

On This Day: December 9, 2001 – Vengeance 2001: Unification

Vengeance 2001

Date: December 9, 2001

Location: San Diego Sports Arena, San Diego, California

Attendance: 11,800

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

The first one here is kind of huge as we unify the WWF and WCW World Titles. I've spent months if not years trying to figure out why this is at Vengeance and not like a month later at the Rumble. The idea is that HHH was supposed to be the first Undisputed Champion but wasn't ready yet. But he was back at the Rumble so why didn't they just do it there? Or at Mania for that matter?

Either way, it's more or less a small tournament with Austin vs. Angle for the WWF Title and Rock vs. Jericho for the WCW Title, then the winners fight. Austin and Rock are Austin and Rock, Angle kept beating Austin and Jericho was the best in the world at the time. Other than that, there's nothing of note on the card. Let's get to it.

We open with this weird old silent movie that allegedly was made by Freddie Blassie about having only one champion. It's freaky to put it mildly. Seriously, this is disturbing. Sinner is a good song once we get to the arena at least.

And here's Vince. Apparently on Thursday, Vince got his head shoved into Rikishi's thong. Good to know. We're in the full fledged WHAT stage at the moment too so that's getting old quickly. Vince is upset that the fans laughed at it like it was some kind of comedy skit. A man that walks with his chest out like a girl trying to make sure you notice her had his head shoved into the back of a thong-wearing street dancing

sumo wrestler and Vince is mad that it's being treated like a comedy skit.

The whole idea of Vince at times is one of the funniest things in the world. He says "he who laughs last laughs best". And here's Flair who owns half of the company at the moment. Why do I feel like I'm watching Impact? Flair looks like an idiot. Yeah it's Impact. We're pushing ten minutes into the show and the youngest guy so far has been Vince McMahon. Flair starts a match.

Albert/Scotty 2 Hotty vs. Christian/Test

GO BACK TO THE OLD GUYS! Albert is the Hip Hop Hippo at the moment. Egads. They aren't the Unamericans yet. And the Heat match was the APA vs. Billy and Chuck. Why can't we see that instead? You know these reviews aren't really as angry as they used to be. Granted that could be because these shows are far less insulting to my intelligence. They may be weaker shows but they're competent at least which is more than a lot of shows give you.

Christian is European Champion at the time. Albert is the Hip Hop Hippo at this point. Take me now. And remember people: this guy was INTERCONTINENTAL CHAMPION. He was one of those guys that always seemed like was on the verge of a big push but it never happened. Lawler makes some bad jokes about potential names for the faces. He's just making this more painful if that's somehow possible. Wow it's weird seeing Teddy Long as a worthless referee.

Far more used to him being a useless GM. Scotty and Test work the majority of this match for reasons that completely elude me. Oh look it's Albert vs. Christian rather than Test vs. Albert, as in you know, FORMER TAG PARTNERS FIGHTING. I guess that would make too much sense. We get a Giant Swing and a Don Leo Jonathan reference. Wow indeed. Albert just massacres both heels.

With some tweeking to his gimmick, he could have been passable. And now Christian does the Worm. We get a surprisingly decent sequence as Scotty is down. And of course we get the Worm. These kinds of moves are just stupid. A simple bulldog keeps Test down for about 20 seconds which it takes for the setup for it? See why that's idiotic? Baldo Bomb, a two handed chokeslam into a powerbomb, ends it. It actually got a pop.

Rating: D. Just...why? What in the world was the point of having this match on PPV? This was something that belonged on Velocity or Heat or something like that. It was as generic as you could ask a match to be also. This was just a head scratcher and not that good.

Regal cuts a decent promo on Edge. Now bad at all.

Intercontinental Title: Edge vs. William Regal

So Edge at this time is getting a massive push as he goes from a tag team star to more or less the top of the midcard in less than six months. Think of him like what the Miz has been doing for the last year or so, but even faster. He was as popular as ever and allegedly was going to win the Raw World Title at the next Survivor Series in the debut of the Elimination Chamber but Shawn and HHH decided Shawn should more or less come in off the streets and beat HHH, Jericho, Booker T, RVD and Kane instead.

