

On This Day: August 4, 1997 – Monday Nitro: A Surprise Before Starrcade

Monday Nitro #99

Date: August 4, 1997

Location: Palace of Auburn Hills, Detroit, Michigan

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

This is an interesting episode as I've seen says this is the 100th episode, but I've counted each one I've done and can only come up with 99. I haven't missed any shows and there are only 99 counting this one so far. Two weeks in 1996 had no show at all so maybe they're counting one of those to get to 100. Either way, the main event tonight is Luger vs. Hogan for the title, five days before their PPV title match. That clearly won't go anywhere. Let's get to it.

Oh and this is a three hour show.

Buffer welcomes us to this special show. This whole 99 or 100 thing is going to bother me but the best I can figure out is that WCW is just lying.

After the Nitro Girls dance a bit, here are Hogan and Bischoff with something to say. Hogan runs down Luger and says that he's going to have "500,000 of his friends" watching on Saturday. It was about 1% of that but what difference does it match? Anyway, Hogan doesn't like having to defend tonight, but Luger is going to pay for the mistake tonight. Hogan says something about defending against Scott Hall instead but it didn't make much sense.

Curt Hennig vs. Mortis

Feeling out process to start until Hennig takes Mortis down with a knee lift. Curt goes after Vandenberg though and the masked dude takes over. Mortis misses an elbow and there's the Hennig neck snap. Mortis comes

back with a spinwheel kick for two but Hennig goes after the knee. PerfectPlex ends this pretty quick.

Rating: C-. I don't like matches like this one as it's hard to rate due to how fast it was. A lot of it was them walking around, but it was so short that it was still decent. This is what WCW's massive roster helps with: they have have a guy like Mortis lose, but he can go and beat up other people and get his spot back. Also since there's no shame to losing to Hennig, everything is ok for him. Why WWE doesn't use their roster like this is beyond me.

Video on Sting not talking for the last year or so.

Dean Malenko/Jeff Jarrett vs. Hector Guerrero/Chavo Guerrero

Malenko and Chavo start things off and we hit the mat very quickly. That doesn't last long so they run the ropes a bit until Dean gets taken down by a pair of dropkicks. Hector comes in to face Jeff and we have a strut vs. dance battle. A headscissors puts Jarrett down and frustrates him so he pounds away a bit. Hector makes a brief comeback but stops to jaw with Dean, letting Jeff take over again.

There's the running crotch attack to a 619'd Hector (I'm still looking for a better name for that) before it's back to Malenko. Make that back to Jeff again and Hector gets two off a backslide. Chavo breaks up the Figure Four and Dean is rolled up for two. Hector won't tag and is caught in an electric chair. Dean hooks the Cloverleaf and we're done.

Rating: C. The idea here was that Hector wouldn't tag, presumably due to stubbornness, but it doesn't make Jeff any more interesting. The guy is just flat out not interesting no matter how you try to push or package him. Malenko was fine but he needs to get away from this stupid tag team thing.

Raven still won't talk so here's Stevie Richards instead. Richards has a contract for Raven but there's a snag. He's been in Atlanta renegotiating for Raven and everything seems to be cool now. Raven looks at the contract, spits at Richards and decks him. He pulls back to punch Richards again, but Stevie blocks it and says no more.

Giant vs. Joey Maggs/Lenny Lane/Scott D'Amore

Chokeslam, chokeslam, chokeslam, about 90 seconds, interview time.

Savage pops up on the stage and says bring it before running from a fast walking Giant.

We recap the roll Lex Luger is on. Basically it's a Luger highlight video.

High Voltage vs. Public Enemy

Kaos vs. Grunge to start and Johnny wants to dance. A swinging neckbreaker puts Kaos down as does a clothesline before it's off to Rocco. Rage interferes but Kaos takes the time to pose instead of following up. Larry: "HE'S WASTING TIME!" Remember, this is LARRY ZBYSZKO complaining about stalling. High Voltage is coming off as the heel team here and it doesn't suit them that well.

Rage comes in and pounds away on Rocco a bit more but jumps off the top into Rocco's boot. My goodness how I hate that spot. Grunge comes in and beats up both guys as everything breaks down. The Public Enemy loads up the table but Rage moves, sending Rocco crashing through the wood. Not that it matters as Rage runs into Kaos and is rolled up by Grunge for the pin.

Rating: D+. As lame as the match was, there was an actual story being told out there. The idea was that High Voltage didn't have the experience to hang with the Public Enemy and the veterans used that to their advantage. This is probably the last match I would have expected something like that from but points to these guys for putting it in there.

