan is going to pay the biggest price. There won't be any running away like there was a few years back, because it's time for them to fight.

As the announcers talk about Bret's promo, Raven gets a mic and says that he and the Flock will give Benoit pain if that's what he wants.

Chris Benoit vs. Van Hammer

Benoit goes right after the Flock, but amazingly enough he gets beaten down by six guys at once. Van Hammer pulls him into the ring and pounds on him before nearly botching a superplex. Benoit avoids a charge into the corner and throws on the Crossface, drawing in the Flock for a DQ. This was nothing.

Post match Benoit gets beaten down until Mongo makes the save.

Here's Flair with something to say. He congratulates DDP on his victory and bringing the US Title back to WCW. As for Hennig, Flair still has unfinished business with him so watch out. This brings Flair to Sting, who brought it back where it belongs. Flair congratulates Bret for making the save last night because Bret is in the big leagues now. Bret may be a big time columnist and referee, but Flair has a column from the Baltimore Sun. Flair reads comments from the paper, which basically say Flair is the best ever. The author of these comments: Dave Meltzer of the Wrestling Observer, both mentioned by Flair.

Cruiserweight Title: Ultimo Dragon vs. Eddie Guerrero

Eddie is defending and jumps Dragon from behind in the aisle. A very quick powerbomb puts Dragon down and a suplex does the same before Eddie puts him on top. Dragon fights back but has his super rana countered. A tornado DDT puts Dragon down but he counters a suplex into the Dragon Sleeper for the tap out and the title in less than 90 seconds. So Eddie dominates the division for months before tapping out in a minute and twenty six seconds? Really?

Post match Eddie beats up Dragon and throws him to the floor.

Here's the NWO for the first time tonight. It's Hogan and Bischoff with Hogan already posing on the stage. Bischoff says that Hogan is still champion so treat him as such. Hogan says made wrestling today and IS wrestling, so let's get some facts straight. He talks about how JJ Dillon said Nick Patrick was the only referee for the main event last night and we get a video showing Dillon saying just that. Hogan also remembers Patrick counting the pin and calling for the bell, so here are some stills of the bell not ringing.

Now we get slow motion video of Bret beating up Nick Patrick and Hogan bragging about winning the match clean in the middle of the ring. To a degree, that's rather true which is one of the many problems with last night. He and Bischoff are open for suggestions as to how to fix the problem, and it better be soon.

Heenan comes back to the broadcasting booth, saying that he was being brave last week rather than joining the NWO. That's very Heenan of him. Bobby ranting and raving about how he's the only one that loves WCW is funny stuff.

US Title: Mortis vs. Diamond Dallas Page

Page is in light jeans here for some reason and starts with a headlock and neckbreaker for no cover. Vanderberg gets on the apron, allowing Mortis to hit Page low to take over. A wheelbarrow mat slam gets two on the champion and Mortis pounds away in the corner. He does Page's spinning finger point and drives Page face first into the mat for two. A spinwheel kick gets two on Page but he breaks up the Flatliner and lays Mortis out with the Diamond Cutter to retain.

Rating: D+. Oh come on like Page was going to lose the title the night after he won it. Mortis is a good choice for a spot like this as he has a solid look and an incredibly solid moveset, but once he became Chris Kanyon he was just another guy and that's where his career pretty much hit its ceiling.

Here's JJ Dillon who says that Sting officially is the world champion, and apparently he's going to defend the title against any member of the NWO tonight. Gee I wonder which member is going to take him up on that.

TV Title: Booker T vs. Disco Inferno

Disco is defending. He dances to start and is booed, so Booker raises the roof to a good reaction. A hard clothesline puts Inferno down as the fans are almost silent. Disco misses an elbow so Booker breakdances a bit before taking it to the floor. The champ is whipped into the barricade but catches Booker with a Chartbuster (Stunner) onto the top rope as they come back in. Both guys fall back over the top and out to the floor. This time it's Booker being sent into the barricade as the crowd stays silent.

Disco breaks up the count before bringing Booker back in, only to be caught in a sunset flip for two. Off to a chinlock by the champion as we've had a grueling three minutes of action so far. Back up and a neckbreaker puts Booker down as the announcers talk non stop about Sting's challenge. Disco gets caught by a spinwheel kick and a backbreaker to set up the Harlem Hangover for the pin and the title.

