

Thunder – December 17, 1998: These People Are Really, Really Dumb

Thunder

Date: December 17, 1998

Location: Independence Arena, Charlotte, North Carolina

Commentators: Lee Marshall, Tony Schiavone, Bobby Heenan, Mike Tenay

It hasn't occurred to me that there are only ten days until Starrcade and it doesn't seem like WCW knows either. There aren't very many matches made for the show yet and one of the only matches has its only wrestler sidelined with a heart attack. It's almost like this company isn't thinking for the future at all and is making this up as they go. Let's get to it.

We open with the announcers talk about Flair's heart attack on Nitro before going to a clip of Scott Steiner offering Luger a spot in the Black and White.

Konnan vs. Kenny Kaos

I think this is non-title. Konnan comes out first for some reason. Oh my goodness I had completely forgotten Kaos was half of the Tag Team Champions at this point. Seriously, when was that last mentioned? Scott Steiner and Buff Bagwell storm the announcers' desk and demand to know why Luger vs. Hall is happening tonight. Steiner says he's here to keep an eye on Luger and to get Lex's career back on track. He'll be helping Luger beat Hall tonight. The camera is staying on the commentators for most of the match but as we cut back it's Konnan basically squashing Kaos. Kenny comes back with

something we don't see and getting two off a middle rope legdrop. Konnan shrugs it off and wins with the Sunrise.

Here's Kaos' regular partner Rage with his arm still in a cast. He wants to know what's up with Kaos teaming with someone else but Kaos says he has to make a living while Rage is out. None of this is on a microphone so the fans chant about wanting Flair.

Ric Flair's family (minus Ric) arrives.

We see Flair having a heart attack again with the audio screwing up.

Fit Finlay vs. Mike Enos

Now the video is messing up as well. Finlay hammers away with a series of strikes in the corner, capped off by some European uppercuts. A splash gets two and Fit nails a clothesline to set up a chinlock. We head to the floor a bit so the beating can continue with Enos being sent into the barricade and down onto the cement. Back inside and we hit the sleeper on Enos before he fights out and nails a few clotheslines. The fans are bored and I can't say I disagree. A nice shoulder breaker gets two for Mike and he follows it up with a nicer powerslam but he stops to gloat and gets rolled up for a fast pin.

Rating: D+. The match wasn't bad but it certainly wasn't interesting. This is the problem that comes with Thunder so often: these guys never do anything of note so why would I care to watch a just ok wrestling match between them? It's one thing if you have Juvy and Kidman having meaningless matches that amaze the fans but seeing two power brawlers beat on each other for four minutes doesn't cut it.

Enos beats Finlay down post match.

Bischoff wishes Flair the best in his recovery.

Here's Hall in street clothes with something to say. He's

ready for his match with Luger tonight and knows Luger will bring his best because Luger is a world class athlete. Hall is all alone with no friends or family and now all he has is wrestling. He wants to be on top of the world and is ready to go through Luger to get there.

Tony and pals announce Kidman defending against Guerrero and Mysterio in a three way at Starrcade. We get some clips showing Kidman defending against both and dealing with the LWO.

Rey Mysterio Jr. vs. Prince Iaukea

Before the match Eddie Guerrero comes out and says Prince isn't wrestling tonight. The LWO surrounds Iaukea and the Prince is given a choice. He wisely walks to the back instead of dealing with this horrible gimmick, allowing Juventud Guerrero to replace him in the match.

Rey Mysterio Jr. vs. Juventud Guerrero

Mysterio scores with a quick shot as Juvy gets in before sending him to the floor with a headscissors. Back in and both guys slip out of slams before Juvy grabs the namesake Driver out of nowhere for two. A tilt-a-whirl slam gets the same on Mysterio and they trade rollups for two each. The announcers of course ignore the match to talk about everything else. Juvy catches a charging Rey on his shoulder and drops him down for Snake Eyes. Eddie is coming to the ring and we take a break.

