

Monday Night Raw – February 3, 1997: The Night That The Lights Were Out In Toronto

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 3, 1997

Location: SkyDome, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Attendance: 25,268

Commentators: Jim Ross, Vince McMahon, Doc Hendrix

Happy birthday KB! My birthday present: the first two hour Raw. I would have turned nine years old on the night of this show and luckily for me things were picking up in the title picture around this time. We're closing in on Final Four which means we need to start printing up lost and found posters for a certain smile. These are dark times for the company though as WCW is crushing them so it's hard to say how many people have seen this stuff. Let's get to it.

Keep in mind there was no February 10 show and the next episode is on Thursday February 13.

Vince calls this Royal Rumble Raw, which means we're going to get a lot of highlights. If I remember right the ads suggested showing the ENTIRE Rumble match but it's clips a go-go instead.

We open with a clip of the end of the Rumble with Austin sneaking back inside and stealing the Rumble from Bret.

Vader vs. Steve Austin

The arena is half dark to cover up the fact that so many seats are empty. Yeah there are 25,000 people there, but Wrestlemania VI had 67,000 in the

same building. Bret comes out before the match and jumps Austin but Vader goes after Hart for no apparent reason. Bret is finally taken out and the match gets started. Austin jumps Vader as he gets in the ring and stomps Vader into the corner in a rare visual. Steve makes the mistake of spitting at Vader though and the monster runs him over.

Now it's Vader slugging Austin down in the corner but an early Vadersault attempt is blocked by a low blow. They slug it out again but Austin is whipped into the referee as we take a break. Back with the referee back up and Vader getting two off a slam. Vader misses a seated senton and Austin casually slams him down (ignored by the announcers).

Vince promises no bait and switch tactics tonight and guarantees two title matches. That's probably a jab at Nitro which isn't the best idea for the WWF right now. Another low blow puts Vader down and Austin chokes away. The referee tries to break it up and gets a Stunner for the DQ once the referee wakes up.

Rating: C. Not much of a match but it was a solid brawl. Austin and Vader could punch as well as anyone so it was fun enough. I loved the slam to Vader which was treated like nothing special here but most of the time got a huge reaction from the announcers. You could see the star in Austin kicking at the door and the hinges were about to break.

Thursday Raw Thursday (no idea why they called it that) ad.

Savio Vega vs. Flash Funk

Savio has recently joined the new Nation of Domination. He goes after the arm to start but Funk (2 Cold Scorpio) easily nips up, only to be pounded right back into the corner. Funk gets a sloppy sunset flip for two but Savio chokes him down for a few four counts. More forearms to the back have Funk in trouble but he Funks Up to a nice pop. Vega is rammed into all four buckles and a rotating splash from the top gets two. Funk dives off the top to take out the Nation but Savio avoids a moonsault and

scores a fast pin.

Rating: C-. I like Scorpio but he wasn't working as the dancer/funky man. Vega was still in the red attire here and the look didn't fit with the new character. The Nation would take awhile to really find its rhythm and Savio wasn't exactly a part of its ultimate success. Nothing much to see here but Scorpio flew well enough.

Vince interviews Peta Wilson, a very good looking blonde actress, of La Femme Nikita. Nothing to see here but Vince talks about sex of course.

Here's former WWF Champion Sycho Sid for a chat. JR talks about Sid beating Shawn and Bret in the span of thirty days before losing the title to Shawn in a rematch. They're scheduled to face each other at Thursday Raw Thursday so Sid makes his usual nonsensical comments about being evil. When the smoke clears he'll still rule the world.

Owen and the Bulldog don't want to talk about Owen eliminating Bulldog from the Rumble. Bulldog called him an idiot and they're about to argue again.

Tag Titles: Doug Furnas/Phillip LaFon vs. Owen Hart/British Bulldog

Furnas and LaFon mainly teamed in Japan but they're here to try to breathe some life into the tag titles. LaFon grabs a headlock on Bulldog to start before taking him down into a side leg lock. Bulldog grabs the rope and catches a diving LaFon in the powerslam but can't quite slam him down. Off to Owen for some right hands to the head but LaFon rolls through a monkey flip and takes Owen into the corner.