Rating: D. Not only did the match bore everyone to sleep but the announcers literally talked about the match for two seconds. Booker T's singles career gets started here and would wind up having a TON of titles in addition to ten tag titles. The match mostly sucked though as there was no chemistry here at all.

JJ is back out and says no one has accepted the challenge. Bischoff comes out and says Hogan accepts the challenge. This is yet another big SCREW YOU to the PPV fans, as they get nothing exclusive because the main event of the biggest show of the year is being given away for free 24 hours later.

Curt Hennig vs. Chris Jericho

Here's a match that could have been awesome if their careers hadn't overlapped like they did. The cleanshaven look still doesn't look right on Rude. Hennig looks mad tonight and it's time to talk about Hogan vs. Sting. Tony claims that the fans going for popcorn are off to call their friends and tell them about what's happening. If the friends are wrestling fans, wouldn't they likely be watching the show? Jericho sends Hennig to the floor and Curt has a conference with Rude.

Back in and Hennig pounds away on Jericho in the corner with punches and chops before putting on a chinlock. Tony actually complains about Bischoff whining too much. TONY SCHIAVONE is annoyed that someone is whining too much. Jericho fights up and slams him down but botches the Lionsault by not flipping at all and landing back first on Hennig's knees. The PerfectPlex ends this a second later.

Rating: D. This was barely a match at all as a long portion of it was spent with Jericho in the chinlock. The commentary here is really annoying though as they don't even react to stuff like the botch because they're too busy being smug about keeping Nitro last night. This was a lot weaker of a match than I was expecting.

Post match Jericho goes nuts, banging a chair against a post while shouting about how he's sick of this.

Here's Scott Hall with something to say. The announcers spend the entire entrance talking about how the NWO sucks and cracks themselves up in the process. Hall says that being here in Baltimore for the holidays is just too sweet. The NWO wins the survey and that's it. Seriously that's the whole promo. Were they running four minutes short or something?

Buff Bagwell vs. Lex Luger

Another match that you were supposed to have to pay to see last night, but here it is for everyone anyway. To be fair though, this is their FOURTH match against each other on Nitro and their sixth this month counting a Saturday Night match and the PPV match. Tony and Mike go on a rant against Bagwell for bragging about a winning streak against Luger but all the matches being DQ's or countouts. I guess we're ignoring the pin from last night because it might make the NWO look good.

Norton pulls Luger's leg as a distraction to start, causing Luger to chase him around. Buff jumps him as he comes back in and the Bagwell control begins. He jumps up and down on Lex's back before getting two off a neckbreaker. The Blockbuster misses and Luger hits his clotheslines followed by a powerslam. Norton gets knocked off the apron and the Rack ends this quick. Nothing to see here, but well done WCW by having Bagwell lose in three minutes the night after the win that was supposed to elevate him.

WCW World Title: Sting vs. Hollywood Hogan

Hogan really does look weird without his belt. Sting power walks to the ring and just like last night, is beaten down by a few Hogan punches. Hollywood hits him with the belt over and over. Sting gets choked on the mat as it's completely one sided so far. They head to the floor with Sting still stumbling around. We're a minute in and the world champion

has had no offense. A slam puts Sting down on the floor before heading back inside. This is the most offense Hogan has been on in years. Sting Hulks Up and gets in his first offense after a minute and forty seconds.

Sting pounds away in the corner and sends Hogan out to the floor. Hollywood is whipped into the barricade and we head back inside without the missing splash against the steel. An atomic drop puts Hogan down but Hogan comes back with some chops and a clothesline in the corner. Hogan pounds away at the head and gets two off the big boot. Back up and they collide with Hogan going down, allowing Sting to do the falling low blow spot. Hogan gets up again and slams him down, only to miss the leg drop. Sting stomps on his hands and hits the Splash....but we're out of time and the show ends.

Rating: D+. This wasn't much as we only got about five minutes. However, Sting looked FAR better here than he did last night, which is exactly what he should have done at Starrcade. The problem here though was Hogan continued to look like he was wrestling any schnook off the street instead of the great hope for WCW. The ending sucks too but we'll get to that in a bit.

Overall Rating: C+. This wasn't that bad, but it's a sign of terrible things to come. That ending basically signaled the end of Sting meaning much in this war against the NWO, but we'll get to that at a later date. As for the rest of the show, it wasn't have bad with everything going very quickly and a lot of stuff happening, including two title changes. You can see a lot of 1998 coming up here and it doesn't look all that bad. We'll get to the horrors soon enough though.

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