Edge has been laughing at Regal for a long time to set this up. Great heat on Regal. More or less the British guy is just doing very bad things to Edge with all kinds of ridiculous strikes and basic stuff. Edge busts out a hurricanrana of all things. Before he hurt his neck, he was a completely different worker. Check out his 2002 stuff and you'll be very impressed. Edge goes for a spear on the floor and hits the steps, allowing Regal to get some brass knuckles.

That was his big thing at the time and it was a very solid

heel tactic to use. He throws out back to back Tiger Drivers in a surprising sequence. Not sure why it's surprising but that's the first thing that came to mind. Regal goes for the brass knuckles but takes a spear for Edge to get a quick pin. Regal made that match for the most part.

Rating: D+. This just missed for me. It's not terrible or anything, but at the same time it just felt like there wasn't much here. Regal more or less dominated but took a quick spear to get pinned. Not sure how much I like that at all. Still though, the crowd was really into this which helped it a lot. Again, not terrible but not very good at all.

Flair is on the phone and Angle comes in. He's a 14 time champion here so somewhere he picked up two more. I guess they gave him two more NWA reigns somewhere.

Lita, the guest referee for the next match, is stretching. Matt comes in and says he's sorry for dragging Lita into this. Lita with straight hair is freaking delicious looking. She's going to call it right down the middle.

We recap the Hardys' rise to this point. Cool memories if nothing else. They're fighting because Jeff has been costing them a bunch of stuff lately, namely because he keeps trying high spots rather than winning matches.

Jeff Hardy vs. Matt Hardy

Lita is guest referee here of course. Dang she looked great back then. Jeff has that stupid hat on like he used to wear back then for no explained reason. The fans like Lita more than anyone else. I can't blame them as this was just a few steps ahead of Cryme Tyme exploding. This works SO much better as face vs. face rather than face vs. heel like they were trying to do last year at Mania.

The psychology is here too as you have two guys that know each other very well and keep countering each others' signature

stuff. The main thing here though is Lita as she's dating Matt but is being fair. It's a nice aspect to it that adds tension and fits the storyline perfectly. Jeff gets a nice counter to avoid being powerbombed onto the floor. Sloppy, but it was intelligent at least. Jeff hurts his leg getting back in and Matt goes for it. This is very basic but it's coming off quite well.

Matt is clearly the heel in this as he won't let go of a half crab when Jeff is in the ropes, I guess assuming Lita would never DQ him. Crowd likes Jeff more. I'm stunned too. Jeff blocks a Twist of Fate with that leg drop he would do at times. The killer instinct isn't here again just like last time though. They keep countering the Twist of Fate which makes sense. Maybe it could have something to do with standing there in that position and the other guy shouting before doing it.

That would give me a hint as to what was coming if nothing else. Matt is kind of hinting at full heel here and it's working fairly well. He's about 40lbs lighter here also. Twist of Fate off the second rope is blocked and Jeff gets the Swanton for the clean pin. This was just missing something and I think it was the full hatred. That and this wasn't a huge match yet, although it was getting close.

Rating: B-. Not terrible and WAY better than the Mania 25 match. This was far more ground based and it came off pretty well. It's no classic by any means, but it's certainly a passable match. Matt flirting with going heel worked. And then they were all fine and good at the Rumble so none of that mattered.

Rock and Trish have a weird moment. How hot would their kids be? She kisses him on the cheek. Rock more or less says after tonight, come see him again and he'll screw her. Ok then.

