

Monday Nitro – June 22, 1998: Canada Saves Us Again

Monday Nitro #142

Date: June 22, 1998

Location: Jacksonville Memorial Coliseum, Jacksonville, Florida

Attendance: 8,749

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

The main story we've got tonight is the signing of Karl Malone for a match at Bash at the Beach. WCW's obsession with celebrities got annoying after awhile but to be fair, they had far bigger problems than wrestling basketball players. Other than that we'll likely get a lot more about the NWO civil war, which hasn't been so much of a war as much as it's been a lot of talking. Let's get to it.

We open with promises of clips from the Karl Malone press conference later.

Opening sequence.

The announcers talk about the tag match for a bit.

We look at Hogan and Rodman attacking Page with chairs a few weeks ago.

We get a clip from the Tonight Show with Hogan and Rodman as guests making fun of Malone for losing in the NBA Finals.

Here's DDP with something to say. This is going to be one of those shows with one topic of discussion all night isn't it? Page says he's jacked to be in Jacksonville. He talks about how he's looking forward to the match at the Bash because it's personal between him and Hogan. Page wants a piece of Hogan but not as much as Malone wants a piece of Rodman.

Disco Inferno vs. Len Denton

Denton is most famous for his work in Portland Wrestling as the Grappler. Disco pounds him down to start and hits his swinging neckbreaker for two.

We even get something resembling a People's Elbow for a nice reaction from the crowd. Denton makes a jobber style comeback but gets caught by some clotheslines and a piledriver gets the pin for Disco.

Here's NFL player Kevin Greene to no reaction at all. He talks about the Jacksonville Jaguars and the Carolina Panthers for several minutes with the fans dying more and more every second. This brings out Rude and Hennig to tell him to get out of their ring but Kevin wants a fight. Giant jumps Greene from behind to finally get a reaction from the crowd.

Post break JJ makes Giant vs. Greene for tonight. Great, more sports stars dominating the show.

Tokyo Magnum vs. Yuji Nagata

The name graphic says "Tokoyo". Tokyo dances a lot so Nagata pounds him in the face and claps a lot. The announcers mention Tokyo being an Ultimo Dragon student as he comes back with a forearm. Yuji sends him to the floor so Sonny can get in some kicks to take over. Back in and we get....wait for it.....wait for it.....more kicking!

A leg lock has Tokyo in trouble as the announcers talk about a bunch of sports stars instead of wrestling. Various leg locks abound and a standing ax kick puts Magnum down. Nagata misses a running knee in the corner and Tokyo scores with a dropkick for two. Not that it matters as a spinwheel kick to the face sets up the Nagata Lock to make Magnum tap.

Rating: D-. I'm thoroughly over these kicking matches. They wind up being nothing but kicking various body parts and leg locks before a big kick and a big leg lock ends it. Nagata isn't terrible in the ring but he has the personality of the tree in my front yard. Nothing to see here at all.

Raven talks about Saturn betraying him in his usual style.

We cut to the back where Stevie Ray has attacked Benoit.

Public Enemy vs. Sick Boy/Horace

This match actually has rules for a change. Public Enemy runs them over, knocking the Flock members to the floor. Back in and it's Rocco working

on Sick Boy's arm to start things off. Off to Grunge for a shot to the chest and a double flapjack before Horace comes in, only to be taken down for a double elbow drop. The Flock finally gets their act together and snaps Rocco's neck across the top rope to take over.

Sick Boy whips him into the corners a few times, only to get caught in a sunset flip for two. The bad guys take turns stomping mudholes in Rocco before Horace gets two off a side slam. Rocco gets clotheslined out to the floor before coming back inside to avoid a charge in the corner. The announcers ignore the match to talk about football and basketball players as Horace accidentally hits Sick Boy with a stop sign. Rocco comes off the top and drives the sign into Horace for the pin.

