

Monday Nitro – June 8, 1998: Once Every 15 Minutes

Monday Nitro #140

Date: June 8, 1998

Location: The Palace of Auburn Hills, Auburn Hills, Michigan

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

We're at the last Nitro before the Great American Bash and we have a new co-main event for Sunday of Sting vs. Giant for the tag titles. It's hard to say what we're going to get tonight as almost everything is set, meaning we've got a three hour commercial for a show that doesn't sound all that interesting in the first place. Let's get to it.

We open with Michael Buffer doing his Are You Ready schtick. Instead of a big match though, he's introducing Hogan and Bischoff for the opening promo. They have a special guest with them though as Dennis Rodman is back. Bischoff sucks up to Hogan and Hollywood brags about having Rodzilla back with him. He dares Piper and Savage to come out here for a fight right now. Rodman gets the mic and says hey a lot and sucks up to the Detroit fans since he used to play for the Pistons. Bischoff tells the fans to bite him and Hogan brags about how awesome the Black and White are. Not much to see here.

We look at Sting joining the Wolfpack because we haven't seen it in a few minutes.

Opening sequence.

Nitro Girls.

The announcers talk about the power struggle for a few minutes as is their custom.

We get some interviews Mike conducted with fans on Sting joining the Red and Black. I don't think the main event of Starrcade got this much attention.

Here's the Wolfpack with something to say. Nash, the hometown boy, sucks up to the Detroit crowd before praising Luger to sign Sting up and then get DDP to team with him on Thunder. Kev talks about being ready to walk out of the business about five years ago because he couldn't get a break, but DDP believed in him. That being said, now DDP needs to make a decision.

The Wolfpack has had a vote and it was nearly unanimous (apparently Savage voted no in a nice bit of continuity): they want him in the Wolfpack. Two years ago Page decided to not go Black and White and that was the right call. Tonight though he can make the right call and join the Dream Team. This brings Nash to Hogan but the mic stops working. Hogan's voice comes from the technical area where the Black and White are watching the show. Rodman is allowed to set off some pyro and turn off the lights to get rid of the Wolfpack.

Konnan interviews JJ Dillon in the back and asks him to prevent the Black and White from doing anything else tonight. JJ says that it's the Wolfpack's problem, not WCW's.

Yuji Nagata vs. Jerry Flynn

Flynn gets in some kicks to the ribs and pounds away in the corner but misses a running kick, sending him out to the floor in a heap. Back in and a high collar suplex gets two for Nagata but Jerry comes back with a snap suplex of his own as the announcers talk about anything but this match. A leg lock gets Nagata nowhere so Flynn comes back with a DDT for two. Yuji comes back with a jumping kick to the face but Flynn hits a kick to Nagata's head to even it up. Tony talks about some announcement we'll get on Thunder as Jerry goes after Sonny Onoo, allowing Nagata to put on the Nagata Lock for the win.

Rating: D. I'm really tired of these karate showdowns because there's nothing to any of these characters other than they like to kick people. Neither guy here is interesting in the slightest and it's really questionable to have this as the first match in over half an hour. Is it any wonder why no one stuck around to watch these shows when Raw came on?

Here's Jericho with an envelope and something to say. It's a registered letter from Ted Turner himself. The letter says that Jericho has asked Turner to look at the Cruiserweight Title loss. Turner praises him for tenacity and thinks Jericho has a lot of the same traits Turner himself had. After reviewing the tapes from Slamboree, it has been determined that Dean Malenko should not be the champion. However, Jericho's incessant whining has sickened Turner, so the decision stands. Signed, Uncle Ted Turner.

We see Luger recruiting Page to the Wolfpack from Thunder.

Reese/Horace vs. Van Hammer/Juventud Guerrera

Hammer and Reese get us going but everyone comes in before too long. A double clothesline puts the Flock members down and Juvy hits a springboard seated senton to take Reese down. Juvy pounds away with right hands to send Reese to the floor before hitting a big dive, only to be caught in midair. Hammer dives on top of both of them to put Reese down so the good guys can stand tall. Well kind of tall in Juvy's case.

We really get started with Hammer vs. Horace and Hulk's nephew taking Hammer down with a Samoan drop. A running clothesline crushes Hammer in the corner and it's off to an arm wringer. Horace wraps up the arm but gets caught in a cobra clutch slam, allowing for the hot tag off to Guerrera. A slingshot legdrop keeps Horace down but he gets up a big boot in the corner to put Juvy down.

