

Thunder – February 19, 1998: Benoit Tears the House Down

Thunder

Date: February 19, 1998

Location: Birmingham-Jefferson Civic Center, Birmingham, Alabama

Commentators: Lee Marshall, Tony Schiavone, Bobby Heenan

It's the go home show for SuperBrawl and things are really taking shape around here. We have the NWO falling apart and Sting vs. Hogan on a collision course for the world title. The midcard is on fire as well with a three way feud for the TV Title between Martel, Saturn and Booker T and Page and Benoit feuding with each other over the US Title as well as with Raven and the Flock. Let's get to it.

We open with a clip of the end of Nitro with WCW clearing the ring of the NWO.

Sting vs. Savage is the main event.

Earlier today we were about to hear from Chris Jericho but instead the NWO runs by and jumps Savage who was talking to Luger. Don't they hate each other? Both guys are beaten down and Randy is dragged away while Luger is left on the curb.

Goldberg vs. Fit Finley

The announcers think Savage isn't into the NWO at the moment. You can't buy crack reporting like that. Finley jumps him with that metal shoulder pad of his but Goldberg kicks him in the chest and hits a gorilla press slam like Finley isn't even there. The rolling leg lock takes Finley down again and the Irishman backs into the corner. Goldberg easily breaks a sleeper with something resembling a snapmare and it's the spear and Jackhammer for another win. He has to be pushing 40 now.

Psychosis vs. Chavo Guerrero Jr.

Feeling out process to start as the announcers talk about the

Savage/Luger segment. Chavo hits a flying forearm to take over and avoids a hard charge, sending Psychosis into the post and out to the floor. Guerrero hits a big flip dive over the top to take him out again and pop the crowd.

Back in and Psychosis takes Chavo's head off with a lariat before dropkicking Chavo to the floor. Psychosis dives into a dropkick to the chest and Chavo starts his comeback with chops and a springboard bulldog for two. A missile dropkick to the back puts Psychosis down but Guerrero charges into a knee, setting up the guillotine legdrop for the pin.

Rating: C-. Pretty basic cruiserweight match here with both guys looking fine. Psychosis wasn't a guy who got the spotlight all that often but he could shine rather well when he had the chance. Chavo was rising up the card but was still several months away from reaching his potential. This was fine for a quick match.

Here are Hogan and Bischoff with something to say. Hogan says that Savage has seen the NWO light and is for life again, everything is cool once again. He just hopes that Savage doesn't destroy Sting tonight because he wants a little piece of Sting at SuperBrawl. There won't be any controversy on Sunday because Hogan will defeat Sting once and for all. He still wants Nick Patrick to be the referee and prays to God that it will happen.

Riggs vs. Booker T

Booker is debuting a new move tonight called the 110th Street Slam. That's likely the only good reporting Lee Marshall will do tonight. Riggs jumps Booker which is Tony's cue to talk about Savage and Luger some more. Booker kicks Riggs in the face and hits a big spinebuster for no cover.

They head to the floor where Riggs is sent into the barricade and Lodi gets dropped with a clothesline. The distraction lets Riggs hit a plancha to take T out and we head back inside. A running knee to the chest takes Booker down again but Riggs misses a middle rope elbow. Booker hits his kicks....and gets the win with an ax kick, thereby making Marshall look

like an idiot again.

Rating: D+. Not much to see here but it keeps Booker looking strong going into the title match on Sunday. Booker looks so smooth in the ring and is getting better every time he's out there. Riggs wasn't much to see but he was far better in this role than he was as the American Male.

Mike Teny tries to talk to Luger as his ribs are being taped but Mike gets run off. Tony and Heenan think Luger is hiding something.

Kidman vs. Juventud Guerrera

These two had a great match a few weeks ago so there's good potential here. Kidman charges into two boots in the corner and Juvy hooks a headscissors to take over. Guerrera hits a top rope hurricanrana for two but his victory roll is countered into a wheelbarrow suplex to change control. Heenan wants Juvy to lose his mask on Sunday to see his ugly mug. Heenan the insensitive jerk is always great stuff. Juvy sends him to the floor but Lodi breaks up a dive attempt, only to be taken out by a missed Kidman dive. Guerrera escapes a German suplex and hits the Juvy Driver followed by the 450 for the pin.

Rating: C+. This was the cruiserweight version of Booker T vs. Riggs with the Flock member being the jobber in both instances. Juvy was one of the better cruiserweights around and Kidman was no slouch either so this was quite an action packed three minute match. The 450 was a great finisher with the high impact and the fans always went nuts for it.

Post match Jericho comes in to beat up Juvy and actually gets the mask off...revealing another mask underneath. Smart man that Guerrera, who comes back with a missile dropkick to send Jericho running.

WCW/NASCAR stuff.

Outsiders vs. Mike Enos/Wayne Bloom

WCW wins the survey in a landslide. Nash says Giant needs to be at the PPV and does a shout out to Syxx about being some rubber thing. Hall pounds on Enos to start and hits a quick chokeslam to work in his Giant pose. Enos comes back with a powerslam for two and it's off to Bloom but

Nash gets in a cheap shot to take over. Nash comes in and destroys Wayne, decks the referee and powerbombs Bloom for a \$50,000 fine and a DQ loss.

Nash is arrested again.

We see the Bret Hart attack from Nitro.