Rating: D. So to clarify it was a match with rules but two shots with a stop sign are perfectly legal? The match was nothing to see for the most part but the commentators ruined anything it had going for it by talking about the sports guys for the majority of the match. Flock wasn't terrible here actually.

The Nitro Girls are now in NWO shirts and no one seems to notice.

Here's Bret Hart with something to say. Bret shushes Gene and hopes WCW is happy for turning one Canadian against another. He remembers Benoit (his opponent tonight) being a little kid running around in Calgary and now the Americans have turned him into another punk kid. Nothing special here but there's nothing wrong with hyping a match for later in the show.

We get even more Tonight Show footage with Page and Malone coming out to face Rodman and Hogan. A fight nearly broke out and this goes on way too long. This was before the match was officially announced but the news had leaked weeks earlier anyway.

Hour #2 begins.

US Title: Goldberg vs. Rick Fuller

Goldberg takes him down and grabs the ankle before hitting a botched spear (it looked more like a tackle/spinebuster with Full taking a few steps back before going down) and the Jackhammer to retain.

Annoying fans talked about Rodman earlier today.

The announcers talk about Kevin Greene again.

More kids talking about the celebrity match. Good grief we get it already.

Here's the Wolfpack with something to say. Everyone hits their catchphrases before Sting talks to a mannequin which apparently proves that this is Wolfpack country. Being Nash's partner makes him a medium sized giant killer and promises to defend the titles anywhere anytime. Nash says too sweet...and that's it. Short promos tonight.

Fans talking about basketball players again.

Nitro Girls in silver.

Alex Wright vs. Eddie Guerrero

The announcers are talking about the basketball players before the bell even rings. Alex takes him down to start and stomps away before dancing a bit. Eddie comes back with a jumping back elbow and some chops in the corner but Alex pokes him in the eye. A backbreaker allows Alex to dance a bit more and get a delayed two. Eddie dropkicks him down so Alex bails to the floor for a breather. Back in and a quick suplex gets two for Wright but he misses a top rope knee drop. Eddie comes back with the brainbuster as Chavo comes out to cheer. The distraction lets Wright grab a suplex for the pin.

Rating: D. This was mainly about waiting on Chavo to show up which is fine for a story but the match hasn't been anything to see so far. Wright continues to be fun to watch and talented in the ring and Eddie is Eddie, but this match had nothing to it at all. It gets rather dull waiting thirty seconds between moves you know?

Chavo grabs a mic and talks about playing Monopoly the night before and landing on Park Place with three hotels even though he owned the place. Eddie: "YOU'RE WACKO!" Chavo: "No that's Chavo. C-h-a-v-o, C-h-a-v-o, C-h-a-v-o and Chavo is my name-o." He keeps talking about Monopoly as we go to a break.

More fans, more Rodman, more aspirin for me.

Back from a break and we get MORE fans talking about the tag match.

Konnan vs. Scotty Riggs

Konnan grabs the arm and hits the rolling clothesline before pulling on his pants. Riggs trips him up and scores with a dropkick. After some quick choking he sends Konnan out to the floor for a decent looking plancha. Back in and they botch a leapfrog with Konnan landing on Riggs' back before a clothesline gets two on Scotty. A rollup gets the same result but a Lodi distraction lets Riggs get in a cheap shot to take over. Riggs powerslams him down for two but misses a missile dropkick. The Tequila Sunrise gets the submission a second later.

Rating: D+. Riggs is another good example of a guy who was just there. He didn't have anything unique or special in his offense and was little more than a warm body that wouldn't screw anything up horribly. Konnan continues to be charismatic but not the best in ring worker to put it mildly.

The announcers talk about the basketball match again.

Now we get to see the freaking press conference announcing the match where the ball players cut promos on each other.

Hour #3 begins.

