

Monday Nitro – March 16, 1998: Let's Hit The Pool

Monday Nitro #131

Date: March 16, 1998

Location: Club La Vela, Panama City, Florida

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

We're past Uncensored and not a lot has changed other than Savage turning on Sting while still hating Hogan, making him a loner. Tonight is a different kind of show as it's the Spring Break Out, being held at a nightclub in Florida with pools all around and under the ring. We've got four weeks before Spring Stampede and we might get some matches announced tonight. Let's get to it.

We get some stills from the cage match last night with Tony and Mike narrating what happened.

Here's the NWO en masse (no Savage of course) to open the show. Bischoff praises Hogan for saving the NWO from a split. Hogan talks about how Nash proved he was the real giant last night and everyone bows to Nash. This brings Hogan to Macho Man, whom Hogan loves more than anyone he's loved in his entire life. They like Savage being crazy and since Savage is NWO, he's NWO for life. Therefore, tonight it's Hogan/Savage vs. Sting/Luger. Bischoff thinks Sting won't be here because there aren't any rafters.

Nitro Girls in St. Patrick's Day attire.

Goldberg vs. Lodi

Lodi has an RF Video sign. Press slam, spear, Jackhammer, moving on.

The Flock tries to come in post match but the destruction continues.

Saturn starts to come in but we look at almost the entire match again instead.

Gene tells us that one of the all time greats has retired. CALL THE HOTLINE!

Ultimo Dragon vs. Fit Finlay

This should be interesting. Finlay shoves him into the corner to start but misses a charge, allowing Dragon to snap off his kicks. You know Finlay takes those kicks with a smile. A nerve hold puts the Dragon down and a simple rake of the eyes stops his comeback attempt. Finlay takes him to the apron and rams him face first into the side of the ring before they come back in for a slugout. A single chop stings Finlay so he casually pokes Dragon in the eye to stop him cold.

Dragon fires off a dropkick but misses a dropkick. A nipup fails and Finlay goes to the floor where he steps aside to avoid a dive. I love that counter but not many people do it other than Finlay and Samoa Joe. The rolling senton gets two for Finlay but Dragon ducks a European uppercut to put on the Dragon Sleeper. To my surprise Finlay actually gives up which I don't remember seeing before.

Rating: C+. This is a good example of what WCW could do better than anyone else. They had these guys that had totally different styles but were both highly skilled in the ring, so why not throw them together and see what happens? It came out quite well with a fun little five minute match.

The Nitro Girls are in DX colors tonight.

Scott Norton vs. Chris Adams

Adams bounces off Norton when he tries some shoulder blocks before

missing a charge and landing in the ropes. Norton throws him over the top to the floor before choking on the ropes. Back in and Norton chokes even more, only to miss a charge in the corner. Norton no sells a flying superkick and ends Adams with the shoulder breaker.

Rating: D. The same complaints as usual about Norton here: the guy just isn't that good. He looked good but he was almost never allowed to lose, even to bigger stars. I've seen some of his Japan stuff and it's still nothing special, but the guy apparently had enough connections to be protected in America. It was just a squash here.

Highlights of WCW at Spring Break in Florida. It's a lot of women in swimsuits which isn't a bad thing at all. There was Miss Nitro contest and the winner is here.

Mike Enos/Wayne Bloom vs. Jim Neidhart/British Bulldog

Neidhart stats out with Enos and it's Anvil throwing him around by the hair. Off to Bulldog who gets caught in a neckbreaker and it's off to Bloom. Bulldog comes right back with a suplex for two but Enos cheats from the apron on the now legal Neidhart. A spike piledriver crushes Anvil but only gets two.

Off to Enos again but another piledriver is countered with a backdrop. Bloom breaks up a tag to Bulldog and drops a leg on Neidhart. Enos comes in with a bearhug as the fans chant boring. Mike misses a middle rope splash and there's the tag to Bulldog. House is cleaned and everything breaks down until Bulldog powerslams Bloom for the pin.

Rating: D. This had no business going six minutes. I have to feel sorry for Bulldog and Neidhart as they're here because there's nothing else for them to do and no one is interested in hem without Bret. The match was really dull and the fans weren't pleased with having to sit through a long match like this.

Hour #2 begins with the Nitro Girls in bikini tops and shorts.

Larry compares Hogan to Julius Caesar.

Here are Savage with Bischoff and Liz, apparently reunited. Bischoff says there was iron in Hogan's words because the NWO is united again. The important thing is that Savage saw the light and is back. Eric goes to hug him but Savage will have none of that. Savage says he isn't back in the NWO because he never left. He didn't do what he did last night for anyone but himself. The future is Savage controlling the NWO and the NWO controlling the world so that Hogan can feel what it's like to be at the bottom. In other words, screw everything else, you're getting WAY more NWO stuff in the coming weeks.

Raven gives the Flock some instructions before the next match.

