

Vengeance 2004: A Forgotten Little Gem

Vengeance 2004

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Location: Hartford Civic Center, Hartford, Connecticut

Attendance: 7,000

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Jim Ross

So Benoit won the title at Mania and since then it's been Benoit vs. HHH because HHH can't allow anyone to be a star on Raw other than him. We also have Batista vs. Jericho and Edge vs. Orton which is considered something of a modern classic for no apparent reason. This is an odd time for the company as they're just breaking out of that 2003 funk but they haven't hit their stride yet. It's coming though. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about Benoit's rise and now that we've talked about him enough it's time for HHH to take over our screen. The announcers aren't at ringside here as they had this weird idea about putting them way in the back for no explained reason.

Tajiri/Rhyno vs. Jonathan Coachman/Garrison Cade

Uh...yeah. Seriously how do I even talk about this? This is like an opener on Heat, but a bad one. This was announced on Heat. Seriously, what was the thought on this? To my great shock and awe, this has a backstory. For no apparent reason Eugene was made GM of Raw for a night and had a game of musical chairs for a title match. Tajiri was eliminated first and Coach got the last seat. This fell out of that.

Tajiri is actually popular. Coach wisely runs from Rhyno. I've never seen the appeal of Cade. The guy just isn't that good and that's all there is to it. Oh look: Rhyno vs. Garrison Cade on Pay Per View. Coach and Cade beat up Tajiri. Again, is

there a reason this is happening? I mean was there NOTHING else to try?

After even more boring stuff, we get green mist from Tajiri to Cade. Apparently the referee seeing green stuff on Cade's formerly blonde hair is perfectly fine. This is making my head hurt and I'm not even fifteen minutes into it. Cade gets gored, Coach gets kicked and I need a stiff drink.

Rating: D. This was a glorified squash and it was just boring. Tajiri was always good for some stuff, but Cade and Coach? Really? That's the best you can come up with? This was one of the dumbest openers of all time and it's also one of the least interesting. I mean just think about it: Tajiri and Rhyno vs. Garrison Cade and Jonathan Coachman. Think about that for a minute.

Evolution is in the back and they make fun of Eugene. Is there a reason for this? Ah Flair and Eugene have a tag title shot for no apparent reason. This was around the time where HHH was pretending to be his friend to set up their match at Summerslam. Evolution can't find him though so HHH goes to find him. He's with Benoit who is telling him that Evolution is using him.

We recap Jericho vs. Batista where the idea is Batista keeps knocking Jericho out with a really strong clothesline. No one can stop Batista, so Jericho is going to try.

Batista vs. Chris Jericho

It amazes me how much things can change in a few years as this would be main eventing a PPV in four years. Batista has very different music at this point. Jericho has the same. That's the one thing Jericho has never changed and the more I think about it the better I think that is. Batista already has those shoulder blocks in the corner that he uses so often. So basically the problem here is that Jericho can't do a thing because Batista is really strong.

I have no idea why I love it so much but I freaking love the jumping back elbow from the top or from the not top for that matter. It just looks freaking sweet. Batista drops an F bomb which is rather amusing. He starts going after Jericho's head which makes sense for the clothesline finisher that you would assume is coming up. And then he works on the back. Sure why not. King is heel here but it's just not working that well. He's trying to be funny and it's just failing.

Jericho makes a short comeback but Batista hits a HUGE spinebuster. That freaking hurt. Lionsault and Batista Bomb bots miss but reverse the order of those. Finally the Bomb hits and even though Jericho's foot is on the rope the pin is counted anyway. Big win for the Animal before he has that name.

Rating: C+. This was FAR better than the previous match. Batista is really young at this point so he needed the big time experience here. Jericho was in a major rut at this point and this was a great example of that. He wouldn't get out of it for awhile and would leave next summer.

HHH and Evolution are in the back and the rest of them leave. Flair moves and behind him is Eugene. HHH sits down with him and keeps manipulating him to eventually helping him win the title. He and Flair give Eugene a Flair robe. Does he just have a closet full of those to give out to people?

Raw Tag Titles: La Resistance vs. Eugene/Ric Flair

Take a guess as to who the champions are here. On a random note, Lillian in Go-Go Boots is AWESOME. Flair's music cuts off the French national anthem to a huge cheer. The look on Flair's face when he looks at Eugene is hilarious. Eugene and Conway start us off and the Kentucky guy struts. These two were a team in OVW called the Lords of the Ring who won like 10 tag titles there. He starts using a bunch of Flair moves resulting in the required freak out from Flair.

Flair hasn't even been in yet. Flair finally comes in and Grenier is in trouble. He's one of those guys that never actually did anything but had a job because he fit into a tag team. Flair for the most part probably used more basic stuff than anyone ever while making it work. I mean really, how many complex moves can you think of Flair using? He does really basic stuff but he does it so efficiently that he makes himself look great while at the same time making others look great. That's a very rare quality.

