

Monday Nitro – July 13, 1998: Hogan's Return To Form

Monday Nitro #145

Date: July 13, 1998

Location: MGM Grand Garden Arena, Las Vegas, Nevada

Attendance: 10,765

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

We're past Bash at the Beach and there isn't much new to report on. Goldberg retained the title and Hogan/Rodman won the NBA match. We're only a few weeks away from Road Wild now and it's not clear where we're going. Hopefully the good midcard stuff gets some more focus because the main event stuff is getting less and less interesting every week. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Goldberg winning the title last week.

Opening sequence.

The Nitro Girls do a long showgirl style dance.

Larry is in a Goldberg shirt but has to thank the crowd before bragging about the new champion.

We recap the entirety of Goldberg's night last week.

Here's the Black and White with something to say. Hogan promises that the Goldberg propaganda ends soon and he'll prove that Goldberg is just a flash in the pan. That brings us to NWO business, meaning Hogan has to prove that he loves some of his brothers. They're bonded for eternity, but sometimes you have to take care of a few things. Hogan blames Hall for the title loss and has been hearing Hall talking about taking over

the NWO when he thinks no one is listening.

Tonight it's Hogan vs. Hall so Hollywood can teach him a lesson. Hall says he's done everything Hogan told him to do because he needs the money, but the match is on tonight if Hogan wants it. Hall reminds Hogan that it was him that got pinned for the belt. Hogan: "So wax up your ponytail Little Bo Peep because I'm the big bad creep." Hollywood gets on Bischoff for chuckling and makes him the referee tonight. Disciple breaks it up as Hogan threatens Hall but Disciple takes the mic. He didn't like that chair shot from Page last night and wants a match with him tonight.

Stills from the tag match last night.

Barbarian vs. Horace

They trade clubbing in the corner with Barbarian taking over, allowing Jimmy Hart to get in some choking on the mat. A Lodi distraction lets Horace get in a shot with the stop sign for two before going after Jimmy. Barbarian kicks the stop sign into Horace's face for the fast pin. That's a pretty overly booked two minute match.

The Flock comes in to beat down Barbarian but Meng comes in for the save. He cleans house but puts Barbarian in the Tongan Death Grip.

Stills of Goldberg beating Hennig last night.

Here are Rude and Hennig with something to say. Rude talks about Hennig having a bad leg from Minnesota because his flight was canceled. He blames Goldberg and Hennig says he's figured out Goldberg's weakness. Another match has been made for tonight and Hennig says he'll go it alone, which is cool with Rude.

Here's JJ to bring out the new Cruiserweight Champion Rey Mysterio. Before anything can be said though here's Jericho with a rulebook. In

short, since Malenko was suspended and showed up anyway, the match last night is null and void. JJ, the spineless jellyfish that he is, agrees and names Jericho champion again. Jericho demands that Ron Mysterio Jr. give him the belt back and here's Malenko to say he'll get the belt back. Chris laughs this off and says Mysterio can face Malenko for a title shot down the line. The match is on.

More Nitro Girls.

Nitro Party winner video.

We look at Savage having his knee injured in the cage a few months ago.

Jim Duggan vs. Rick Fuller

Duggan gets shoved from behind to start but quickly comes back with those big right hands of his. A clothesline sends Fuller out to the floor before Duggan pounds away in the corner. The three point clothesline and the Old Glory knee drop are enough for the pin on Fuller. WCW's battle plan in the Monday Night Wars: win one week with Goldberg, then a Jim Duggan squash.

Hour #2 begins so the announcers hit the recap button.

We look back at Buff Bagwell returning last week and saying how much he loved his mama.

Here's Buff again this week with his doctor. Gene has been hearing from the people in the hotels and airports and they want to know if Buff is NWO or WCW. WHAT AIRPORTS DO THESE GUYS GO TO??? Buff says he's going to rehabilitate his neck before he goes to see Rick Steiner. He has to get something off his chest so Rick Steiner needs to come out here right now.

Here's Rick with his arm in a sling but Hogan and the Disciple come out

to say he can't stand a couple of cripples. Hogan threatens Steiner with another broken leg (just go with it) before telling Buff to be a man. We get an actual evil act from Hogan as he shoves the wheelchair over and walks out.

Stills from Booker vs. Bret last night. Apparently Booker T has torn a meniscus and will be out 4-6 weeks.

Fit Finlay vs. Bret Hart

This should be interesting. Bret comes out to NWO music now. Finlay grabs a headlock to start but Bret drives him into the corner for some right hands. A European uppercut puts Bret down for two and a clothesline and knee drop do the same. They head outside with Finlay scoring with another uppercut but being sent into the steps for his troubles. Bret hits some right hands but gets poked in the eye and slammed down. We hit the chinlock for a few seconds before Bret charges into a boot in the corner. Hart comes right back with an atomic drop and a clothesline to set up the Sharpshooter for the win.

