

Souled Out 1998 Redo: One Of WCW's Best Shows Ever

Souled Out 1998

Date: January 24, 1998

Location: Hara Arena, Dayton, Ohio

Attendance: 5,486

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Bobby Heenan, Dusty Rhodes

We're a month removed from Starrcade and there's no world champion at the moment due to the screwy events of Starrcade and the Nitro that followed. WCW has promised an announcement on the title situation tonight instead of an actual match because why have the match when you can drag it out for another month? The main event tonight is Flair vs. Hart in a well built up feud. Let's get to it.

The opening video is Bischoff surrounded by candles in what looks like a demonic ceremony as videos play of Nash vs. Giant. Bischoff says he's looking to buy more souls because the devil hath no fury like Souled Out. It's remarkable how much better these videos were back in the 90s than the generic ones we see today.

The announcers preview the main events. The set is as basic as you can get but unique at the same time: it's just a stand alone video screen and the wrestlers walk out from behind it. It's a cool set up.

Juventud Guerrera/Super Calo/Lizmark Jr./Chavo Guerrero Jr. vs. La Parka/Psychosis/Silver King/El Dandy

This is under lucha libre rules, meaning going to the floor is the same as a tag. These matches are always insane so bear with me when things get nuts. Calo and Psychosis get things going with Calo armdragging him to the floor. No one replaces Psychosis so he comes back in to chop Calo down and drops an elbow for no cover. Calo climbs Psychosis' chest in the corner and powerbombs him down for two before it's off to Lizmark vs. Silver King. King misses a dropkick in the corner and Lizmark backflips away.

A tilt-a-whirl powerslam gets two for Lizmark but King comes right back with a running DDT. Off to El Dandy vs. Chavo with Guerrero monkey flipping Dandy from the corner before being taken down by a backdrop. A clothesline puts both guys on the floor and it's off to La Parka vs. Juvy who both dive at the guys on the floor. They fight on the apron for a bit before Juvy's springboard is caught in mid air by La Parka. The skeleton man (La Parka) struts around and sits Juvy in Guerrero's corner before being pounded by Juvy's partners.

Guerrero hits a gorgeous top rope hurricanrana to take La Parka to the floor. Lizmark comes in with a top rope standing Lionsault for two on Psychosis but El Dandy comes in without a tag. Things are quickly breaking down with Calo getting two off a top rope headscissors on Dandy. Silver King comes in with a somersault legdrop for two on Calo before Juvy walks in and botches a rana attempt. King's powerbomb is broken up and Juvy's 450 connects for two as La Parka makes the save.

Psychosis hits the guillotine legdrop on Chavo for two before La Parka comes in to throw Chavo to the floor. El Dandy dropkicks Calo to the floor but Silver King completely misses his dive. Calo pops up to the top rope to dive onto King before almost everyone dives onto everyone else. Chavo and Psychosis are left alone in the ring with Guerrero hitting a quick tornado DDT for the pin.

Rating: B. It's an idea that has worked time after time and this was no exception: take a bunch of luchadores and let them go nuts for ten minutes to open the show. Everyone looked great out there and the dive sequence at the end was excellent with all of the guys hitting their spots almost perfectly. This was the perfect choice for an opener and the crowd is hot right off the bat.

Post match La Parka cleans house with the chair, including his own teammates, sending the audience into a frenzy.

Raven vs. Chris Benoit

This is one of the best built matches WCW has had in a long time with Benoit having to face every member of the Flock before finally getting his hands on Raven. Raven has sent all of his lackeys to attack Benoit

time after time and tonight Benoit FINALLY gets his hands on their leader. The Flock comes out to back Raven but are ejected by an executive order. Raven rants about being shunned all his life and being fine with it here. The match is also Raven's Rules, meaning anything goes.

Raven starts with a baseball slide before Benoit is even in the ring. Benoit is sent into the barricade and then the steps before heading inside for a backslide on Raven for two. Benoit is sent right back to the floor so Raven can blast him in the back with a chair. Back in and Benoit is snapmared and bulldogged down onto the chair for two. Benoit comes back with a drop toehold onto the chair (Dusty: "YOU TAKE A SEAT! YOU TAKE A SEAT! YOU TAKE A SEAT!") but can't immediately follow up.

Chris hits the snap suplex onto the chair for two of his own before ripping Raven's shirt off. Raven bails to the floor and gets caught by a baseball slide before being sent into the steps. That's a nice callback to what Raven did to open the match. Bird Boy stumbles up the aisle with Benoit chopping him down along the way. There's another snap suplex on the ramp to put Raven in big trouble. Back in and Benoit stomps the chair into Raven's head before hitting the Swan Dive onto the chair but both guys are out.