The figure four goes on but Conway makes the save. Flair is RIDICULOUSLY popular here. For some reason this is getting some time. It says a lot when a guy like Flair, a member of the top heel stable, is getting cheered this much. There's a massive row of signs that spell out WOO in the crowd. There are a lot more o's in there though which I'd guess you figured out. Why is it that you never see guys use the front facelock in singles matches but you see it all the time in tags?

Without a tag, Flair gets hit by Au Revoir (the champions' finisher) but Eugene Eugenes Up and beats the tar out of them. And then he knocks the referee down for the CHEAP DQ. Eugene hits a Stunner and Rock Bottom on them after the match.

Rating: C. I don't think anyone was really expecting much here or a title change and that's about what they got. This was by no means bad but it's nothing great at all. Flair and Eugene were part of a far more important angle that would culminate with HHH beating up a slow man on PPV. Still though, not awful at all but nothing special either.

Ad for Summerslam, which if I remember right was a pretty bad show.

We recap Matt Hardy and Lita vs. Kane. The idea here is kind of in depth but simple at the same time. So Matt loved Lita and wanted to marry her. Kane kind of stalked them for no reason other than he's evil. Lita got pregnant and Matt

proposed to her, but of course the baby is Kane's. The reason though is she slept with Kane to prevent him from more or less killing Matt. That sets this up.

Matt Hardy vs. Kane

It's no DQ here. No count out either according to JR. Kane's music ROCKED back in the day. Matt gets a NICE pop. He always had that potential to be something big but they kept botching it. This is pure soap opera and it works great. They're not sure who the baby belongs to here so that's a major factor in this. JR says if Kane wants kids he should get married and do it the right way. That's just amusing.

I've always loved that huge clothesline he'd hit off the top. To be fair though, Kane has always been one of my favorites. They've been in the ring maybe 45 seconds and we're over five minutes into this. That fits though as it's supposed to be a really serious feud so I'm fine with it. Kane gets tied up in the ropes and Matt goes OFF on him. Tombstone is countered into a Twist of Fate for two. A bad chokeslam hits on Matt as we're waiting on Lita to get here.

Ah here she is. She bounces down to the ring and distracts Kane while he picks up the steps. Matt blasts the steps with a chair so they hit him in the head for the pin. I liked this more than I thought I would, but their Summerslam match was much better.

In the back Matt tells Lita he needs her to stay away from him until he can figure things out and for the sake of the baby.

Rating: B-. This is one of those matches where you have to consider the angle. This was sloppy and far more of a brawl than a traditional match, but that's what it was supposed be. This came off as a big fight like it was supposed to be and I was into it. There's some likely bias there but who cares? This worked pretty well I thought though and I liked it a lot more than most would.

We recap Edge vs. Orton. The idea here is that Orton has finally stopped being a pretty boy and is just being awesome, including the war with Foley at Backlash. Edge came back from injury and said someone had to stand up to Evolution and he's going to start with Orton. When Edge got hurt, he was the hottest thing in the world, so this is by far the biggest match on the card as far as people drooling to see it.

Intercontinental Title: Edge vs. Randy Orton

Apparently the title has changed hands the most in July out of any month. Doesn't really mean much but it's a cool little factoid. Orton was just totally awesome as the ridiculously confident jerk that never lost. He's held the belt forever here and this is just before he would rise to the main event picture and win the world title at Summerslam...before he had to hand it back to HHH a month later. Lawler has a crush on Orton I think.

Edge is using a lot of shoulder blocks and headlocks here. After about his fourth one, Orton tries to bail. And then he just comes back. Was there a point to that other than killing time? Ross says that this is for the title if you just tuned in. Make your own jokes. Orton is beating the heck out of Edge here. It amazes me how much his character has evolved over the years. Sweet goodness Edge is boring here. The fans like Orton actually.

Edge finally mixes it up a bit by hitting a nice missile dropkick off the top. Orton kicks the spear out of the way just like he's done many times. Edge I beg of you: get a new freaking finisher. The Impaler is perfect. The fans are more or less split but there might be a slight lead for Orton. Orton does the Zeus/Giant neck spin thing that put Hogan out for months but on a guy that's had neck surgery it doesn't do much at all. Orton's dropkick is freaking pretty. It just is.

And of course we get a chinlock. That makes this a real Orton

match. The more I think about it the more I think a legdrop would hurt. Lawler and Ross argue about Edge's hair. This is a LONG chinlock. Edge hits a dropkick into the ribs to get us back to even. This is long but not that interesting. It's decent but from the thoughts I've heard about this before now I'd think it was a classic. By no means is that the case.

They crank things up a good bit and it gets a lot better. This has cracked twenty minutes and Orton goes for the RKO. Crowd is WAY into this. Let the near falls begin! After Orton takes the pad off the buckle he goes into it and there's your spear to give Edge the belt. The spear had that explosion it needed to make it good too.

Rating: B. This was good but by no means a classic. This is a great example of a match where being long doesn't exactly mean it's great. Orton and Edge never really did anything spectacular here and it felt like a longer version of a regular match. It's good, but by no means is it a classic.