Rating: D+. This didn't have the time to go anywhere. In perhaps the most telling reason why Bret Hart never caught on in WCW, this was his tenth televised match since joining the company in November. Of those ten, two were against Brian Adams and this one was against Fit Finlay. Again, this guy was WWF Champion nine months ago. How could they screw this up so badly?

Nitro Girls again.

Stevie Ray vs. Rick Martel

Stevie has the TV Title with him for reasons not yet explained. This is Martel's return match after being gone since February with a knee injury. Martel cranks on the arm to start as the announcers talk about the NWO.

Stevie sends him to the floor where Martel grabs his knee. Someone who might be a trainer comes down the aisle as we take a break. Back with Martel on the mat but getting two off a sunset flip. Rick stomps away but keeps leaning on the ropes.

A dropkick gets two on Ray and Martel puts on an armbar. Back up and Martel charges into a World's Strongest Slam but Ray misses an elbow drop. A back elbow out of the corner staggers Rick and a kick to the face puts him down. Martel comes right back with a belly to back suplex and there's the Quebec Crab. Here's Bret Hart for no apparent reason to blast Martel with a chair. Stevie hits the Slap Jack on the unconscious Martel for the pin.

Rating: D+. This would be the last match of Martel's career as he injured his knee again and called it a day at 42 years old. Stevie with the TV belt was an interesting idea that would be better suited on anyone but Stevie Ray. Martel having to go out this way is kind of a shame as his comeback was very entertaining.

Ray says there's no deal with Bret Hart. Booker has given him power of attorney to defend the title against anyone that wants a shot. Documents are promised next week. Allegedly the Martel match was for the title.

We get stills of the two minute bonus match from last night with Konnan beating Disco Inferno thanks to Wolfpack interference.

Barry Darsow vs. Konnan

Sting is with Konnan here to ensure this is a squash. Darsow jumps Konnan to start and chokes on the ropes for awhile. Konnan avoids a charge in the corner and the rolling lariat sets up a seated dropkick. Tequila Sunrise ends Darsow a few seconds later.

Here's DDP to accept Disciple's challenge and the match is right now.

Disciple vs. Diamond Dallas Page

Page jumps him to start and takes Disciple down with a belly to back suplex, only to be stopped with a low blow. Disciple slowly punches a lot and hits a slow motion piledriver for no cover. Rick Rude comes down to ringside. Page comes back with a clothesline and goes up, only to be crotched by Rude. Page rams the NWO guys into each other and pins Disciple off a very sloppy rollup in another short match.

Hogan and Vincent jump Page with a chair while he leaves.

The announcers talk about Goldberg again.

Raven vs. Kanyon vs. Saturn

This is before the triple threat became the most overused gimmick match of all time. Raven jumps Kanyon in the aisle but Saturn jumps both of them as the bell rings. They get in the ring with Saturn t-bone suplexing Raven down, only to be caught with a neckbreaker from Kanyon. Saturn kicks at Kanyon's head in the corner but some Raven interference allows Kanyon to catch him in a face first electric chair drop.

Kanyon's fireman's carry into a pancake puts Raven down and Saturn misses a charge to put him on the floor. That's fine with Saturn as he pulls out a table. Kanyon is pulled to the floor and laid out on the table for a cool looking top rope splash. Raven tries to suplex Saturn back inside but gets kicked in the head.

Saturn goes up but gets crotched by Kanyon but Raven avoids Kanyon's top rope splash. He can't avoid Saturn's though, giving Perry a two count. Kanyon goes to the corner but gets caught in a belly to back superplex from Saturn, who is caught in a belly to back suplex from Raven at the same time. Raven gets two on both guys but walks into the Flatliner from Kanyon for two as Saturn saves. The Death Valley Driver lays out Raven

again but this time Kanyon saves. Kanyon and Saturn fight to the floor and we get a bell for I believe a double countout, giving Raven the win.

Rating: B-. Really fun match here with everyone moving for the entire match. This was before the triple threat matches became a collection of the same spots in every match, meaning this was something very unique at the time. I'm curious to see where this feud goes as everyone is awesome at the moment.

Hour #3 begins so we recap the Cruiserweight Title situation.

Dean Malenko vs. Rey Mysterio Jr.