Alex Wright cuts in on the Nitro Girls dancing. The Girls leave and Alex talks some trash about Jericho, who he faces on Saturday.

Scotty Riggs vs. Alex Wright

Non-title here. Wright sends Scotty to the floor almost immediately and hits a double ax off the apron. A suplex on the floor keeps Riggs down

but he sends Wright into the barricade to get himself a breather. Back in and Alex takes over again before dancing a bit. They both hit cross bodies with Scotty falling on top for two. They head up top and Alex headbutts him down before hitting a missile dropkick for the pin.

Rating: D+. Just a squash here to set up the title match at Road Wild. Wright using the dropkick was a nice touch as that's one of Jericho's finishing moves. Not much of a match here, but then again Riggs wasn't much of a wrestler. At least he stopped using the American Males theme.

Hour #2 starts.

Here's Luger to talk to Gene. Lex says that he was only focused on Saturday but now his focus has shifted to tonight. It's his defining moment and tonight, he's going to make history. Standard promo here but it did exactly what it needed to do. It's such a simple science but no one can pull it off anymore.

Chris Benoit vs. Syxx

Syxx starts with that headlock of his but Benoit quickly elbows him down. A spinwheel kick puts Benoit down but Chris immediately legdraps Syxx out to the floor. There's a suicide dive to take the NWO dude out. Back in and Benoit goes up, only to get caught in the Tree of Woe. Syxx hits a Bronco Buster to an upside down Benoit in a move I've never seen before. A top rope flipping legdrop misses Benoit though and Chris suplexes him down for two. Benoit loads up a belly to back superplex but here's Jarrett to attack Benoit for the DQ.

Rating: C+. This was a nice fast paced match that had to be brought down by a stupid ending. This was done to further the tag match on Sunday which at least had a purpose. Not much to see here but Benoit was fast paced as usual and Syxx continues to be much better against smaller guys. Not bad at all here.

More dancing.

Booker T vs. Vincent

Nothing match as Booker beats up Vincent and side kicks him for the pin

in maybe 45 seconds.

DDP talks about his match with Flair tonight, saying that while he and Flair have common enemies, Flair has his respect, but he has Flair's number. I like that line.

Wrath vs. Barbarian

Now here's an odd match. Barbarian knocks him back into the corner but gets clotheslined down for two. Wrath takes him down but can't hit the Death Penalty (two arm Rock Bottom) as we head to the floor. Barbarian sends him into various metal objects before we head back inside. Back in and Barbarian goes up but jumps into the Death Penalty for the pin. Too short to rate but it wasn't very good.

Meng comes out to stare down Wrath. Wrath bails.

The hometown Steiners come out and introduce Ted DiBiase as their surprise new manager. DiBiase was one of the original members of the NWO so this is a big deal. He starts off by saying that he's seen the error of his ways before almost saying the World Wrestling Federation tag titles were on the line on Saturday. Cue the Outsiders to laugh this off and say that DiBiase is a dead man.

More dancing.

Lee Marshall does his thing.

Konnan vs. Psychosis

Konnan pounds him down to start before nearly clotheslining a horn off. A low dropkick hits the masked man and Konnan sends him to the apron. Psychosis comes back in with a top rope spinwheel kick for two. That's about the extent of his offense as Konnan hits the 187 and Tequila Sunrise for the fast tap.

Rey, still on crutches, comes out to confront Konnan post match. Konnan kicks the crutches away but Rey is faking it and breaks a crutch over Konnan's back.

Glacier/Ernest Miller vs. Damien/Silver King

King and Glacier get us going and the kicking begins. Glacier cranks on the arm a bit but King kicks out of it pretty quickly. Damien trips up Glacier but the ice enthusiast kicks Silver down anyway. Off to Miller but the luchadores pound him down pretty quickly. Miller comes back with a bunch of kicks and here's Glacier again. A backdrop gets two on Damien but Glacier is double teamed a bit. Uninterested tag brings in Miller who uses his karate stuff, finishing Damien with a spinning kick off the top.

Rating: D. At the end of the day, Miller was so unbelievably boring in this role and it took a long time to get him to a level where anyone cared about him. Silver King and Damien actually got a win or two so they were only somewhat jobbers to the stars. Not much to see here though.

Here's Bischoff with something to say. He's here to complain about the attack by the Giant from last week and calls out JJ Dillon. The alleged boss of WCW comes out and Eric yells a lot, threatening legal actions against the Giant and violence against Larry Z. If there was a point to this getting six minutes of TV time, I have no idea what it was.