Tag Titles: Dudley Boys vs. Big Show/Kane

Stacy is managing the Dudleys here and I've always thought this was her hottest period, which is saying a whole lot. The Dudleys weren't useless yet at this point. Since it's 2001, Show destroys both of the champions. Kane takes them both out with a double top rope clothesline. Show spansks Stacy. Ok then. A red thong shot on Stacy is never bad though. Yeah I don't care about this match in the slightest. Kane destroys both of them.

Big Show destroys both of them. Some of you may be beginning to notice a pattern here. Kane accidentally hits the top rope clothesline on Show. To my complete and utter shock, Show and Kane get into an argument. Oh and Show is wearing his sexy one piece swimsuit. I can't stand that thing. I truly can't.

Is that supposed to look good? Is he supposed to be intimidating? Show goes after Stacy...again. D-von tries for the save and SLAMS INTO STACY. Yeah thanks for helping there bubbles. The champions take a turnbuckle pad off and slam Show into it with a double flapjack, naturally called 3D by JR.

Rating: F+. This just was not interesting at all. Show vs. Kane has been DONE. And I mean done a LOT. The ending was creative and Stacy was hot though. Even still though, this just didn't work at all. The styles clash was so apparent here and it didn't come off well at all.

Don't try this at home. Feel free to though at your grandparents' house.

Lita tries to apologize. It doesn't work.

Sinner is the theme song. I saw that band last night.

So Taker was ticked off at Vince for not telling him that Angle was the mole in the Alliance. Because of that, he turned heel and started his RESPECT ME thing. He talked about all the people he beat up and that he kissed up to Vince more than anyone else. He saved JR from kissing Vince, and then beat him

up and made him kiss it. Nicely done. Oh and he went after RVD. This was his heel turn for a long time.

Hardcore Title: Rob Van Dam vs. The Undertaker

Taker still gets face pops, but that likely has something to do with the Limp Bizkit song and the Harley. I say the song because it lowers intelligence so much that people forget what they were told on television. Oh and Taker got a massive haircut. Van Dam doesn't have his signature theme yet at this point but it was coming soon. Like the next night or close to it soon. Taker is the America Tough Guy here and the style is remarkably different.

We hit the crowd here which at least makes sense due to the hardcore aspect. This is actually a pretty interesting match from a star power perspective, although it would be like 5 years before RVD was a main event guy. Never mind his solid in ring stuff (no it's not as great as it's made out to be) and the MASSIVE pops he got. He just wasn't ready yet and wouldn't be for years. Also he was out like a year with a bad knee so that wasn't something anyone could control.

We get to the weapons and RVD saves himself with a fire extinguisher. Van Dam does a balcony dive and in an amusing visual, the stuff they land on shoots up a bunch of dust. It might have been Taker. They're fighting behind the TitanTron now and you can see why WWF was so far ahead of ECW when it was still in business: there is a camera right there with a perfect shot of them. You can see every single thing that happens rather than seeing a random arm or leg. It's very nice indeed.

Taker picks him up and rams him head first into the set which he goes partially through. Nice looking spot. Van Dam gets Rolling Thunder on the stage since a head injury that severe of course is something you can get up from very quickly. Van Dam does his running chair shot dropkick thing and it's called

a Van Daminator.

I would ask if JR ever watched ECW but I think I already know the answer to that. Taker wears him out with a chair and of course he's fine. Van Daminator misses and RVD gets chokeslammed off the stage through some tables and is pinned. Taker as Hardcore Champion is an interesting idea.

Rating: B-. Not bad here but the majority of the rating comes from the oddness of seeing Taker in the midcard title hunt. Having a guy like RVD rub elbows with a guy like Taker is only a good thing for him at this point, although this was Taker trying out his new image and I'm not so sure how it was working. Fun match though and not your traditional hardcore stuff at all.

Jericho comes in and complains to Flair about...life in general I guess. Flair is half owner in case I forgot to mention that. Jericho's big thing was he can't win the big one, which is the case here. The Brand Split hadn't happened yet either. I think that was the night after Mania or like 2 weeks after that.

