

Thunder – February 26, 1998: Nash vs. Raven

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Date: February 26, 1998

Location: Five Seasons Center, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Lee Marshall, Bobby Heenan

After a weak Nitro we're here in Iowa to hopefully get things back on the right track. Sting is the world champion again but Hogan and the NWO destroyed him on Monday like he was any other guy. WCW is finally starting to unite against the NWO though with Flair, Hart, Luger, Sting and maybe even Savage coming together to fight back. Let's get to it.

Dean Malenko/Booker T. vs. Chris Jericho/Eddie Guerrero

The fans immediately go off on Guerrero and it's Booker elbowing Jericho down to start. A spinebuster puts him down again and we take an early break. Back with Guerrero missing the slingshot hilo and being backdropped out to the floor. Tony tells us that these four will be in singles title matches at the PPV with Dean challenging Jericho and Eddie challenging Booker. Jericho pulls Dean to the floor for a snap suplex and now the fans are all over the Canadian.

Eddie and Chris hit a double shoulder for two on Malenko as this crowd is very hot. Tony tells us that the over the top DQ rule has been abolished. I never liked that rule so good for it being gone. Jericho hooks an abdominal stretch but Dean quickly hiptosses out of it. Malenko goes for the tag but Eddie dropkicks him into a Liontamer attempt to break it up. Dean kicks Chris away and makes the hot tag so Booker can clean house.

Guerrero slows him down with a dropkick but Booker hits the side kick for two. Everything breaks down and Booker hits the ax kick on Eddie but

Jericho makes the save. Eddie hits a brainbuster on Booker, waits for Dean to have Jericho in the Cloverleaf, and hits the frog splash on Booker for the pin.

Rating: C+. This wasn't quite up to the level of the matches with Benoit instead of Booker but it was fine. The thing I want to focus on is Eddie waiting those few seconds to hit the frog splash. If he had done it immediately it would have looked stupid that Dean wouldn't break up the hold. By waiting for Malenko to put on the Cloverleaf and turn his back to the cover, Eddie made the whole sequence much more realistic. I love little things like that.

Tenay brings out DDP for a chat. Page praises Benoit for giving him the best match of his career and says they respect each other. They also agree that Raven is a piece of garbage, which brings out Raven and the Flock. Raven wants his US Title shot and Page says anytime, so Raven picks next week.

Brad Armstrong vs. Fit Finlay

Finlay quickly takes him to the mat to work on the ankle for a bit. Back up and Brad grabs Finlay's leg, only to get caught by an enziguri. After doing nothing of note on the floor we head back inside for a beating from Finlay with uppercuts and right hands. Armstrong grabs an arm but Finlay whips him into the corner for an easy escape. Finlay looks like he's toying with Brad here. Finlay charges into a boot in the corner and gets caught by a middle rope crossbody for two. Brad gets two more off a belly to back suplex but Finlay gets bored of being beaten on and tombstones him for the pin.

Rating: D+. This was an odd pairing but they would actually five three times on this show before the end of the summer. I don't know where they're going with this Armstrong Curse idea but I'm surprised they're giving Brad Armstrong of all people a continued story like this. It's not a major story but Armstrong is one of the last people you would expect to

get a story at all.

Davey Boy Smith vs. Dave Taylor

Bulldog hits a quick shoulder and a clothesline to send Taylor out to the floor. Back in and the crowd is already booing Taylor despite Bulldog not being the nicest guy in the world in his WCW run. Tony tells us (he's a chatterbox tonight) that Mongo will be out for a few weeks because of his broken arm. A suplex gets two on Smith but he pops up, hits the real vertical suplex and powerslams Taylor down for the pin.

Tenay brings out Hennig to talk about his match with Bret at Uncensored. Mike talks about Bret turning the NWO down, which Hennig says makes Bret stupid. Hennig is the man Hogan picked to deal with Bret and actually uses the my dad beat up his dad line. He's got Neidhart tonight but isn't worried at all. I can't say I blame him on that.

Goldberg vs. Rick Fuller

Fuller is a big guy with a decent look. The NWO music comes on for a few seconds during Fuller's entrance in a production error. The place goes NUTS for Goldberg who is definitely a big deal now. Heenan wants to know how many matches Goldberg has won in a row. Tony: "All of them." Goldberg takes him to the mat with ease and no sells a big boot before hitting the two moves for the pin. This was about a minute long.

The Flock comes to ringside.