Hour #3 begins and the Nitro Girls dance on the announce table.

Diamond Dallas Page vs. Ric Flair

Hennig comes out and shakes Flair's hand to mess with Page's mind. Page runs Flair down and slaps him in the face to tick him off. Hennig went to the back already so this is one on one. Page pounds away in the corner and Ric is in trouble early. Flair comes back with a poke to the eye but Page counters a backdrop attempt into a sweet sitout powerbomb for no cover. Hennig comes back out and we take a break.

Back with Flair in control and Page down in the corner. Page comes back with right hands and slams Flair off the top, but a Hennig distraction lets Flair get in a shot to the knee. There's the knee drop and Flair is in Nature Boy mode. A quick Figure Four is broken up because Page is in the ropes.

Flair pounds away even more and tries to suplex Page over the top and out

to the floor. DDP counters of course and puts Ric in the Figure Four instead. Flair pokes the referee in the eye, allowing Curt to come in. Page cradles him to slow him down, but it lets Flair escape the hold. There's a Flair Flip in the corner and Ric goes up, only to dive into a clothesline. Page calls for the Cutter but Hennig comes in for the DQ.

Rating: C+. This was fine but they more or less had a big sign saying RUN-IN COMING. That's fine though as you can't have these guys losing five days before a PPV match. I mean, this is WCW, not some crazy company like WWE that has guys in prominent matches getting pinned on go home shows.

Page clears the ring post match.

Hector Garza/Lizmark Jr. vs. Villanos

This would be IV and V for you Villano enthusiasts. Garza and IV start things off and things speed up quickly. Hector moonsaults out of the corner and clotheslines IV down before hitting a superkick. Off to Lizmark for a dropkick but V comes in and ducks the same move. Some armdrags put V down but the Villanos double team Lizmark to take over. Back to Garza who gets caught in a double gutbuster.

We head to the floor where Garza is dropkicked into the barricade. That gets boring so it's back inside where everything breaks down. Garza dives on I think IV before Lizmark and V go to the floor. IV is backdropped to the floor so Garza can hit the big corkscrew plancha. Back in and Lizmark dropkicks IV a few times, but the referee gets distracted and the switch from the brothers is enough for Lizmark to get rolled up for the pin.

Rating: C. This was fine but it was nothing more than a bridge between the big stuff later on in the show. Garza had the making of a big star and was getting over pretty well in the earlier days of TNA before getting busted for steroid possession. The other three guys never amounted to anything in the States.

Here's JJ to offer Sting a contract. Basically "we're sorry we thought you were lying because we were too stupid to use common sense and tell that it wasn't you the whole time. Maybe we should hit Turner up for

vision insurance. Anyway, wanna fight Curt Hennig?" Sting lowers from the rafters and rips up the contract. See, this is something that actually deserved the six and a half minutes it got.

WCW World Title: Lex Luger vs. Hollywood Hogan

Dang man how long has it been since Hogan wrestled on Nitro? They trade hammerlocks to start and Hulk heads to the ropes. More feeling out until Hogan pounds away in the corner to take over. The fans are WAY into this here. Hogan keeps beating on him and drops a bunch of elbows. A clothesline in the corner has Lex in trouble and Hulk chokes away. Luger comes back and rams the champ into the buckle a few times to get himself a breather. Hollywood takes his head off with another clothesline and we take a break.

Back with Hogan still in control and hitting a suplex for two. A belly to back suplex puts Luger down again and a big right hand gets two. The big boot and legdrop hit for two and the pop is really weak for some reason. Another legdrop misses and it's comeback time. Luger decks the Outsiders and Savage as they try to run in. The forearm takes Hogan down and there's the Torture Rack to give us a new world champion.

Rating: B. The match itself was as by the book as you could get, but that's exactly what it should have been. The rating is almost entirely for the moment, which is WAY better here than I remember it being. Hindsight would say it was obviously only going to last until the PPV, but still man this worked really well. I'm actually surprised at how much I liked this.

The locker room empties out for the celebration. The fans go NUTS too. Everyone goes to the back and we see Giant and Luger polishing the belt to get the NWO paint off as champagne is flowing everywhere.

Hogan loses his mind in the other locker room.

Overall Rating: B. This was supposed to be a special show, and I don't often get to say this about WCW, but they absolutely nailed it. The wrestling here is ok at best, but they did a good job of setting up the PPV, they had a good start to the new part of the Sting angle, and the

ending is actually excellent. I know it doesn't mean anything in the long run, but at the time this was a cool moment. Good show here which almost shocks me.

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