

Monday Night Raw – April 8, 2002: Austin Fights Authority

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 8, 2002

Location: America West Arena, Phoenix, Arizona

Attendance: 13,500

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

We're two weeks past the Draft now and the main story is that Austin has signed with Raw, finally giving them an exclusive top star. Other than that there isn't much going on here as we roll towards Backlash. Whatever energy the Draft gave the show is already gone, meaning we're entering into the dark days for the show. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap from Smackdown with Vince saying Undertaker isn't the #1 contender because Flair didn't have the right to make that selection. Vince knows what the fans wants and makes HHH vs. Hulk Hogan for the title at the PPV. HHH said that when Hogan was in the ring with him, he was an obstacle, not immortal.

Opening sequence.

Here's Undertaker on his bike to open the show. He wants to know who made the decision to take the title shot away from him because it was his turn to take the title. Now it's HHH vs. Hogan and that's a bunch of bull. Raw starts right here and now because he's going to stand here until someone comes out and explains this to him. Cue Raw owner Ric Flair who says maybe he was too ambitious last week. He wanted to see HHH vs. Undertaker at Backlash, but he tried to get there too fast.

However, Undertaker needs to understand that he's not in charge around here. Flair implies Undertaker gets the next title shot but Undertaker calls him a liar. This must be about Undertaker beating him at Wrestlemania, which is understandable after how badly Flair got destroyed there. Undertaker wants the shot after Backlash and threatens another beating if he doesn't get it. This brings out Austin to stand up for his

boss, because that's in character for him.

Austin does the WHAT schtick while asking why Undertaker is getting the title shot after Backlash. Is it because of the clothes he wears or because Flair is scared? Maybe Undertaker is dead, meaning he has no pulse, doesn't breathe, bought the farm or kicked the bucket. Or is it because he rides a stupid bike?

Austin wants Flair to pick between himself and Undertaker for the shot after Backlash, but instead Flair rants about both guys treating him badly. He makes two #1 contenders matches with Austin vs. Hall and Undertaker vs. RVD for tonight. No word on what happens if both win but I think you can figure it out. Undertaker threatens Flair and calls Austin cueball before starting a fight. Austin clotheslines Undertaker to the floor but can't Stun Flair.

Hardcore Title: Bubba Ray Dudley vs. Booker T.

Bubba is defending but Booker has something to say first. He thinks the people want to see a Spinarooni and that's exactly what Booker gives them. Bubba comes back with dancing of his own that makes it look like he's having a seizure. Booker jumps him and we're ready to go, only to see Bubba dump him to the floor. The champ sends him into the steps and then back into the ring as it's time to bust out the weapons. A belly to back suplex gets two on Booker as the fans want tables.

Booker comes back with a knee to the ample gut and an ax kick before blasting him in the head with a stop sign. Bubba shrugs it off and hits a Samoan drop followed by a series of elbows. He gets his own table but Booker knocks him down and sets it up himself. Cue Goldust to run in and DDT Booker on a trumpet before Bubba powerbombs Goldust through the table for a pin to retain, because that's how the Hardcore Title works.

Raitng: D. Why bother pinning him if the title is defended 24/7? The match was nothing of note and it was an even worse sign that they were trying to push Bubba as a singles guy. Yeah he would eventually work as Bully Ray but this was just one half of the Dudley Boys, which isn't interesting at all.

Bubba dances more on the stage.

Trish says her head hurts and promises to get back at Molly Holly for attacking her last week. William Regal comes up and says no one cares about Trish because she's only there to show off her figure. He talks about Spike Dudley but Trish makes fun of Regal for getting shown up by Spike last week. Regal calls Spike a toerag, an accident to his mother and an abortion on society.

Kane admires the Divas Swimsuit Magazine and says the rest of him isn't burnt. He's no longer ashamed of being a freak because the Kaneanites love him. Tonight he'll start going through the NWO, because just like the lion roars and the chicken clucks, it's a simple fact of life that X-Pac sucks. Nice rhyme.

X-Pac asks the Outsiders to wait in the back.

Kane vs. X-Pac

Falls count anywhere. Brawl to start with X-Pac actually taking over with some kicks in the corner. Kane easily shoves him back down and stops a charging Pac with a big boot before heading outside. They fight into the crowd and up by the set before going into the back. Hall and Nash jump Kane with weapons and X-Pac hits the ground with a chair (missing Kane's head by about eight inches) for the pin. This wasn't even two minutes long.

X-Pac takes the mask off with Kane's face on the ground until Bradshaw makes the save. Yeah at this point, the top faces on Raw were Austin, Kane, Bubba Ray Dudley and Bradshaw. Starting to get how long these shows felt live?

Kane is taken out on a stretcher post break and X-Pac is wearing the mask when Flair comes in. Nash is suspended without pay so he threatens to sue Flair.

European Title: Spike Dudley vs. William Regal

Regal is defending, Spike steals the brass knuckles and knocks him out and we have a new champion in 5 seconds.

Tommy Dreamer, Jackie, Big Show, Bubba Dudley and Coach celebrate the title win by pouring Slurpees on Spike.

Rob Van Dam vs. Undertaker

First #1 contenders match, RVD's Intercontinental Title isn't on the line and I think only Undertaker can become #1 contender. Undertaker pounds Rob down in the corner to start and chokes him on the ropes. Some knees to the ribs have Rob in more trouble and he walks into a side slam for two. The fans are entirely behind Rob but Undertaker kicks him to the apron for an elbow to the jaw.