Steve McMichael vs. Stevie Ray

Are they actively trying to tick the fans off? That's a serious question. They can't think this is the most entertaining thing they could put on right now. Stevie wins a quick slugout to start and kicks Mongo down as the announcers talk about how tough Mongo was because of his football career. Mongo comes back with right hands and some choking as we take a break. Yes, in THIS match.

Back with Ray kicking Mongo down again before calling someone in the crowd a sucka. An elbow drop gets two and Stevie is getting frustrated. We hit the chinlock to keep the match at its dull pace until Mongo fights

up and kicks to the ribs. The “fight” heads out to the floor with Ray being sent into the barricade before grabbing a chair. Benoit comes out and takes it away but Booker takes the chair from Chris. It’s a four way staredown and the match just ends.

Rating: F. Let this show end soon before I injure myself.

Here’s the Black and White with something to say. Bischoff talks about how amazing Hogan is and makes jokes about breaking Savage’s leg. Hogan says Liz only stayed with Savage because of the money because Savage clearly wasn’t much of a man. He talks about the basketball match (it had been a full five minutes after all) for several minutes while saying nothing at all. Tony: “What have they done to our sport?” That should be the title of this episode. Hogan actually gets up close to the camera and says he’ll be a sixty minute man at Bash at the Beach. I’ve heard that was actually the plan until sanity sat in.

We look back at Benoit turning down the win over Booker due to Bret’s interference.

Chris Benoit vs. Bret Hart

If this is anything less than perfect, this is in the running for most worthless Nitro ever. Benoit snaps off a quick armdrag to start before Bret drives him into the corner for a surprisingly clean break. Benoit takes him down by the arm again and hooks an armbar as we’re still in first gear here. Bret fights up and scores with a hard DDT for no cover. Benoit comes back with some hard forearms to the head but Hart rocks him with European uppercuts. A middle rope elbow (not the middle rope elbow) misses Benoit and Chris chops him down.

Benoit is sent out to the floor and rammed back first into the post. Bret pounds away at Benoit’s head before heading back inside to pose a bit. A piledriver (not a tombstone Tony) gets two on Benoit and Bret is getting frustrated. We take a break with Heenan talking about Kevin Greene and come back with Bret getting two off something we didn’t see. The Russian legsweep gets another near fall on Benoit and Bret’s counter to an O’Connor Roll gets the same.

Bret takes too much time yelling at the referee and gets caught in two rolling Germans and a dragon suplex for no cover. A snap suplex looks to set up the Swan Dive but Bret rolls away. Bret goes up top very slowly and gets superplexed down for a close two. The fans are finally into something tonight. A short arm clothesline gets two more for Benoit so he slaps on the Crossface. Bret can't make the rope but here's Stevie Ray for a distraction, allowing Bret to knock Benoit out cold with a foreign object. Bret puts on the Sharpshooter for the win since Benoit is out cold.

Rating: B-. The match was getting good by the ending but we just needed a worthless guy with limited talent to screw up the ending. Benoit got a good rub here and I get why they can't have Bret do a job, but can we please get Benoit a win? It doesn't even have to be anything big. Just let him submit say...El Dandy. I'd take that at this point.

The announcers recap the Kevin Greene stuff in case you've only been watching for 85 seconds.

Kevin Greene vs. Giant

Greene is in street clothes which at least helps with some realism. He pounds away on Giant in the corner but gets caught by a single elbow to the face. A low blow slows Giant down and here's Hennig for the DQ after maybe 75 seconds.

The rest of the Black and White comes in for the group beatdown until Goldberg (Green's old teammate) makes the save. Greene throws out a challenge for a tag match at Bash at the Beach against Giant/Hennig to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. Only Benoit vs. Hart kept this from being a failure but it's by a hair. This was TERRIBLE with the basketball and Kevin Greene talk killing this show right out of the box. I was a huge NBA fan in the 90s but even I was getting sick of hearing about it back then. The commentary and lack of anything (save for the Canadians) else being good crippled this show for three very long hours.

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