Yuji Nagata vs. La Parka

Parka swings the chair and does the Karate Kid crane kick to start. Nagata will have none of this foolishness and kicks Parka in the leg and side to take over. A sidekick puts La Parka down but he kicks Nagata in the back of the head to stagger him. Nagata is out in the Tree of Woe for

a running spin kick to send him to the floor.

The masked man brings the chair into the ring as a launchpad to jump to the top rope and dive down onto Nagata in a nice move. Yuji is sent into the chair (no DQ on that for some reason) and then back inside for a corkscrew dive from the top. Cue Disco Inferno to give Sonny Onoo the Chartbuster for no apparent reason, allowing Yuji to kick the chair into La Parka's face and get the win via the Nagata Lock.

Rating: C-. It wasn't dull but I'm not sure what was going on here. Wasn't Disco fighting with La Parka as recently as the last PPV? The match was one of Nagata's more interesting ones but that might have been due to La Parka showing off a lot. Also it would have been better for Nagata to pin him off the chair kick instead of a leg lock which hadn't been set up at all but that's nitpicking.

Hall comes out for the survey with the boys in black taking another one. He gets his shot at Sting in two weeks and is clearly the favorite. He's been in the ring every night for two years and all Sting has is a cool entrance. Sting has to prove how good he is at Uncensored so bring it on. Nice and simple promo to build up the title match.

Buff Bagwell does Scott Steiner's entrance ala Michael Buffer. Scott is now known as White Thunder which never got over as a nickname. Scott talks about having breakfast with Luger, Sting and Rick on Sunday morning but the next night Luger was challenging him to a fight. Steiner accepts but doesn't get why Luger thinks he's the Total Package. Luger went to college and is an educated man, but he didn't go to Michigan. Michigan wanted Scott Steiner because he's a better athlete, so Scott sings part of Michigan's fight song. And they wonder why it took so long for him to get over.

Scott Steiner vs. Marty Jannetty

Steiner destroys him as Tony talks about Sting/Savage vs. Hogan/Hall on

Monday. The announcers think it's a trap and Sting would have to be crazy to agree to that match. Well Sting may be the dumbest man in the history of wrestling so it wouldn't surprise me if he's being trapped. The match is a total squash with Scott hitting a gorilla press, belly to belly and the top rope Frankensteiner for the pin in about 90 seconds.

Curt Hennig vs. Jim Neidhart

Neidhart easily shoves him across the ring and Hennig bails to the floor. He's pulled back in by the hair ("OWWWWWW!") as Scott Steiner comes in to the announcers' desk. He says the door is still open for Rick to join the team and it's the best decision he'll ever make. Neidhart puts on a bearhug but here are Vincent and Adams for the DQ.

Davey Boy makes the save for his brother in law.

Raven vs. Kevin Nash

Now that's an interesting pairing. Before the match, Raven says this is going to be a battle royal with the rest of the Flock being the other participants. Raven sits down in the corner as the Flock charges at Nash (one at a time of course) and is easily eliminated. Nash powerbombs Lodi twice to a big pop, sending Nash to prison and costing him \$100,000. Raven wins by default.

US Title: Chris Benoit vs. Diamond Dallas Page

Page is defending. They trade wristlocks to start with Page taking him down in an armbar. Benoit reverses into a chinlock as we hear what sounds like a canned DDP chant. Page rolls out of the chinlock into a stalemate which turns into a fight. They lock up and fall out to the floor before going into the crowd. Page hits a hard right hand to knock Benoit back to ringside and gets two off a swinging neckbreaker.

Benoit goes after the big bandages on the ribs with a kick to the stomach and a front suplex onto the ropes to put Page down. Page is whipped hard into the corner and Benoit grabs him for a northern lights suplex but just drops him on the ribs for two. Benoit stomps him down in the corner but Page comes back with right hands. We're on a wide shot now as it appears Page is busted open. Raven comes in for the DQ a few seconds later.

Rating: C. This didn't have the time to go anywhere but it set up the main event next week a bit better. Three way feuds like this are almost always interesting because there are so many different ways they can go. Benoit is getting a solid rub out of this as he can hang with higher level talent, but a title win would be nice.

Benoit and Raven fight to the floor and Page dives on them to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. This was a really light show and I mean that in a good way. We got some good wrestling and angle advancement but there wasn't any heavy lifting to make the show hard to sit through. That's a really nice thing to have as an alternative to the story heavy Nitro. Uncensored is looking good other than the main event, which could sum up almost any WCW PPV from this era.

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