

# Thunder – June 24, 1998: Can We Pop The Basketballs Already?

## Thunder

Date: June 24, 1998

Location: Orlando Arena, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Bobby Heenan, Tony Schiavone

We're still closing in on Bash at the Beach where, in case you didn't hear it 948 times on Nitro, the main event will have basketball players wrestling. Nitro was one of the most annoying shows I can remember in a very long time, meaning things almost have to be better tonight. Granted I've said that before and been very, very wrong. Let's get to it.

We open with, naturally, a video on Malone/Page vs. Hogan/Rodman. It's at Bash at the Beach you know.

Here are Giant and Vincent with something to say. Giant, between puffs, says that he wants a tag title match tonight but knows Nash isn't in the building. Sting has to find a partner and put the belts on the line for no adequately explored reason. Either way, that appears to be the main event.

## Public Enemy vs. Raven/Sick Boy

Man how much were they paying Public Enemy for this many appearances in a row? Naturally they bring a table to the ring with them. Before the match, Raven says everyone is looking for the chance to end his career. The match is under Raven's Rules, which really isn't even worthy of an announcement anymore. Sick Boy pounds on Rocco's arm to start as the other two are actually standing on the apron. Off to Grunge for a double flapjack so Sick Boy tags out to Raven.

A neckbreaker puts Raven down and it's back to Rocco for a double suplex. Everything breaks down as the wrestling nonsense is completely forgotten. Grunge puts Raven in a sleeper (Heenan: "THEY KNOW A HOLD!") but Sick Boy makes the save and things settle down. Sick Boy stomps Grunge down in the corner but gets caught in a faceplant to put both guys down.

Raven points Sick Boy back to the ring instead of tagging and everything breaks down again. Rocco gets crotched on the top to prevent Sick Boy from going through the table. Saturn comes out and blasts Raven in the head with a piece of metal before splashing him through the table. Back in the ring and the Drive By is enough to put Sick Boy away.

**Rating:** D. The lack of hardcore stuff (for the most part) was a surprise but there's a reason why Public Enemy didn't do much traditional wrestling. They weren't horrible for the most part but the match was nothing much to see. The Saturn vs. Raven blowoff match should be fun when we get there though.

#### Eddie Guerrero vs. Hugh Morrus

Guerrero is still looking over his shoulder for his crazy nephew and Morrus pounds away on him to start. Eddie finally gets away for a bit and dropkicks the knee out before hitting a nice headscissors. The fans chant for Chavo and Eddie freaks out but stays on the knee like a good villain. Morrus makes his comeback with a quick slam but misses an elbow off the top. Chavo comes out to a big reaction and the distraction lets Hugh slam Eddie off the top and hit the moonsault for the pin. More storyline development though the same thing we got on Nitro.

Here are Sting and Konnan with something to say. Konnan does his usual stuff which still sounds ridiculous. In short, Sting accepts the challenge and picks Luger as his partner but Luger is nowhere in sight. Sting goes back to get him which might mean something later on. Sting in a ponytail doesn't work for me here.

Mike Tenay tries to talk to Benoit in the back but gets chased off by Arn Anderson. The camera picks up Benoit talking about the Horsemen being alive again but Anderson saying that it's over.

### Stevie Ray vs. Sumo Fuji

Fuji might be someone from Dragon Gate but I can't find much on him. Ray easily pounds him down into the corner and beats on him with forearms while talking a lot of trash. While saying sucka a lot, Stevie sends him to the floor and tells Booker to watch how it's done. Back in and a big boot sets up something like Page's Pancake for the win. Sumo didn't get in a single bit of offense.

Here's Jericho to jump around the set to start before waving to the crowd like the condescending jerk that he is. He wants the fans to want him because he's the paragon of virtue and the Cruiserweight Champion. On top of that though, he's the top legal eagle and knows all of the loopholes, meaning he'll defend the title inside of 30 days but not against Malenko. This brings out JJ who says if Jericho spent as much time defending the title as he did finding ways to not face the top challengers, there's no way of telling how great he would be. JJ says he's changing the rules and it's Malenko vs. Jericho at Bash at the Beach.

### Cruiserweight Title: Chris Jericho vs. Ultimo Dragon

Tony wastes no time in ignoring the match to talk about the sports stars wrestling at the PPV. Dragon takes him down with a quick headlock but Jericho is quickly back on his feet. A back elbow puts Jericho down and Dragon does his headstand in the corner. We hit the chinlock by the challenger but Jericho fights up and we take a break. Back with Jericho getting two off the arrogant cover and doing the long strut. Jericho tries the Lionsault but Dragon pops up and dropkicks him in the ribs.