Furnas comes in despite having the flu tonight. Owen tags out and we get a test of strength between the very strong Bulldog and the former champion powerlifter Furnas with Doug taking him down with relative ease. The arena is so dark you can barely see the first few rows. Owen gets in

a cheap shot from the apron and comes in to rake Furnas' eyes. Back do Davey Boy to stomp away a bit before drawing in LaFon with a shot to the face.

Owen comes in sans tag and is immediately caught in a sunset flip so he tags right back out. Bulldog goes after Furnas' back but when Owen does the same, Doug lifts him up into a nice electric chair drop. He still can't make the tag though as Bulldog comes in for the save, only to be caught in a small package for a very close two. Owen comes back in and pounds away but Bulldog is too busy posing to make another tag. Bulldog finally wakes up due to Owen screaming at him as we take a break.

Back with Furnas being clotheslined down for two before snapping off a great looking overhead belly to belly, sending Bulldog to the mat. LaFon finally comes in with clotheslines all around as everything breaks down. A bad looking jumping DDT gets a three count on Owen but his foot was on the rope. The champions double team LaFon but Bulldog turns his head and backdrops Owen to the floor. Smith powerslams LaFon down but Owen gets countered out.

Rating: C. Nice match here but it was more about the champions' troubles than the match itself. Furnas and LaFon are both solid in the ring and could more than hold their own, but the way the arena looks with the lights almost off is really dragging the show down. That's rather pathetic and it's not fair to the guys in the ring.

Owen is fine and it was a ruse, even though Bulldog could have gotten the pin.

We go to the Rumble again to see Ahmed Johnson eliminating Farrooq with a big board.

Ahmed says he's off his Prozac so you don't know what he's going to do. Undertaker, Johnson's partner for the night, says stay out of the next match or he'll be going out there alone.

Crush vs. Goldust

No real reason for this other than getting both guys on the show. Goldie grabs a wristlock to start before clotheslining Crush out to the floor. Back in and we hit a quick armbar on Crush and the match is already boring. The interesting part however is the commentary, as JR and Vince talk about upcoming shows. It's always fun to hear Vince promote shows as he can go from commentator to expert salesman at the drop of a hat. Listen to him do it if you can and you'll hear the love for it in his voice.

The armbar stays on until HHH comes out to distract Goldie, allowing Crush to knock him to the floor. Goldust is dropped throat first across the barricade before they head inside for some very slow pounding from Crush. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Crush has to suplex Goldust down. Goldust avoids a middle rope punch and DDTs Crush down before scoring with a clothesline. A bulldog gets two but the Curtain Call is broken up by an interfering Savio when the referee is distracted. Crush's heart punch (exactly what it sounds like) is good for the pin.

Rating: D-. This was REALLY dull stuff with almost the entirety of the match being spent in an armbar or in really boring periods of offense from Crush. The whole match was just a way to set up the HHH interference which doesn't make for the best match in the world. Nothing to see here at all.

The Blackjacks are coming. Great.

We come back from a break with a shot of the half empty upper deck. Nice job tech guys.

Here's WWF Champion Shawn Michaels who certainly has his smile at the moment. The fans aren't exactly thrilled with him due to the natural Bret vs. Shawn rivalry but Vince wants to talk about Sid. Shawn says the title used to represent everything that was good in the WWF but after listening

to Sid talking about how evil it was, Shawn thinks Sid is right. If being bad is what it takes to be the WWF Champion, he'll be as bad as you can be. Bret is seen watching in the back as Shawn says it's cool if the Canadian fans like Bret more than him. He doesn't worry about being popular anymore because he's the WWF Champion.

This brings out a ticked off Bret to a big reaction from the Canadian crowd. Bret says that he's tried to like Shawn but it's getting harder and harder all the time. Shawn said it best himself when he called himself a degenerate (there's a word for the future) and a brawl is imminent when Austin comes in to sneak attack Bret. This draws in Sid to stare down Shawn and we go to a break. Back with Shawn and Bret in the ring with the other guys in the back already. They keep staring each other down until Bret picks up the title belt. He holds it out to Shawn but drops it down when Shawn reaches for it. Nice segment.