Back with Juvy still in control but getting caught in a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker from Mysterio for two. Mysterio misses a middle rope splash and gets caught in something resembling a bulldog for two. Juvy goes up for a dropkick but gets dropkicked out of the air in a nice counter. Not that it matters as Juvy comes back with something like a Liger Bomb. The distraction allows Eddie to sneak in with a Frog Splash to give Juvy a cheap pin.

Rating: C+. That's pretty much the baseline for these two but this wasn't much better than most of their stuff. The problem with the LWO angle is it's dominating the division but there's nothing for them to fight over as Mysterio is on the team as well, despite not wanting to be there and causing Eddie a ton of issues.

Post match Iaukea comes back out and tells the referee what happened. The referee buys it for no apparent reason and Rey wins by DQ. Iaukea and Mysterio run from the LWO before getting a bad beating.

Scott Steiner and Buff Bagwell come in to see Lex Luger (man alive did WCW love alliteration). They want to know what's up with the main event tonight and if he's joining the Black and White but Konnan comes in to say Lex is Wolfpack. Konnan leaves and we hear sounds of an attack. Luger goes outside and sees Scott Hall. Lex yells at Hall and checks on Konnan.

Shiima Nobunaga vs. Disco Inferno

That's quite the random opponent. Disco comes out in a Wolfpack shirt and howls before the match. They trade armbars to start until Shiima hits a pair of dropkicks and cranks on an even better armbar. Disco fights back with an atomic drop and clothesline to send Shiima out to the floor. Shiima takes over with a Stunner across the top rope but charges into an elbow to the jaw. The middle rope ax handle from Disco sets up a chinlock before Shiima fights up and hits a quick reverse powerbomb (as in Disco's face hits the mat) for two. A top rope cross body misses and Disco grabs the Chartbuster for the pin.

Rating: D+. What was the point of having Nobunaga in this one? I can't imagine this show had a huge audience and it's not like there weren't dozens of guys that could have done this job just as well. The match wasn't bad but we're at the point where Disco Inferno is winning squash matches. That can't be a

good sign.

Remember the Flair Family arriving earlier? Here it is again.

Jerry Flynn vs. Norman Smiley

Great, a Jerry Flynn match. Of course he starts by firing off kicks so Norman grabs the leg to take over. Smart man that Smiley. The spinning slam puts Flynn down but he comes back with a belly to back suplex. Jerry tries a sunset flip but Norman stops to dance, allowing Flynn to pull him down for two. More kicks have Norman in trouble and Flynn puts on an ankle lock. A dropkick puts Jerry outside and it's BIG WIGGLE time! Back in and Jerry fires off more kicks but gets caught in a sunset flip for another two count. Norman escapes a slam and puts on the chicken wing for the win.

Rating: D. I like that someone talented like Smiley is getting a push, but I had to sit through a Jerry Flynn match to get here. He's another guy whose consistent employment boggles my mind. He was just a step above Glacier in ring work and had nothing interesting at all about him, but he kept a job for years.

We see Bischoff wishing Flair the best again. He promises to do the right thing.

Chris Jericho vs. Perry Saturn

This should be more entertaining. Jericho tries to get in a cheap shot in the corner and gets slapped upside the head for his efforts. They hit the mat for some technical stuff and Jericho gets one, meaning it's time for an overblown celebration. The fans think Jericho sucks and Saturn eggs them on, so Jericho makes the referee cover his ears. Yep it's better than the previous two matches already.

They fight over control again until Jericho gets tired of it and nails Saturn with a clothesline. Another celebration

allows Chris to pop up and superkick him to the mat. The spinning legdrop gets two for Saturn and a swinging neckbreaker does the same. Perry goes off on Jericho in the corner but misses a charge, only to come back with a release belly to belly suplex.

A top rope forearm sends Jericho into the referee and you can smell Miller and Onoo from here. Saturn hooks the Rings and here's Miller to break them up. He suplexes both Jericho and Miller but the numbers catch up to him, allowing Ernest to kick him in the head. Jericho puts on the Liontamer and the referee drops Saturn's arm three times for the win.