Winner gets a shot at Jericho at some point in the future. Dean works on a hammerlock to start as the announcers bicker over breaking rules. Rey fights free and both guys try dropkicks to give us a standoff. Back to Rey's arm with Dean taking him to the mat and putting on a headscissors to supplement the armbar. Rey escapes into a cover for two and we get another stalemate. Dean sweeps the legs out for two but gets sent to the outside, setting up a BIG flip dive over the top from Mysterio.

Back in and Dean hits the tilt-a-whirl backbreaker but they trade rollups for two each. Rey charges at Dean and gets launched to the top rope but slips off, hurting the knee in the process. Mysterio pops back up with a hurricanrana but gets caught in a powerbomb for two. Rey loads up the top rope hurricanrana but Dean counters into the super gutbuster. The referee checks on Rey but Jericho sneaks in with a belt shot to Dean, giving Mysterio the pin and the title shot.

Rating: C+. Good stuff here as you would expect from these two. The Jericho story is still rolling but eventually he has to get his comeuppance. That's going to happen eventually and it's still entertaining but they're running the risk of the story going on too long. Malenko getting screwed over again is good but something needs to give at the title match.

Kevin Nash/Lex Luger vs. Disco Inferno/Alex Wright

Disco goes on a long rhyming rant against the Wolfpack for interfering last night but gets cut off by the howl. Sting (with REALLY bright teeth) and Konnan are here as well. Luger starts but the dancers argue over who has to face him. Lex cranks on the arm to start but gets armdragged down, setting up dance time. Both dancers are clotheslined out to the floor and Luger poses. Konnan doesn't let Wright and Disco walk out and Sting adds a Stinger Splash to crush Wright against the barricade. The Jackknife to Disco and the Rack to Wright get the win. Is this really what the Wolfpack is being used for?

Mongo still wants to reform the Horsemen. I believe this is the fourth time we've heard this promo from him. We also see Anderson's promo before his match with Flair at Fall Brawl 1995 again.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Steve McMichael

Eddie jumps him to start as we hear about Heenan throwing out the first pitch at an Oakland A's game. Mongo comes right back with something like Cena's spinning belly to back slam but here's Chavo on the horse. He says he wants to be a Horseman and the distraction lets Eddie dropkick Mongo's knee out. Chavo comes in and that's a DQ despite there being no contact.

Eddie dropkicks Chavo into Mongo so McMichael beats up Chavo.

We recap Hogan challenging Hall from earlier.

Scott Hall vs. Hollywood Hogan

Bischoff is guest referee and we get an old school weapons check. Hall throws toothpicks in Hogan and Bischoff's faces so Hogan punches him to start. Hall bites Hogan's fingers and drives his shoulder into Hogan's. A slap to the face annoys Hogan even more so he clotheslines Hall down and

pounds him in the head. Choking in the ropes gets no reaction from Bischoff and Hall comes back with right hands. Disciple gets in a cheap shot and Bischoff still does nothing.

Hogan rolls up Hall for two despite Hall being in the ropes the entire time. Scott comes back with a clothesline in the corner and more right hands followed by a chokeslam but Bischoff won't count. Hogan puts on a choke but Bischoff still does nothing. Hall reverses into a sleeper which is broken up almost immediately.

A Hogan low blow gets a "that hurt" response from Eric as Heenan thinks Bischoff is one sided. Tony to Heenan: "Welcome to Nitro!" There's the big boot but here's Page to beat up Hogan and Diamond Cut Bischoff. Nash comes in for the save and does Too Sweet with Hall. Nash loads up the Jackknife but Hall decks him, which we'll call a heel turn. Maybe? Hogan and company stand tall.

Rating: D-. I'm not sure what to say about this. Hogan is a jerk to Hall, Bischoff treats Hall like an enemy in the match, Nash saves Hall, but Hall is still loyal to Hogan and Bischoff. I get that Hall needs the money, but do you have to make him look like a nitwit along the way? At least give it longer than ten seconds between Hall seemingly turning face before jumping Nash. The match was all about the angle of course.

Hogan hugs Hall to apparently welcome him back into the family.

WCW World Title: Goldberg vs. Curt Hennig

Hennig takes forever to get to the ring for some reason. Goldberg gets the full entrance, complete with police escort. The entrances are nearly six minutes combined and Hennig bails to the floor. The match on the other hand is less than a minute and literally is just the spear and Jackhammer. Given the long entrance and the lack of anything in the match, I'm thinking Hennig might have been in no condition to perform here.

Goldberg poses to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. This is another hard one to grade as there was some good action at times to go with Hogan being genuinely evil for the first time in forever. That's been missing from him for so long and it's a nice return to form for him. Other than that though it was your usual time filler show with stuff like Barbarian vs. Horace and Fuller vs. Duggan wasting our time. It was entertaining at times though and that's what WCW needs right now.

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