The big man beating begins with Horace pounding away before hooking a reverse chinlock. Juvy fights up again and snaps off a quick hurricanrana

before countering a belly to back superplex into a crossbody. There's the real hot tag off to Van Hammer who cleans house but regular clotheslines don't do much damage to Reese. A middle rope clothesline finally takes him down and a Cactus Clothesline puts Horace to the floor. Not that it matters though as Reese hits a chokebomb on Guerrero for the pin.

Rating: D+. Nothing special here but at least there's a story going on here. Juvy needs to get the win in the showdown with Reese but having him lose in a tag match like this is ok. The match wasn't all that good but it was a huge step up over the battle of the karate guys from earlier.

The Black and White has a party with some good looking women. Hogan promises a new member of the team soon and talks about how Skinny Legs Nash isn't getting away with all those powerbombs Hogan had to pay for.

Hour #2 begins with a riveting interview with JJ Dillon. He reiterates that Luger and DDP aren't tag champions because Giant had no authority to pick a partner to defend the titles. Sunday it's Sting vs. Giant for both belts and the winner gets to pick his partner.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Scott Putski

Putski is a good example of a guy with a great look with almost nothing else to back it up. Guerrero runs into a hard shoulder to start but takes Scott down with a drop toehold. An elbow to the face sets up an abdominal stretch by Eddie as you can feel the ratings battle slipping away. Putski fights out and hits a scary looking release German suplex, dropping Eddie down on his shoulder. A short powerbomb puts Eddie down as Tony shills the big announcement on Thunder again. Eddie escapes a gorilla press and dropkicks the knee out but here's Chavo for the DQ without actually doing anything.

Rating: D+. Believe it or not this might have been the match of the night so far. Putski wasn't doing anything of note but he was throwing Eddie around pretty nicely. He would have been a good candidate to throw into a

tag team as a silent enforcer. Eddie was his usual smooth self.

Chavo punches Scott out as Eddie bails. The nephew shouts at Eddie to come back because he needs his uncle.

Nash and Konnan, with the latter in different clothes than he was in earlier, say they've got some money from the 5,000 Wolfpack t-shirts they sold tonight so they can pay Hogan back now. The money is in a Swiss bank account down there. Down where you ask? Both guys laugh before they can answer.

Bischoff and Giant are at the tech area again because we haven't heard enough from the NWO tonight. Apparently Giant hasn't eaten in four days so he'll eat Sting on Sunday like the chicken he is. Somehow this took two and a half minutes.

Here are Rude, Hennig and Konnan in his fourth appearance in ninety minutes. Rude cuts a heel promo on Goldberg but Konnan does his usual deal to get the crowd back on the Red and Black's side. Rude and Hennig just don't fit with the Wolfpack at all.

Chris Benoit vs. Booker T

Match #6 in the best of seven series for the TV Title shot on Sunday with Booker trailing 3-2. Feeling out process to start until with Booker taking it to the mat, only to have Benoit take over with a hammerlock. Booker counters into one of his own before lifting Benoit into the air into a kind of pumphandle slam. A spinning kick to the face puts Benoit down again and the Canadian bails to the floor.

Back in and Booker hooks another armbar as Heenan talks about Booker having more video equipment to watch tapes than Bob Crane (star of Hogan's Heroes, eventually became a sex addict who made hundreds of sex tapes). Benoit fights up and hits a knee to the ribs to send Booker out

to the floor. The Canadian gets two off an elbow to the face and a snap suplex for the same.

A belly to back suplex gets the same and the Swan Dive connects, but Benoit might have injured his shoulder and can't cover. Cue Stevie Ray to give Booker a pep talk but his comeback is stopped with a German suplex for two. Booker comes back with a kick to the face and the sidewalk slam but Benoit fires off kicks in the corner to slow Booker down again. Not that it matters as Booker hooks a spinning sunset flip out of the corner for the pin to send up to a seventh match.

Rating: C+. This match is another instance of the same problem this entire series has had: the matches are still good but they're running out of things to do to each other. Still though, I can't imagine anything on the show topping what they did here. Thankfully there's just one match to go in the series though.

Benoit kicks Booker's leg out post match but Stevie runs him off.

Nitro Girls.

Nitro Party winner.

Hogan and Hart are in the sky box again so Hollywood can make gay jokes about Konnan. We get a pretty awesome Randy Savage impression from Hogan as he brings in Liz. Apparently she's a gift to Bret and is no longer with Savage. Ok then.

