

On This Day: June 25, 2001 – Monday Night Raw: That's How The Invasion Started

Monday Night Raw

Date: June 25, 2001

Location: Madison Square Garden, New York City, New York

Attendance: 13,763

Commentators: Jim Ross, Paul Heyman

Ok so we're past King of the Ring now and there are a few more developments. Benoit isn't going to be back for over a year after having the injury angle last night that wrote him off after he hurt his neck in TLC 4. Edge is the new King of the Ring. Booker T has debuted, and Austin is still champion. Tonight something huge (well kind of huge at least) happens, so let's get to it.

Here's Vince immediately and he's not happy. Austin talks about a rumor that said if Benoit or Jericho won the title, they would defect to WCW. Granted that's not an issue because Austin is still champion so who cares? As for Booker T though, what does the T stand for? Maybe it means terrible, trash or Troglodyte. Or maybe tempo....I spelled Troglodyte right? I'm stunned. It might mean temporarily employed because all of WCW is going out of business. I thought they already did that.

No WCW star has any business being in MSG, because this is hallowed ground. We get a clip of Vince's dad being inducted into the MSG Hall of Fame, complete with Todd Pettingil voiceover. This is more like a career retrospective on Vince Sr. and we hear various praise for him with Gorilla Monsoon getting the loudest pop. Oh this is his Hall of Fame induction video. Got it.

Vince guarantees more memorable MSG moments here tonight. That

takes us to the theme song.

Brothers of Destruction vs. Dudleys for the titles tonight.

Hardcore Title: Test vs. Rhyno

Test had used the newly debuted Stacy to distract Rhyno into losing the title so this is Rhyno's rematch. Rhyno starts out strong and hits a running shoulder in the corner. Out to the floor already as Rhyno looks for a weapon. They do a fairly nifty sequence with a trashcan resulting in Rhyno charting head first into it. The announcers talk about MSG instead but that's probably more interesting anyway.

They go into the crowd and Test suplexes him onto a piece of a barricade to bend it in half. They go to the back now and Test tries to put him through some tables but Rhyno stops him. And never mind as Test puts him through them anyway with an elbow for two. There's a cart involved but Test is backdropped onto the concrete. A quick Gore puts the title back on Rhyno.

Rating: D. If you've seen one of these, you've seen them all. Test was nothing of note but somehow he wound up with Stacy Keibler in real life and Stephanie on TV. The match was your usual I hit you, you hit me thing which is only so interesting when it's not being played for comedy. Not much here.

What is much here is that Mike Awesome (with short hair) runs up the tunnel, hits Rhyno with a pipe and wins the title. That's the first time a WCW wrestler has had a "match" in MSG ever to my knowledge, which is your historical thing I mentioned in the intro.

Light Heavyweight Title: Jeff Hardy vs. X-Pac

Jeff is 23 here. I'm 23 now so that makes me shake my head. Things speed up very quickly to start and the fans are all over Pac. They do some flips and Jeff fires off a baseball slide to take over. He loads up Whisper in the Wind but Pac

kicks him off the top and into the barricade. Pac counters a rana into a powerbomb for two. This is a rematch from last night. A dropkick knocks X-Pac out of the air and here comes Jeff. Bronco Buster meets boot but the Swanton misses and some feet on the ropes give Pac the title.

Rating: C+. Fun old school Cruiserweight style match here with both guys flying all over the place. Jeff was fun to watch when he was on and he was on around this time. Unfortunately they put him back into the Hardy Boys and while they were good, it was kind of a step back for them at this point.

Vince freaks out and tells Austin he was raped by WCW. Austin basically tells him to get over it because he kept the WWF Title here on his own and Vince wasn't there when Austin needed him. Vince: "How are you?" Austin: "YOU DON'T EVEN CARE!" Vince: "I care." Austin: "Promise?" They hug and Debra looks like she can't find a divorce soon enough.

Video on some of the best moments and performers in MSG history, with this one being about Sammartino.

Big Show hits on Trish. This is disturbing.

Vince, Austin and Debra share a vegetable plate. Kurt comes in to a pop and Vince congratulates him for his victory last night. Angle says he's banged up but he'll make it. Austin FREAKS and Vince tries to smooth things over with the offer of carrots. Angle sits but won't have any right now. This is hilarious stuff.

Billy Graham is the next Garden Classic.

Tazz vs. Steven Richards

Richards doesn't like New York so here's Tazz to kill him. Lasts 20 seconds, Tazmission. Taz is just MAD over in New York.

Regal and Tajiri have a trophy for Edge. It looks like the

Stanley Cup.

Angle has loosened up and is having some vegetables. Austin and Vince have a pow wow and Austin wants Kurt out. The idea is he's jealous of Vince playing with someone else. Angle: "Hey Steve you want a carrot?" Angle compares their careers and says they could be related. Austin looks like he could break a moose in half. Angle has some celery. These two had some awesome chemistry together when Angle was playing the simpleton.

Time for the King of the Ring coronation ceremony. Regal isn't thrilled to be in New York but he brings out Edge who won the tournament last night. Regal suggests a five second pose but Tajiri gets in it somehow. Christian takes the trophy and gives an acceptance speech for some reason. He talks about how he had to face harder competition (which is true) and Edge doesn't sound thrilled.

Now it's time for Edge's speech and he welcomes us to a new Era: the Era of AWESOMENESS. And here's Billy Gunn because he has to be here whenever this tournament is brought out. He whines about never getting to be able to defend his crown but instead had to be at WWF New York. This is heel Billy which is even more annoying.