Rating: C. The match was indeed more entertaining for multiple reasons, but the biggest is that we've been given a reason to care about these two. Rather than just having people who we occasionally see lose elsewhere, these are two guys who have had success in the past and it's interesting to see them interact. Granted it was a way to push Ernest Miller even more but you can't win them all.

Side note: Jericho's eye got busted open off that forearm and there's blood on the side of his eye. It looks borderline terrifying.

Bischoff again. It's not the same promo but it's the same idea.

The Flair Family is brought out, Ric's wife hugs Tony, and that's it for them tonight. So glad we spent so much time on this one.

Video on Nash vs. Goldberg.

Scott Hall vs. Lex Luger

Hall comes out with no music as has been his custom lately. Disco comes out to wish Luger luck but is ordered to the back. They fight over a lockup to start with Luger easily shoving

him down and flexing. Hall grabs a headlock and here are Scott Steiner and Buff Bagwell down the aisle. Luger takes Hall down by the hair, much to Steiner's approval.

Bagwell starts a Luger chant as Hall puts Luger down with a clothesline and puts on the double arm crank. As in Hall is grabbing Luger's wrists and bending Luger's arms behind his back. To really show the stupidity of this show, Luger spins it around so that Hall's arms are behind his own back. Hall stays in the hold for several seconds instead of LETTING GO OF LUGER'S WRISTS. A low blow gets two for Hall but Lex comes back with right hands. There's the forearm and Luger calls for the Rack, drawing in Steiner and Bagwell to attack Hall for the DQ.

Rating: F. For that arm thing alone. I can't get over that. The match was nothing of note.

Post match Konnan comes out and says Steiner and Bagwell jumped him earlier. Wait, so he didn't tell Luger this earlier in the hallway? Luger had like 40 minutes to get ready for his match and NEVER ASKED? How stupid are the people in this company?

Tony calls out Reid and David Flair to close the show. He's about to talk to David but here's Bischoff to interrupt. Eric says he doesn't want any trouble and is so sorry for what he's put the family through. It must have hurt David the most as the oldest son. Eric says David wants to be a wrestler and apologizes that David's dad had such a weak heart. A shot to the back puts David down and sends Reid after Eric's leg. This brings out Brian Adams and Barry Windham to easily hold Reid back and beat up David. Eric leaves and kisses Flair's livid wife before WOOing to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. There's a lot to talk about here. First and foremost, I really question the logic of having Flair taken off television this close to Starrcade. With no Thunder

next week (Christmas Eve), Monday is the go home show for the biggest show of the year and the main attraction of the second biggest match on the card isn't on TV? Come to think of it, the second biggest name wrestling at Starrcade on the show tonight was Rey Mysterio. They're doing a really lame job of setting up Starrcade, especially with a main event that isn't the hottest thing in the world.

Second, this is Thunder arguably at its worst. It's not that it's bad wrestling as the matches certainly aren't horrible and some of it is actually good. The problem is that most of it isn't interesting. Of the matches tonight, three of them have people the fans would care about. We've seen Rey vs. Juvy a bunch of times, Hall vs. Luger was more of an angle than a match, and Jericho could have been any given wrestler against Saturn as the match was there to further another feud.

Finally, and this is a mild spoiler (for a show that aired over fifteen years ago so I think it's ok): a lot of this stuff isn't going to mean anything at Starrcade. Luger, Hall and Steiner won't be wrestling on the show, making their entire story pretty worthless. You know who will be wrestling on Starrcade? Jerry Flynn, Norman Smiley, Fit Finlay and Prince Iaukea. The lack of common sense or logical wrestling booking knowledge in this company continues to astound me.

That's it for Thunder this year as the next two weeks are Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. Overall, Thunder in 1998 was....pretty freaking dreadful most of the time. There's the occasional good match between the cruiserweights, but more often than not it's a totally worthless show that adds almost nothing to WCW. Most of the guys on here are on Thunder because they're not important enough to get on Nitro most of the time and their matches on Thunder aren't much better. The show just doesn't need to exist and it's not getting any better as time goes on.

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book of on the History of Clash of the Champions at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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