The Dragon Sleeper is quickly countered and Chris sends him to the apron, only to miss a charge and fall to the floor. Asai Moonsault takes Jericho

out and they head back inside to trade rollups for two. A dragon suplex gets two for Jericho and he hooks the Liontamer but it's right next to the ropes. Dragon escapes a powerbomb and fires off some kicks, only to get caught in a powerslam for a close two. Jericho loads up a suplex and says it's for Dean's dead daddy but Dragon reverses into the Dragon Sleeper. Before Jericho can submit though here's Dean for the DQ.

**Rating:** B-. This is the kind of match that WCW has been missing for the last few weeks. They let two talented guys go out there and fly around the ring for ten minutes which hasn't happened in far too long. People often forget how good Jericho was in the ring at this point since he's mainly remembered for his antics, which is a shame because he could put on good matches like this at any time.

Dragon yells at Dean, allowing Jericho to get away.

We get a sitdown interview with Scott Steiner and Eric Bischoff where Scott narrates a Steiner Brothers tag match, saying he did all the work while Rick got the glory.

DDP and Malone will be on Nitro. Joy.

#### Jim Duggan vs. Barbarian

They slug it out to start with the big, heavy handed punches you would expect from these two. Barbarian makes a quick comeback and punches Duggan down before kicking him in the face. The top rope headbutt misses and Duggan pounds away with ten punches in the corner. Cue Hugh Morrus to throw the 2x4 to Barbarian, only to have Duggan clothesline him down and drop a knee for the pin. At least it was short.

Jericho tries to get Dragon to get a title shot at the PPV but Malenko chases Jericho off.

## Chris Benoit/Steve McMichael vs. Disco Inferno/Alex Wright

Alex and Chris get us going with Wright actually taking him down and stomping away. Benoit comes back with chops to both dancers before Mongo comes in to clear the ring. We take a break and come back with Wright tagging in Disco to face the Canadian. Benoit takes him into the corner and hits the skin ripping chops to the chest. I don't know if it's something about Disco's chest or just bad luck but he takes the loudest chops I can remember.

The fans want Flair but get Mongo instead to pound on Inferno even more. A tilt-a-whirl powerslam gets two on Disco and it's back to Benoit as the announcers talk about Heenan spying on basketball players. Benoit tries the Crossface on Disco but Wright makes the save, drawing everyone in at once. Things settle down with Alex hitting a release belly to belly on Benoit for two. They chop it out until Alex hits a running clothesline in the corner to take over.

Back to Disco for a slam and some dancing. Heenan goes into managing mode by yelling at Disco for not following up like he should. Wright comes back in to stomp away as Heenan comes up with names for Disco and Alex, including the Twinkle Toe Twins. Benoit counters a Disco right hand into a backslide for two but Disco drops some hard elbows for two. Back up and Benoit hits a great German suplex and makes the hot tag to Mongo. Everything breaks down with Mongo cleaning house and spinebusting Disco, setting up the swan dive and Crossface for the win.

**Rating:** C+. Surprisingly good match here with the Horsemen actually sweating a bit instead of running over the dancers. Also they used Mongo like they should have here: don't let him do much more than just clean house at the end with some passable power stuff. Maybe that was the solution all along. Or maybe it was a good match and he was tolerable. You never can tell with Mongo.

Tag Titles: Sting/Lex Luger vs. Giant/Brian Adams

Luger shows up this time. Brian is referred to as the Mack Daddy of the NWO. Giant lights up a cigarette after the bell but drops it to start a fourway brawl. Adams is easily sent to the floor because he's Brian Adams and the Wolfpack backdrop Giant up and over the top. Back in and Giant pounds Sting down in the corner before dropping him with a slam.

Sting avoids a splash and fires off right hands, only to have Giant run him over with ease. Giant talks too much trash to Luger and misses an elbow drop, setting up the double tag. Luger cleans house on Adams and pops Giant in the face as well. The Torture Rack ends Adams with ease.

**Rating:** D+. This wasn't horrible but I'm getting tired of these mix and match tag title partners. Pick a team and stick with it already. Adams continue to not fit in these matches at all. Tony called him the power man of the NWO, but when you have the Giant throwing Sting and Luger around with ease and Scott Steiner in the group as well, that statement really doesn't hold up.

Post match the Black and White comes out to destroy the Wolfpack. Konnan comes out as well but gets beaten down to end the show. The fans chant for Goldberg but he's nowhere to be seen as Tony plugs the basketball players on Nitro and ignores the massive beatdown.

**Overall Rating:** C-. This wasn't a terrible show and was WAY easier to sit through than Nitro but it was still dull stuff save for a few bright spots. The basketball hype is already beyond the point of annoying and has made me want to see the match even less than I already did. Watchable show here with the elements they've been needing to have showing up again.

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