Women's Title: Trish Stratus vs. Jacqueline

To say Trish looks good in white is a dramatic understatement. I think this is her first title reign as they didn't know she had talent until around this time. Seriously, who cares about Jackie? I can't think of a soul that does. This isn't interesting at all. Stratusfaction is blocked before it has a name. Trish wins with a backslide of all things in like 3 minutes.

Rating: N/A. Just boring as heck and not interesting at all. See what I mean by how boring this was? That was proper English to me. Trish wasn't any good yet and it was apparent.

We recap Vince getting his head shoved into Rikishi's thong. The look on his face is priceless. You have to give him this: there is very little Vince won't do for his company. No one

can take that away from him.

At WWF New York, Rikishi is there. He says he's back. I guess we'll forgive the whole vehicular manslaughter thing. There was no point to this whole thing apparently.

We recap Survivor Series where these were the final four and Jericho and Rock beat the Alliance. Vince says Austin is stripped and as the sole owner of the company, he's naming Angle as world champion. Enter Flair, who says that's not the case as Rock is still the (WCW) World Champion. That sets us up to hear. There's a montage in there somewhere but you can figure that out.

WWF Title: Kurt Angle vs. Steve Austin

Austin comes in as champion. These two had a very good rivalry in August/September. Austin as champion just feels right. They start off slow. Seeing these two as face vs. face is kind of weird. We knew Angle was great at the time but Austin was a legend to put it mildly. Ok scratch that Angle as a face part I think. It's actually hard to tell. Weird to say but it's true. I'm pretty sure he had Kane at Mania. Actually yeah he is a heel. Yeah I'm pretty sure that's right.

Austin runs from a mat wrestling thing so at least he's thinking out there. This is a chess game to start us off which is very odd indeed. Austin works on the arm. See what I mean? When do you remember him doing something like that? I guess it would be difficult for him to do his normal stuff with just one good arm. Angle...shakes it off I guess and starts stomping Austin. Austin stays on the arm though which is the right thing to do. Now, is Angle smart enough to sell the stupid thing?

Ankle lock is on and the arm seems fine to me. Ah there are the ropes. Angle goes for the leg. At least that makes sense. Just like most main event guys, Angle had solid chemistry with Austin. I love watching Angle bust out suplexes, especially

when he's healthy. He freaking LAUNCHES people. Angle starts busting out Germans, which is a really awesome and simple move when you think about it: you pick up a guy and slam them on the back of their head.

That just sounds painful doesn't it? The moonsault of course misses. Did he EVER hit that in WWF? It looked perfect if nothing else. Thesz Press hits, the crowd pops. Yeah he was still WAY over at this point. Austin shows his coolness and busts out Rolling Germans of his own.

He even goes further than Angle, hitting FIVE of them. Dang that would have freaking hurt. Angle hits another German. Oh wait he spun around about 9 degrees so it's the Angle Slam. Got it. It gets two and there's the Stunner to end it. Austin is in the main event.

Rating: B. Solid stuff here as always from these two. I don't think anyone believed Austin would lose here. I mean while he's past his prime at this point, he's still a huge star. Still though, very solid match as these two brought out some good stuff in each other. Seeing Austin mix things up was always fun.

Trish is in a towel and getting ready, when Test comes in. More or less he hits on her and she doesn't like it, but he can't be fired. In other words, sexual harassment laws are trumped by battle royal victories. Sure why not? Vehicular manslaughter and necrophilia and assault and battery are never prosecuted here, so why not harassment?

World Championship: The Rock vs. Chris Jericho

Yeah the WCW Title is the World Championship, which actually sounds more encompassing than the WWF Title, but why use logic? This was a pretty solid feud back in the day, if nothing else for the promos. Jericho is heel here. Seeing Rock bust out armdrags and leapfrogs makes me appreciate him even more. Remember, he's about the same size as Batista or so.

Imagine a guy Batista's size doing athletic things like that. I love that springboard dropkick that Jericho does. It's just awesome looking.