Chris Benoit vs. Raven

Raven blames Benoit for costing him the US Title last night and the fans think he sucks. Benoit stabbed him in the back last night and now it's time to feel the Even Flow. Benoit pounds him into the corner and catches him in a German suplex. Raven bails to the floor and gets caught by a baseball slide. They head away from the entrance and across a little bridge over the pool. We're just waiting on someone to go into the water.

Back to the ring after doing nothing on the floor with Benoit stomping him in the corner. A back elbow to the face gets two and Benoit stomps him in the head as we take a break. Back with the fight up by the entrance and Raven being sent into the big metal WCW letters. They get back in the ring with Benoit firing off knees to the head to take Raven down again. Raven loses his shirt so Benoit can fire off some loud chops. Benoit pounds him down into the corner as this has been completely one sided so far.

Benoit stands over Raven and slaps him in the face while shouting COME ON. Another chop puts Raven down and a backdrop gets two. Benoit rolls some snap suplexes but takes forever to load up the flying headbutt, allowing Raven to roll away. Raven throws in a chair and bulldogs Benoit face first into the steel. Benoit tries the Crossface but rams his own head into the chair on the way down. The Even Flow onto the chair is good for the pin, apparently earning Raven a US Title shot at Spring Stampede.

Rating: C. This was nowhere near their Souled Out match but it certainly wasn't bad. The booking of the match was a little weird though as Raven had nothing at all for the first six or seven minutes and then hit two or three things to win. These two have a solid chemistry together though and the match was pretty entertaining stuff.

The Nitro Girls are in the crowd dancing.

Heenan gives his take on the NWO issues.

Yuji Nagata vs. Ernest Miller

They lock up to start with Nagata getting in a shot to the head to take over. A nice jumping kick to the face puts Nagata down but a cross armbreaker is quickly escaped. Nagata catches a kick and suplexes Miller down for two before stomping away. We hit the chinlock and the fans think this is boring. Back up and Nagata fires off forearms in the corner but gets caught with a spinning kick to the face. They botch a leapfrog with Nagata landing on Miller to send him down but Ernest's top rope roundhouse kick gets the pin.

Rating: D-. Can we please stop these martial arts matches already? They're not interesting at all and I've yet to see a crowd that was actually impressed by one of them. Nagata continues to be a boring guy and putting him in there with a guy even more one dimensional than him isn't the best idea in the world.

More Nitro Girls.

Scott Steiner vs. Ray Traylor

Steiner bails to the corner to start but pokes Traylor in the eye to take over. A suplex puts Traylor down and a kick to the head does the same. There's a bearhug from Steiner but Traylor bites his way to freedom. Steiner literally kicks him to the floor and sends him into the steps as we take a break. Back with Traylor making a comeback and pounding away before crotching Steiner against the post.

A big clothesline sends Steiner over the barricade and we finally get someone in the pool. Back in and Traylor hits a big forearm to the jaw and pounds down right hands in the corner. Traylor actually goes up top and hits a decent clothesline for two, making Steiner call for time out. Ray goes up again but Buff comes out to crotch him, allowing the Frankensteiner from the top to set up the Recliner for the win.

Rating: C-. The match wasn't great but it was some entertaining stuff which is all you can ask for in a lot of matches. The pool spot was cute and Traylor's top rope clothesline looked pretty devastating. I'm still not sure why Traylor wasn't allowed to beat some low level NWO guys over the months. It wouldn't have hurt to have a guy beating guys like Vincent and Adams but falling short against names like Steiner or Konnan.

We get stills of Giant vs. Nash with Nash still not doing the job.

Tony recaps the NWO drama.

Nitro Girls again.

Eddie Guerrero gives Chavo a "My Favorite Wrestler Is Eddie Guerrero" shirt ("Cheat To Win" on the back) and Chavo has to listen to Eddie, who says wear it.

TV Title: Chavo Guerrero Jr. vs. Booker T

Chavo shoves him away for making fun of the shirt so Booker clotheslines his head off. A hook kick to the face puts Chavo down again and a powerslam puts him on the floor. Chavo is in first and gets in a cheap shot on Booker to take over. Guerrero stomps away a lot but keeps stopping to look at the shirt. Booker's knee is kicked out and we hit the chinlock for a bit. Back to the chinlock for a bit but Booker quickly fights up and kicks Chavo down. The ax kick sets up a sidewalk slam for two and the missile dropkick retains the title.

Rating: D+. It was clear that Chavo wasn't ready for a singles push like this. Now that being said, the angle with Eddie was a great way to get him noticed. The T-shirt was a good way to get on his nerves and keep the story going during the match. It's amazing what can happen when you use an established guy to bring up younger guys rather than using the younger guys to give the veterans wins.

More spring break festivities.

Nitro Girls part 9 or so.

US Title: Reese vs. Diamond Dallas Page

The fans are WAY behind Page here. Reese lumbers around a lot and Page pounds away, only to be thrown into the corner for knees to the ribs. Something similar to Cena's ProtoBomb puts Page down and a gorilla press drop does the same. Reese sends him into the ropes but Page spins around the shoulders into the Diamond Cutter to retain. Usual Page match here.