Van Dam avoids the legdrop and kicks Undertaker in the face, setting up an Asai Moonsault for Rob's first advantage. Back in and a kick to the face sets up Rolling Thunder but Undertaker crotches Rob to break up the Five Star. Undertaker busts out a nice top rope superplex for two and heads outside for a chair.

That's fine with Rob though as he shoves the referee away and hits a quick Van Daminator but has to dive on an interfering Eddie Guerrero. Back in and the chokeslam puts RVD down for a delayed two count. The Last Ride is escapes and Rob kicks him in the face to set up the Five Star, but Rob bounces off too far and Eddie blasts him in the back of the head with the IC Title. Undertaker covers for two before ending Rob with the Last Ride.

Rating: C. Better match than I was expecting, even with the unnecessary overbooking. I'm glad they didn't have Rob get pinned clean though as it keeps the title looking stronger. Undertaker wasn't much to see around this time but this was one of his better performances. Not a bad match at all with Rob making up for the lethargic Deadman.

Trish Stratus vs. Molly Holly

Jazz is on commentary. Before the match, Molly, now looking even better with light brown hair says she's a great wrestler and doesn't like being off the show while there's a paddle on a pole match going on. Terri thinks Molly is jealous but Molly says she's beautiful and wholesome. Trish jumps her in the aisle to start as Jazz has nothing to say. Molly

escapes a monkey flip but gets dropkicked down and bails to the floor.

Back in and Molly chokes a bit before hitting a nice handspring elbow. More choking ensues and Molly gets two off something the camera misses. Molly gets crotched on top and the Stratusphere brings her down. Trish goes after Jazz and gets hit with the belt for her efforts, allowing Molly to hook a freaky leg lock into a pin back inside.

Rating: D+. And most of that is for how tight Trish's top was and how great Molly looked. The match was nothing more than angle advancement which is a great sign. Imagine that: an ANGLE in the Divas division with three different women who can all work a good match. It wasn't anything of note but it's light years ahead of what we get today.

Paul Heyman insults Phoenix and tells Brock that he can't beat up a member of the audience. Heyman reveals that he's Brock's agent.

Here are Brock and Heyman to some very generic rock music. Heyman says he can do whatever he wants as long as he's standing next to this monster. He brags about managing Steve Austin and Undertaker to make them what they are today. Heyman also invented ECW which the WWF stole but that's beside the point. Paul lists off about ten names for Brock, ranging from impervise to incredible to the Next Big Thing.

We look at a highlight reel of Brock's destruction, including that awesome F5 to Rikishi. Cue the Hardys to double team Brock but he LAUNCHES both of them to the floor. They both grab chairs and give Lesnar HARD shots to the head that would get them fired today. Brock doesn't even go down and is all BRING IT ON but Heyman calls him off.

Big Show vs. Mr. Perfect

This is about what you would expect: Perfect gets in some shots, Big Show throws him around, Perfect hits him low and actually gets the PerfectPlex for a one count and the chokeslam ends it.

Austin goes into Flair's office but finds no one. He has a seat and puts his feet up to wait.

JR recaps the big angle of the show and introduces clips from earlier.

JR: "It was time for Ric Flair to make a decision." Austin: "It's time for Ric Flair to make a decision." We also see some of Undertaker beating RVD earlier tonight.

Flair comes in and explains the deal to Austin: if Austin wins, he faces Undertaker at Backlash for the #1 contender spot.

Scott Hall vs. Steve Austin

X-Pac is with Hall here but Austin goes off on Scott to start anyway. He chokes away with the vest and gets two off a slam. They head to the floor with Austin chopping and eye poking. Back in and Scott throws Austin to the floor so X-Pac can get in a few shots, only to have Austin beat the tar out of him. Austin gets back inside and works over Hall in the corner until a mule kick below the belt changes control again.

Steve is sent to the floor for another beating from X-Pac before coming back in to get clotheslined for two. There's a sleeper from Hall but Austin suplexes out of it. Austin comes back with right hands (shocking) but a double clothesline puts both guys down. An X-Pac cheap shot has almost no effect and there's the Thesz Press as Austin cranks it up. X-Pac gets a shot to the jaw but the referee goes down.

Both NWO members get spinebusters but here's the Undertaker to beat up Austin. Bradshaw runs in to fight Undertaker as Hall gets two off Undertaker's chokeslam. The referee goes down again (bad night for him) as Hall hits the fallaway slam. X-Pac comes in for a double team but Flair comes in to stare down X-Pac. A Stunner takes care of Pac and an even bigger one is good for the pin on Scott.

Rating: D+. This was a kick and punch match until the overdone ending. Austin vs. the NWO isn't an interesting story, especially with no Nash or Hogan in sight. Hall and X-Pac are just guys in matching shirts at this point and there's nothing for them to do anymore. Unfortunately they would be around for awhile.

Flair takes a Stunner as well because Austin fights authority you see.

Overall Rating: D. The show went by pretty quickly but there's nothing

interesting to see here. The matches were nothing special and the big story could have been solved by making Austin vs. Undertaker for the title shot in the first place. Austin Stunning Flair made me roll my eyes as they're trying to force lightning back into a bottle and it just doesn't work that way. Uninspiring but not completely horrid show this week.

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