This is more of a fight than the last match as the angle was more built up in this pairing. Jericho hits a sleeper like five minutes in which is odd. Jericho is no Dolph Ziggler though so it doesn't work. Lionsault gets two as Jericho is FREAKING. We hit the floor and this has more or less been all Jericho. Like I said earlier, he was probably at the best he ever was in his career around this time and he's getting to showcase it here. I love when guys break a count that isn't happening.

How often do count outs consistently get threatened? Jericho gets DDTed through the table. Didn't look as good as it sounded. The replay makes it look a bit better. It's fun watching Rock throw punches. Jericho hooks a Breakdown, which is more commonly known as a Skull Crushing Finale. Jericho hits the People's Elbow, and when I say hit I mean misses completely and almost gets hooked in the Sharpshooter.

Somehow he gets the Walls, but since he's a heel at the time it doesn't work at all. Actually he has a Sharpshooter on Rock. Same result though. Rock hits the Rock Bottom out of NOWHERE. That was sweet. And here's Vince. At least it makes sense in storyline terms. Rock goes for the Elbow, but stops to fight Vince.

He drops a regular elbow and of course Jericho gets up because IT IS A REGULAR ELBOW DROP. Jericho gets a low blow and Rock Bottom to win the world title. Ok then. Hearing it called the world champion is odd to say the least.

Rating: B-. This was a different style than the previous match which is a nice touch I think as it was for a different title. I'd hardly think it was intentional, but it came off pretty well. Jericho was great in the ring, but I still want to see

him wrestle as a face champion. It really could work.

Austin is here NOW for the title match. Jericho isn't even back to his feet yet when Austin is stomping him.

Undisputed Title: Chris Jericho vs. Steve Austin

Nearly immediately, Angle is here and hits him with a chair. Rock is here and hits a Rock Bottom. I guess this makes us even? The fans chant for HHH, who was semi-advertised for the show. He was in a short video earlier and that's about it. He'll be back in about a month to the loudest pop I have ever heard. We hit the floor for a bit with Austin dominating. Ok make that a LONG bit. Jericho goes for the Walls on the remaining table but it doesn't work of course.

Jericho hooks an armbar despite Austin LIMPING to the ring and having Angle working on the knee the whole match. The Walls go on and there goes the referee since this is still an Attitude-Era style. HHH chant again. Jericho hits a Stunner. Vince brings out another referee, Nick Patrick in this case. I'm SHOCKED! They're OVERBOOKING A TITLE MATCH! Flair is here and the old guys go at it, foreshadowing their match at the Rumble. Austin hits McMahon to a BIG pop.

See, it still worked to an extent. Jericho taps to the Walls (you read that right) and there's no referee. BOOKER T comes out and blasts Austin with a belt. And yes, THAT is how they end it, and I never realized this was Austin's final match as a world champion. Yeah, Austin leaves the title picture other than a one off rematch at No Way Out like this, thanks to Booker T. WOW. Jericho holds up both belts with Ross freaking. Wow this came off bad at the end.

Rating: C-. This was overbooked to heck and back. Even once Flair came in, I was hating it. Booker costing Austin the title is fine to build a storyline, but at the same time, it just didn't work for me. The match wasn't terrible, but it's a total letdown, which fits this show perfectly.

OverallRating: C-. The problem here is simple: the Undisputed Title, the first one EVER, was at a throwaway PPV like Vengeance. Seriously, this is in December and between Survivor Series and the Rumble. This is a filler PPV and they have the Undisputed Title decided here? The ending, while putting it on the right man in Jericho, was just BUTCHERED as it took like 4 people to beat Austin. Jericho needed to go over almost cleanly here and he didn't do it.

Dang he didn't even beat Rock clean. Other than the final three matches, nothing here matters at all. This just did not live up anywhere near to what it should have been and it's not a good show as a result. Definitely worth seeing for the historical aspect though.

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