Edge is talentless apparently but congratulations anyway. Edge says Billy sucks and blows at the same time. Edge asks Billy for a favor: if he's not on the card in 2003 and just has to host at WWF New York, please shoot him in the head. Edge promises not to Billy Gunn the title, because he'll actually be entertaining. A match is proposed and made. Basically a face turn for Edge.

Garden Classic: the Alley Fight with Patterson vs. Slaughter. It's called a boot camp match here but I've never heard it called that before. Either way, find it as it's one of the best brawls you'll ever see.

Tag Titles: Dudley Boys vs. Undertaker/Kane

Sara comes out with Taker now. The champs are quickly knocked to the floor and the beating is on. Bubba vs. Taker officially starts us off and there's Old School already. Off to D-Von and the champs hit the double team neckbreaker for two. Off to Kane for more beating. He's IC Champion here. Kane beats them up on his own (the tag champions remember) and there's the top rope clothesline for two. Everything breaks down and here's Albert to Baldo Bomb Kane so D-Von can pin him. Too short to rate but it was basically a squash. Albert won the IC Title on Smackdown.

Bubba takes a chokeslam post match as Kane goes after Albert. And then Page pops up to blast taker with a chair. Page takes Sara down and steals hair extensions.

Regal is ticked off about WCW and in particular....Jericho....for rumors saying he might defect if he won the title....which he didn't. His punishment is a match with Tajiri. Ok then.

European Title: Matt Hardy vs. Big Show

Trish comes out with Show at the potential promise of a European vacation. Matt has to dodge and move here and chooses to work on the arm. That gets him sent to the floor, where Show hits the post. All Big Show anyway as he drops Matt on the barricade. Trish kisses Matt for some reason, prompting Lita to rip her top off. Show goes after Lita who hits Show low to protect herself. That's a DQ win for Show in a match too short to rate, but it was basically a squash up until then.

Saturn and Terri are at WWF New York but Shane invades it. Shane talks about how WCW isn't on TV because of Vince. You know, instead of the losing a million bucks a week for a year. Therefore, since they can't get on TV, it's time for an invasion of the WWF. He calls Booker over and it amazes me how

different Booker was in just a few months. This is the one that was the only guy in WCW that got over for like two years before they went under and was a guy that could have been awesome. He calls out Austin and I'd love to see that feud, instead of what we got, which is Booker the bumbling idiot.

Vince and Austin are all fired up and since they're both in New York City, Vince says Austin should go fight Booker right now. Austin recruits Angle as backup.

The APA starts the war effort with guys like....Funaki and Steve Blackman and Essa Rios. If you can't see why this is the biggest bomb in wrestling history, I've failed at my job.

Garden Classic: Snuka dives off the cage which apparently inspired EVERY WRESTLER EVER to be a wrestler.

Edge vs. Billy Gunn

Fast paced stuff to start but Billy heads to the floor. Baseball slide puts him down and a missile dropkick gets two back inside. Billy hits a spinebuster for no cover. Out to the floor with Billy in control. There's a guy in the crowd doing a Hogan impression and since we're watching a Billy Gunn match, the fans cheer for Hogan.

Edge spears him down and makes a comeback until Christian accidentally hits him. Billy gets two off a rollup and Jackhammers Edge for two. There's a boring chant. Who thought giving BILLY GUNN a long match in 2001 was a good idea? Billy loads up the Fameasser but Christian comes in with a backbreaker so Edge can Impale Billy for the pin.

Rating: F+. And 99% of that is for Gunn. What in the world were they thinking by pushing him OVER AND OVER AGAIN??? I mean he just kept getting time on TV and less and less people cared every time until he owed the people some caring for the interest getting so low. Terribly uninteresting match and the crowd turned on it. Why is Edge facing Billy Gunn anyway? He

beat Kurt Angle last night to win the King of the Ring and now he's got Billy Gunn?

Austin is caught in traffic and doesn't like it. Angle is a dork. This is all on the phone with Debra.

Classic Garden: the first Wrestlemania.

Chris Jericho vs. Tajiri

Jericho says he's taking out his aggression on Tajiri. They start off fast, which would be normal speed for everyone else. Jericho looks for the Walls but gets kicked in the head for his luck. Superkick (kind of) and a spinwheel kick get two for Tajiri. Octopus has Chris in trouble and Tajiri kicks a lot. A missile dropkick gets two. Jericho comes back with some clotheslines for two. Regal takes a baseball slide and Tajiri gets caught in the double powerbomb. Regal comes in and beats up Jericho but takes the mist in the face. Lionsault ends this.

Rating: C+. Pretty decent match here. Tajiri was pretty much wasted in WWE as they used him as a comedy character who couldn't speak English (and finally got a translator with like a week to go before he left) and that's about it. Fun match though as they let two guys with talent go and it worked as it should have.

Austin and Vince have a plan or something.

We get a shot from WWF New York where Austin and Angle go in...and there's no Shane or Booker. OH NO! WHO WOULD HAVE SEEN THAT COMING??? Austin: "Booker said he wanted to axe me something. AN AX IS SOMETHING YOU CHOP A TREE DOWN WITH!" Booker and Shane come out, Booker destroys Vince (loosest use of that word ever) and the APA comes out with their army to save him and end the show. Yep that's it.

Overall Rating: C+. Decent show but not as good as last week

with us reaching the Invasion full bore. This never worked at all because Vince couldn't let anything work on its own pace and the whole thing was wrapped up in like 5 months instead of in like 3 years as it easily could have been. Still though, decent show but it would go downhill after a brief pick up soon.

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