Benoit finally covers for two but can't even stand up to keep the pressure on Raven. A northern lights suplex is countered into Raven's DDT but Raven is too weakened to cover. It's Benoit covering Raven for two before putting on the Crossface. Raven doesn't try to escape and instead smiles at the pain. He laughs himself into unconsciousness in a creepy moment to end the match.

Rating: A. If there's a better Raven match out there I'd love to see it. These two beat the tar out of each other and it was brutal throughout. This is the kind of emotional response you can get to a well built feud. The place went NUTS for Benoit's win, which makes you wonder why he was wasted for so long in WCW.

Post match Kidman comes out for the save but Dean Malenko runs out to put him in the Cloverleaf. The rest of the Flock comes in but Dean and Chris fight them off.

Cruiserweight Title: Chris Jericho vs. Rey Mysterio Jr.

Rey is defending after winning the title nine days earlier. Jericho had injured Rey a few days before the title shot before earning a title shot later to set this up. The fans chant JERICH0 SUCKS and Chris is stunned. Jericho makes fun of Rey for being short so the champion armdrags him down. A hard clothesline gives Jericho control but Rey comes hooks a slingshot rana to send Jericho to the outside. Rey's knee goes out while Jericho is on the floor and things slow down.

Jericho charges back in but gets caught in a chinlock followed by a victory roll for two but Rey's knee goes out again. A running hair takedown puts Chris down but a hurricanrana attempt is countered into a modified hot shot to put Rey down again. Jericho hits a double underhook powerbomb (called a shoulder breaker by Tony) on the floor followed by a running knee to the face. Why isn't he going for the knee?

Back in and Jericho sends the knee into the buckle before toying with Rey a bit. Rey fights back with the good knee and manages a jumping Killswitch for two. Jericho is sent to the apron and a baseball slide takes out the knee, sending Jericho face first into the apron. A big flip dive over the top takes Jericho down again but the knee is damaged even worse. As they come back in, Jericho breaks up a springboard attempt and Rey's knee is hurt again. He tries a springboard hurricanrana but Jericho catches him in the air and puts on the Liontamer for the tap out and the title.

Rating: C+. The match was about Rey's bad knee with Jericho toying with him the entire time until the end. At the end of the day there wasn't much Rey could do on one leg and Jericho played it perfectly. This made Jericho look like a goofy killer which is perfect for his character at the time.

Post match Jericho says the fans must really like him before kicking Rey's knee out. The leg is crushed between a toolbox and the steel steps to put him out for a LONG time, as in the next six months.

Here's JJ Dillon with the world title. He talks about the big mess in the last month and how he's tried to come up with the best answer. Dillon

brings out Roddy Piper for the first time since Halloween Havoc. Roddy talks about nothing of note before bringing out Sting, Hall and Hogan for the big announcement. Piper says that Hall earned his world title shot, but since there's no world champion, Hall has to take a back seat for the time being.

As for Hogan, he's a three time world champion and Piper would love to put the title around his waist.....NOT! Seriously that's what Piper said. The solution to all the problems over the belt: a rematch between Hogan and Sting at Super Brawl. Sting gets in Hogan's face and Hall walks away with a disgusted look on his face. Somehow this took over twelve minutes.

TV Title: Rick Martel vs. Booker T

Booker is defending and this is face vs. face. Martel saved Booker from some beatdowns and was granted a title shot as a thank you. Booker takes him by the arm to start before running Martel over with a shoulder block. An O'Connor Roll gets two for Rick and it's a stalemate. They trade hammerlocks until Booker gets two off a clothesline and hooks an armbar. The champion misses an elbow but spins up for a side kick for two.

Back to the armbar but Martel fights up with a dropkick for two. Booker comes back with a superkick for two before hooking the third armbar. Rick is accidentally kicked low and Martel is angry. He goes nuts on Booker with right hands and chops before hooking a chinlock. Rick gets two off a spinebuster and goes to work on Booker's back.

Off to a reverse chinlock on Booker despite his leg being under the bottom rope. Back up and Booker hits a flying forearm smash but Rick holds the rope to avoid a dropkick. The Quebec Crab goes on but Booker is right next to the ropes. The ax kick sets up the Harlem Hangover to retain the title for Booker.