Cruiserweight Title: Juventud Guerrera vs. Chris Jericho

Jericho is defending. Juvy is now wearing cheesy looking sunglasses. Jericho has on sunglasses of his own but of a less cheesy variety. Before

the match the champion goes over all the trophies he's won recently, from Rey's knee to Juvy's mask to Malenko's dignity. He's wearing the sunglasses because his future is so bright. The Jericho Mapleleaf will be his 1005th hold daddy!

They run the ropes to start with Jericho having his head kicked off, sending him into the corner. Jericho backdrops him to the ropes but catches a springboard crossbody in a slam for two. Jericho pulls him back in off the apron and gets two off the arrogant cover. A belly to back suplex gets the same for the champion and Jericho bends Juvy's back over his knee.

Chris has to tell the fans to cool it with the booing and Juvy backflips out of a German suplex. A standing hurricanrana gets two on Jericho and a modified Juvy Driver looks to set up the 450. Guerrero's ribs are too banged up though, allowing Jericho to get to his feet. Instead it's a top rope flying hip attack and a DDT for two. Jericho goes over to the corner and hits Juvy with the belt for the DQ.

Rating: C. This was getting good by the end but the ending hurt it. Guerrero was solid in the ring and could keep up with anyone they threw at him. Taking the mask off was a good way to give him some more character and his push is working well here. Jericho's trophy case gimmick is awesome as well and could easily be brought back by someone today.

Post match Jericho puts him in the Cloverleaf.

The Nitro Girls dance on some rocks.

Here are the Outsiders in hula shirts with something to say. Hall is BOMBED but still does the survey with the NWO winning. Nash says be nice to the fat girls over spring break. He talks about knocking Giant out with the ball bat last night and wants to know why Giant isn't here tonight. Nash thinks Giant doesn't have the guts to show up but here's

the other big man, sans neck brace. Giant stalks Nash so Kevin CANNONBALLS INTO THE POOL! Hall tries to get away but gets thrown in as well. That had to happen at some point tonight.

Sting/Lex Luger vs. Hollywood Hogan/Randy Savage

Savage on the mic: "0000H YEAH!" Hogan on the mic: "0000H NO!" Why did no one think of that before? Sting's music hits but we only have Luger. Buffer does the entrance but there's no Sting. Bischoff takes the mic and says Luger is on his own because there's no Sting. The camera pans up to show a helicopter (blowing the ring skirts and mats around) with Sting REPELING INTO THE RING!

Hogan blames Savage for this so Savage goes to leave, only to be stopped by the Disciple. Hogan jumps Randy from behind as Hogan and Sting look on from the ring. Savage is thrown inside and gets beaten up by Sting with the fans trying to recover from the entrance. A top rope splash gets two for Sting and he shouts at Savage to get up. Sting pops Hogan with a right hand and brings in Luger to work on Savage even more.

Luger suplexes Savage down for no cover and drops him again with a gorilla press. Back to the world champion for an atomic drop before Luger comes in for the running forearm. Hogan isn't even paying attention to the ring. Savage gets up and slaps Hogan on the back but Hogan says he doesn't think so and bails.

Randy throws Hogan back inside before getting in a fight with Disciple. Hogan chokes Luger down but Lex avoids the legdrop and tags in Sting. There are a pair of Stinger Splashes for Hollywood and a right hand for Bischoff. Savage is rolled in by the Disciple and everything breaks down, drawing in the Disciple for the DQ.

Rating: D. This wasn't a match as much as a massive angle. Hogan and Savage already had a bad match last night and it looks like we're gearing up for another one in the future. Luger continues to be a man with no

direction at all as he's just thrown into random matches to fight for WCW because that's all he does. Bad match here but the entrance was awesome.

The rest of the NWO comes in but Sting and Luger run them off to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. They were trying here but the show was running with an anchor. Yet again we're all about the NWO because that's what this company has become. The problem with that angle is Sting is an accessory to the real story of Hogan vs. Savage, which isn't what people want to see. Every week that goes by makes Starrcade and SuperBrawl look like bumps in the road as we continue towards some ending that doesn't seem to be coming. The NWO is coming up on two years old now and they're still the dominant story in the company. People are going to start getting bored with it and it's going to happen in a hurry.

The rest of the show was hit or miss throughout the night. Part of what's so frustrating with the NWO is a lot of the other stories show promise. The three way feud with Raven vs. Benoit vs. Page is good stuff and Booker is making the TV Title mean something. Jericho is doing a great job with the Cruiserweight Title and the trophy case gimmick. Then you have the tag titles and I don't remember the last time they Outsiders were even shown with the belts.

One last thing: the set being different here was a very nice touch. Instead of the same stuff over and over, WCW was good about mixing things up every now and then. Whether it was a show in a nightclub like this or Road Wild being outside or the cool themed sets at PPVs, the look was changed up just often enough to keep things from getting boring. WWE completely fails in this area outside of Wrestlemania anymore. Watchable show overall but the NWO brings it down, as usual.

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