Here are Hennig, Brian Adams and Rick Rude with something to say. Rude makes fun of Bret's catchphrase and says Hennig proved that wrong on Nitro. Hart is a quitter and Hennig is the best, but here are Neidhart and Bulldog to argue. Anvil yells a lot and we get a bell.

Jim Neidhart/British Bulldog vs. Curt Hennig/Brian Adams

This is a wild brawl and has no semblance of rules at all. Rude interferes early to give the NWO the advantage but Bulldog hits an atomic drop to send Hennig into the corner. Adams clotheslines Smith to the floor where Rude can send him into the steps. Anvil gets double teamed for a few moments and Rude throws in some choking as the referee throws the match out. It was entertaining while it lasted.

Back from a break and the fight is just now being broken up.

The Steiners say they'll keep the titles on Sunday. Heenan yells at Tenay for interviewing them instead of finding out what's going on with Savage and Luger.

Super Calo vs. La Parka

They shove each other around to start until Calo hits a quick backbreaker and a slam to send La Parka into the corner. La Parka misses a charge into the other corner but comes back with a clothesline to take over. Calo is put in the Tree of Woe for a spin kick to the chest but eventually gets a boot up to stop a charging skeleton man. Calo lifts him into a powerbomb position but sits him on the top for the ankle scissors back to the mat. La Parka rolls to the floor and gets caught by a dive as Disco Inferno comes out. He crotches Calo for no apparent reason before running across the ring. La Parka hits a corkscrew splash for the pin.

Rating: D. The ending was a mess and I have no idea why Disco was running

across the ring after the interference or why he helped Calo. Either it was botched or it's going to be explained later, but everyone seemed a bit confused and the match ended abruptly. Again, at least the crowd favorite is getting some featured time.

Cruiserweight Title: Chris Jericho vs. Dean Malenko

Jericho quotes Cheap Trick before the match ("I want you to want me") before talking about how ugly Juventud Guerrera is, claiming he looks like Quasimodo. He might even let Juvy keep the mask after the match to save us from his ugliness. The champion refuses to take the belt off so Malenko attacks him in the corner. He whips Jericho across the ring and stomps away in the corner with the belt falling off in the process. A Jericho monkey flip is blocked and Dean goes to town on him even more with Jericho barely covering up.

Dean tries a suplex but gets countered into a reverse suplex followed by a regular suplex for two. After a quick chinlock, Jericho clotheslines Dean down for the arrogant cover. The fans get on Jericho and he's nearly hopping mad in shock. Jericho fires off chops in the corner and hooks a backbreaker, bending Dean's back over his knee for a few seconds. The Lionsault misses and Dean sends him out to the floor.

Back in and Malenko fires off forearms to the head before going for the Cloverleaf but Jericho is right next to the ropes. A rollup gets two for Dean and he loads up the tiger bomb, only to have Jericho backdrop him out. The Liontamer goes on and Malenko taps out in a completely clean submission.

Rating: C+. This was your usual good match between these two and it was interesting to see Jericho get the clean win. The overall story is rather interesting as Malenko would seem to be the big fish for Jericho but the PPV match is against Juventud Guerrera instead of Dean. Still though, nice match here as you would expect from these two.

Chris Benoit/Diamond Dallas Page vs. Perry Saturn/Raven

Raven starts with Page but it's off to Saturn before any contact is made. Page takes him down with a quick belly to belly as everything breaks down

with Benoit and Page clearing the ring. We settle down with Benoit clotheslining Raven down but walking into a superkick from Saturn as we take a break. Back with Saturn ramming forearms into Benoit's head before getting two off an overhead belly to belly.

Benoit counters a suplex into the Crossface but Raven makes a quick save. The hot tag brings in Page who comes in off the top with a clothesline to Saturn. Page cleans house but Riggs hits him in the ribs with a chair to break up the Diamond Cutter. Saturn can only get two so he brings in Raven who gets two more off a clothesline. Saturn comes back in with a springboard legdrop and puts on a front facelock.

Kidman gets on the apron so the referee misses the tag to Benoit and Raven comes in to stomp on the bad ribs even more. Raven brings in a chair and hits the drop toehold into the chair but Saturn's top rope moonsault misses Page completely. Now the hot tag brings in Benoit who punches the chair into Saturn's face. A snap suplex onto the chair gets two on Raven and it's time for Rolling Germans on Saturn. Everything breaks down and Benoit is sent into Raven. Saturn kicks Page low but Benoit's swan dive breaks up the Rings of Saturn on Page. The Diamond Cutter takes out Raven and Benoit Crossfaces Saturn for the win.

Rating: B. This was short but they all looked great out there with Benoit being a highlight. It's also a great example of how weapons can be used to make a match better. This match had a chair involved but the focus was on the action instead of the weapons. The chair enhanced the match and made things all the more entertaining.

It's time for Savage vs. Sting but the NWO carries out an unconscious Savage who is covered in spraypaint and wearing a Sting mask. Hogan says Savage is NWO for life and since Hogan wants all of Sting on Sunday, Savage doesn't get to face him tonight. Hollywood knows Sting isn't coming out here tonight and you know what that means. Sting runs out and fights off the NWO but they finally get the better of him. Luger comes out to even the odds a bit and stand over the fallen Savage to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. This is probably the best show they've had in the

series so far with good action and a solid build towards Sunday. The main event was great and we have a genuine mystery as to the Savage/Luger relationship heading into their match on Sunday. WCW is rolling right now and things should be capped off by Sting winning the world title on Sunday and sending the NWO into their fatal tailspin.

Here's SuperBrawl if you're interested:

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