We look at the end of the Booker vs. Benoit movie again with Tony actually praising Benoit's heel actions. That's new at least.

TV Title: Fit Finlay vs. Norman Smiley

Finlay grabs a headlock and a cravate to start but Smiley hiptosses him

down and scores with a dropkick. Finlay comes back with a rake to the eyes and takes Smiley down into a Crippler Crossface. Back up and a running forearm puts Smiley on the apron for some shots to the chest. The fans do the wave and the announcers actually call it. Finlay puts on an armbar for a bit before planting Norman with the tombstone to retain.

Rating: D. The announcers spent more time talking about the wave, the announcement on Thunder, Booker vs. Benoit, or ANYTHING else they could come up with besides the match. Could it be because Finlay is clearly just a placeholder for the winner of the series and Smiley had no chance at all here? I'm sure this match had fans glued to their sets instead of watching whatever Austin was doing to McMahon at this point.

Hour #3 begins.

Here's Tony in the ring for something actually interesting: a Sting interview, which I believe is the first one in over a year. Sting says Giant is fat and talks about how he beat up big guys like him at the first Great American Bash. He recommends Giant loses some weight and take a shower before Sting wins both belts on Sunday. This was nothing.

Back from a break with Tony still in the ring for even more talking. This time it's Piper who compares himself to Barry Sanders and promises to hit Hogan and Hart in the head so much that they'll feel like they just got out of a Red Wings' game. Piper makes jokes about Karl Malone beating Dennis Rodman in the NBA playoffs and says Savage is from a test tube. This draws out Macho who will fight Piper after the tag match on Sunday.

Piper says they'll fight in Baltimore but Savage wants to do it tonight. Hart and Hogan (appearance #5 tonight) pop up at the tech area again and apparently Liz is a present for Eric, who doesn't need Viagra. Eric kisses Liz as Bret cracks jokes about Savage and Piper. Savage says he's over Liz but not Piper and there's a right hand to the Scot. Piper punches Savage back, sending him to the floor. This ran nearly ten minutes whereas Sting got about three.

The announcers talk. Again.

We recap Jericho's tour of Washington DC last week as well as Jericho showing the 1934 NWA rule book to Malenko on Thunder.

Cruiserweight Title: Disco Inferno vs. Dean Malenko

Dean stomps him down in the corner to start and gets two off a powerslam. Disco comes back with a clothesline and an elbow drop for two but Dean puts him back down with a leg lariat. The Cloverleaf retains the title with ease.

More Nitro Girls, this time in pink.

The Black and White, including Hogan (#6) are with the girls in the lounge again to run down the Wolfpack some more before introducing a video of Hogan's newest movie.

Video of Hogan (#7) and Steiner on a movie set where they run into Carl Weathers (Apollo Creed from the Rocky movies).

Back to the lounge for Hogan to talk about how awesome an actor Scott Steiner is going to be.

Video on Goldberg.

US Title: Goldberg vs. Chavo Guerrero Jr.

Chavo requested this match and says "be very very quiet. I'm hunting Goldbergs." Chavo dives at Goldberg and is easily sent lying across the ring. A kind of fallaway slam puts Chavo down again and there's a gorilla press into a powerslam for good measure. Eddie is cheering on the stage as Goldberg hits the two move combo to become 99-0.

Here's the Wolfpack (appearance #5 for Konnan tonight) to offer Page a spot on the team. Page comes to the stage where Tony asks him for his decision. DDP talks about the talent he sees in the ring and says he can't believe what he's about to do. Before he can say what he's going to do, Hogan (appearance #8) and Rodman come up behind and blast him with chairs. Sting and the Wolfpack chase the NWO off to end the show.

Overall Rating: N. As in NWO, because that's all this show was about. This was a really good example of something WCW was horrible about: putting FAR too much of the focus on one idea instead of spreading the show around. Hogan was on TV in 8 (arguably 9) different segments in about two hours and twenty minutes of total air time. The guy has reached new levels of overexposure and we're to the point that I just don't care about what he's doing at all.

On top of that, there was barely any wrestling at all on this show and the only stuff we got was decent at its very best. I mean, Booker vs. Benoit was a fine match, but it's literally the sixth time they've done the match in two weeks. Of the other six matches, two were under three minutes, one was a karate off, one was a squash, another featured Ivan Putski and the last was a decent match featuring the Flock B-Team. Is it really any shock that Nitro hasn't won a ratings night since April? Absolutely awful show this week with the NWO just crushing everything in their sight.

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