Rating: B-. This was a different kind of match with an old school style to it. There was a basic story being told with both guys playing mental chess to outwit the other. Martel's comeback is very impressive as he looks like he hasn't missed a step in all the years he's been gone. The ending was a little abrupt but this was a very good match for the most part.

Post match Martel takes the belt from the referee but hands it back to Booker and raises his hand. Booker shakes Martel's hand in a display of mutual respect. Booker leaves and Saturn runs in to beat down Martel after their altercations on Raw and Nitro.

Scott Hall vs. Larry Zbyszko

These two have a long history dating back to the AWA in the 80s and it's picked up here in a battle of tradition vs. disrespect. Hall has his lackey Louie Spicolli with him. Larry had promised he wouldn't come to the ring alone and points to Dusty Rhodes to be his corner man. Scott's toothpick is swatted out of the air and Larry takes him to the mat. Hall goes after the arm as Tony makes fun of Heenan for thinking Larry was bringing Ted DiBiase to the ring with him. That's hardly a ridiculous guess.

Larry offers a test of strength but gets Hall's arms moving so fast that he slaps Scott in the face. Hall gets suckered into an abdominal stretch as Dusty plays cheerleader. Larry goes for a front chancery but Hall counters with a right hand to the face. Hall punches Larry down in the corner before tying up the legs like an STF but putting on an armbar instead.

A clothesline puts Larry down as the fans are all over Hall. The fallaway slam puts Larry down but he backdrops out of the Outsider's Edge. Zbyszko pounds away in the corner but accidentally spin kicks the referee down. In a nice move, Larry plays possum to catch Hall in the front chancery but Spicolli runs in for the DQ.

Rating: D+. This was pretty good considering it was Larry's second match in several years. Hall had to tone it down to let Zbyszko keep up with him but the match was hardly a disaster. It's not a great match on its own but the long story building up to it makes the payoff a bit better. Not much but some.

Post match Dusty elbows Spicolli before accidentally hitting Larry. Hall points at Dusty who opens his shirt to reveal the NWO colors. Dusty drops some elbows and talks trash as the announcers are disgusted. This is one of those ideas that was supposed to be a big deal but most people didn't

care.

Steiner Brothers/Ray Traylor vs. Buff Bagwell/Konnan/Scott Norton

Tony is upset and doesn't want to call the match so Mike Tenay joins commentary. For the sake of clarity, Scott Steiner will be the only person referred to as Scott. Rick and Bagwell get things going with Bagwell imitating the dog bark. He tries to take Rick to the mat but bails to the corner when the former collegiate wrestler is ready to go. Rick poses at Buff in the corner for a quick laugh. Some suplexes put Buff down and it's off to Traylor.

Rick and Traylor start tagging in and out pretty quickly while leaving Scott on the apron. The idea is that Scott hasn't been tagging out during their recent matches so his partners aren't letting him in at all. Traylor gets caught in the wrong corner and it's off to Norton for some standing splashes. Konnan gets in a cheap shot to knock Traylor into a powerslam for no cover. Tony is back to whatever you call normal for him as the NWO double teams Traylor.

Norton and Traylor hit a double clothesline and it's back to Rick. The announcers say that it's surprising that Scott didn't get the tag, even though Traylor fell into Rick as he was much closer. Tony tries to defend the bored crowd as being stunned by Dusty's actions. The NWO takes Rick down as Scott is now standing on the same side of the apron as Traylor to get a tag.

Norton slams Rick and it's off to a chinlock from Bagwell. Konnan comes in for a leg lock as this match is dragging badly. Bagwell and Konnan double team Rick until Traylor makes the save, allowing for a tag from both of Rick's partners at once. Everything breaks down and Scott hits a dragon suplex and the Screwdriver on Konnan for the pin.

Rating: D. This was long and boring and not much else. The idea of Scott being left out in the cold was fine but in the end it wound up meaning nothing at all. The problem for the Steiners was they had no one to challenge them with the Outsiders feud being done to death so their time as a tag team was long since over.

Post match Scott and Bagwell have an unheard chat and a pose down. Scott leaves on his own.

The Giant vs. Kevin Nash

Bischoff and Hogan come out with Nash. This is a match that was supposed to happen at Starrcade but Nash "hurt his knee", allegedly over not wanting to job. Both guys had to put up \$1.5 million as a bond with Nash guaranteeing to appear and Giant promising not to attack Nash before the match. Giant shoves Nash back and picks him up for a pretty good looking belly to back suplex. Nash gets crushed back into the corner and choked down on the mat as this is one sided so far.