We see the contract signing for Tiger Ali Singh. If there has ever been a bigger dud, I can't think of him off the top of my head.

Intercontinental Title: Marc Mero vs. Hunter Hearst Helmsley

HHH is defending and this is Mero's last shot at the title. Also Sable and Mr. Hughes are banned from ringside. Mero runs the champion over to start and scores with a few armdrags to keep his early control. Helmsley rams him into the buckle but walks into a backdrop and gets clotheslined out to the floor. Mero's dive to the floor misses but he lands on his feet and stays on HHH. Back in and Mero's second dive hits Helmsley's knees to give the champion his first advantage.

A not great looking vertical suplex (he almost dropped Mero) gets an easily broken two count and the knee drop gets the same. Mero escapes a suplex and gets two off a rollup, only to get caught in a facebuster. We take a break and come back with both guys down and Mero slamming HHH face first into the mat. Mero scores with a clothesline and knee lift as the match is picking up a bit. HHH is sent out to the floor for a big flip

dive over the top from Mero.

Back in and a somersault legdrop gets two on the champion and Mero pounds away in the corner. He charges into a boot in the corner but still manages to crotch Helmsley down on top. A top rope hurricanrana puts HHH down but a delayed cover is only good for two. Helmsley comes back with a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker to put both guys down. Why did he stop using moves like that? He gets back to form by taking the pad off a buckle but walks into a Samoan drop. The Merosault is good for two and the referee sees the exposed buckle. The distraction lets HHH pull out a foreign object for the retaining knockout.

Rating: C+. This started slow but got a lot better as we went along. Helmsley took awhile to find his footing as a heel but the soon to debut Chyna would help him out a lot. The Goldust feud didn't do anyone any favors though and dragged on for far too long. HHH winning clean here wouldn't have been horrible either.

We get another clip from the Rumble with Lawler jumping into the ring and getting eliminated by two punches from Bret. Jerry going back to commentary and finishing the sentence he started when he jumped into the ring was awesome.

Farrooq/Mankind vs. Ahmed Johnson/Undertaker

This is anything goes and a way to combine two feuds into one match. Ahmed brings out his 2x4 to even the odds against the Nation. It's a brawl to start with Undertaker and Mankind fighting to the floor and up the aisle. Ahmed comes off the top with a clothesline but getting caught in a sleeper of all things. The Dead Man comes back in to break it up and the pairs switch off.

Undertaker clotheslines Farrooq down and Johnson rams Mankind back first into the post. The original pairings hook up again as Crush and Savio Vega stroll down to the ring. Back from a break with Mankind hooking the

Mandible Claw on the champion. This time it's Ahmed making the save and planting Mankind with the Pearl River Plunge. Farrooq comes back in with a Dominator to Johnson but Undertaker breaks up the pin. Mankind kicks Undertaker low but the Dead Man kicks a chair into his face.

Johnson goes to the floor and pounds away on the rest of the Nation. Undertaker chokeslams Mankind down but Farrooq breaks up the cover. Johnson fights the Nation up the aisle but comes back with his 2x4 to take Farrooq out. Mankind scores with a neckbreaker on Undertaker and here's Vader to splash the Dead Man. Vader accidentally hits Mankind with the chair and his shot to Undertaker just ticks the Dead Man off. A Tombstone onto the chair puts Mankind away.

Rating: C+. This is the kind of match the show needed to breathe some life back into it. The four guys here just destroyed each other for about ten minutes with no rules or story whatsoever. Sometimes that's the best way you can run a match at all and the fans were completely into it. Nice showing here.

Overall Rating: C-. The wrestling was just ok until the end when things picked up, but the atmosphere just crippled the show. It felt like we were in a building that held about 2000 people because the place was so dark. That's the kind of stuff you expect from a really low level company and not worthy of Monday Night Raw.

Here's the February 13 show (Thursday Raw Thursday) if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/02/21/monday-night-raw-february-13-1997-thursday-raw-thursdayshawn-loses-his-smile/>

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