Kevin bails to the floor for a meeting with Hogan before hitting a running clothesline in the corner. Giant reverses an Irish whip and a big boot puts Nash down again. Nash actually leapfrogs over Giant before kicking him in the face to not much success. Giant is punched to the floor and Nash DIVES over the top rope, only to be caught in mid air by the bigger man. Giant rams him into the steps but Hogan blasts him in the back with a chair to give Nash a big advantage.

Back in and Nash pounds away, only to have Giant shrug the offense off before kicking Nash in the face to get himself a breather. Back up and Nash pounds away in the corner, only to be caught in an atomic drop. Giant clotheslines him down a few times and hits a big boot with a point to Hogan. Bischoff distracts the referee, allowing Hogan to throw Nash some hot coffee. Giant is blinded by the liquid and Nash delivers a famously botched powerbomb, dropping Giant on the top of his head for the pin.

Rating: D+. This was better than expected but the ending is the only thing that people remember is the ending. It's so odd to see Nash doing stuff like dives over the top rope and leapfrogs but he didn't look all that awkward. The interesting thing to me though: allegedly Nash was booked to do the job at Starrcade, then screwed over the fans and got to win the match once it happened. That's quite the reward.

Giant is looked at for a good while.

Ric Flair vs. Bret Hart

This is your basic battle for respect. Bret has a column in the Calgary Sun newspaper and said that he was better than Flair. That wasn't cool with Ric and we had a main event. This is Bret's in ring debut for WCW. Feeling out process to start until Bret takes over with a headlock. Flair reverses into one of his own and runs Bret over with a shoulder as we're still in first gear.

Bret grabs a Figure Four of all things but Flair is almost immediately in the ropes. A suplex gets two for Hart and it's chinlock time. Flair fights up but loses a battle of top wristlocks, allowing Bret to take him back down with an armbar. Bret slaps him out to the floor and Flair takes a breather. Back in and Hart puts on the headlock again to keep Flair at a slow pace. Flair fights up and pounds away in the corner and suplexes his way out of a quick sleeper.

Ric has the referee check the time so he can hit Bret low like only Naitch can. A knee drop gets two and it's off to a chinlock on Hart. Back up and they slug it out until Bret grabs a neckbreaker to put both guys down. Hart gets two off a bulldog and it's time to go for the leg. He cannonballs down onto the knee and loads up the Figure Four around the post, only to have Flair kick him back into the barricade. Back in and it's Ric's turn to go after the knee with the knee crusher and a few pulls on the leg.

The Figure Four is countered into a small package by Bret but now the Figure Four works for Flair. Bret finally turns it over to escape before slamming Ric off the top. Bret comes right back with a Russian legsweep and takes down his straps so Flair can chop him even harder. The Five Moves of Doom set up a superplex which sets up the Sharpshooter for the submission.

Rating: B-. Solid match here but it wasn't going to be able to live up to the hype. It's a great debut for Bret and good proof that he still has it with an ending that makes sense. The match was all about respect and Bret won the match with pure wrestling skill and a submission hold. That's the right choice.

Lex Luger vs. Randy Savage

Yeah this is the main event instead of Flair vs. Hart. This is a rematch from the night after Starrcade which wasn't a big deal at all. Savage bails to the floor to start and the stalling is already rolling. Luger is dropped throat first across the barricade for two back inside. A suplex gets two on Luger as this is really basic stuff so far. Savage chokes away and Liz gets in some of her own.

Luger fights out of the corner but has to deal with Liz again. He finally goes after her but the trap works to perfection with Savage getting in another cheap shot. They head into the crowd with Luger taking over as this match drags on. Back in and Luger hits the steel forearm as Hall and Hogan come to ringside. Savage is sent into Hall and Luger throws him into the Rack for the fast submission.

Rating: D-. This would have been a bad match on Nitro and it's even worse on a pay per view. These guys had no business having the main event slot on this show as the match was treated like a midcard match for weeks setting up the show. Nothing to see here at all and a very bad choice to end the show.

The NWO beats Savage down until Sting makes the save to end the show.

Overall Rating: B+. This is one of the best WCW PPVs ever produced with four good to great matches and only two that weren't at least good. The main event is a stupid choice but I'm guessing Hogan had to be in the final segment so it had to go on last. Definitely check out Benoit vs. Raven for a great fight if you don't have three hours to watch the whole thing, but if you do have the time the whole show is worth checking out.

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