This ran over 25 minutes and the first 20 are more or less a long Raw main event minus the good part. You cut ten minutes off of this and it's FAR better. The last three minutes are quite good though as far as drama and drawing the crowd in.

Ad for the Diva Search. Christy Hemme won but Michelle and Maria were in it as were three others that are gone now.

Molly Holly vs. Victoria

This is a number one contender's match. Molly had her head shaved recently for no apparent reason but she has a wig with a chinstrap holding it on. I smell a comedy moment later on. Victoria is more recently known as Tara. She went from being this psycho chick to being some dancing chick with a bad theme song. Such a shame. Victoria busts out a sweet moonsault for two. We nearly get a countout as Victoria may have hurt her what appears to be neck. Ah it's her shoulder. Got it.

Why do so many women use the handspring elbow? It's not like it's a unique move when so many people use it. Molly works on the shoulder for a LONG time, including throwing her arm first into the ropes. Would that hurt? I'm not sure actually. Widow's Peak doesn't work but she hits more or less a superkick for the pin.

Rating: D. This was your standard Raw Divas match. The division was just bad at this point and this was no exception. Trish was champion and was injured at the moment hence the no title thing here. This just didn't interest me at all though, although I've seen FAR worse matches.

Ad for Summerslam with Stacy in a short skirt.

We recap HHH vs. Benoit which more or less has been the main feud since Mania. Benoit has the title now but HHH won't leave him alone and then last month when there was Benoit vs. Kane for the belt, HHH and Shawn just HAD to do a 50 minute Hell in a Cell match. In short, HHH wouldn't let Benoit be the top guy and next month Benoit lost it. Eugene is being manipulated by Evolution and Benoit is trying to explain this to Eugene but accidentally hit him with a chair. Sadly I think he'll be involved in the main event.

Raw World Title: Chris Benoit vs. HHH

They try to make it sound like HHH is the second best technical guy in the world. So in other words not only are they saying Benoit is best, but they're BOTH better than Angle. That's just funny. Benoit wasn't at his best at this point, but when he was at his best HHH insisted he wasn't ready to be a main event guy since Angle vs. Lesnar was the top feud and that would just leave Benoit to fight HHH and we couldn't do that right?

HHH has the white boots here which just look idiotic but whatever. We start with some very nice technical and even chain stuff. I love chain wrestling but it rarely happens

anymore. Benoit works on the shoulder to set up for the Crossface. That's why he's great: intelligence. The headbutt misses though and HHH takes over. This has been back and forth so far and solid stuff. If the referee stops the match, Benoit keeps the belt? Even if Benoit is the one that's hurt? That makes no sense at all.

This was a very strange time as even logic went out the window as you can see. HHH busts out the GORDBUSTER! Benoit had hurt his chest earlier so that move makes a ton of sense. And that again is what we call psychology. Benoit hurt his sternum so HHH works on it. That's intelligent. HHH is beating the tar out of him and his chest here. Sweet niblets those chops are awesome sounding. And here the abdominal stretch makes sense.

And now let's hit the sleeper. It's boring, but far less so than the chinlock as you could maybe get a win with it. The chinlock has never meant anything other than rest. Resting is fine, but at least try to have a point to it. Sharpshooter is hooked and HHH is in trouble.

We go to the Germans and we've got a solid match here. And now we crank it up a bit as Benoit busts out a suicide dive. More like a running forearm through the ropes but it looked fine. The referee goes down and HHH calls for Eugene. Benoit hooks the crossface and Benoit tells Eugene to GET THE REF! HHH taps and no referee. Seriously, why do we need the slow guy to be involved in the ending of a great title match?

Benoit jumps Eugene when he comes in out of possible protection. Again, he's beating up a slow guy but everything is fine with this I guess. Pedigree hits and still no referee. Can we get a second referee? I mean this is just stupid. It only gets two and we put the camera on Eugene of course. The guy in the far too small tights brings in a chair for HHH but then takes it back. This is officially the Eugene Show. And down he goes again.

Benoit gets the chair and takes out the running in Flair and Batista. Eugene is in AGAIN. This is just freaking stupid at this point. People are freaking LEAVING. Could it be because the slow guy has become the focus of this PPV? Again, he's a great example of a guy that was fine for a minor role but they've given him this massive spot and the people turned on him. Eugene doesn't want to hit either guy, Benoit starts a tug-of-war and HHH gets smacked in the head with it.

The referee is STILL down. And Benoit rolls him up for the pin after HHH sits around for 20 seconds. AWFUL ending. Again, they managed to take a great match and make it about Eugene. This was completely blasted and the fans would soon totally turn on Eugene and the whole character to the point where they actually tried turning him heel.

Yeah that sums things up well. Oh and the slow guy was the secret weapon of HHH. You have Dave Batista, Randy Orton and Ric Flair and you freaking pick Eugene? You deserve to lose buddy.

Rating: B. This was a great match until the last 7 minutes or so. Seriously, EUGENE was the focus of the ending of a PPV. That just does not work at all. He was a comedy character that got ridiculously over so they pushed him harder than he ever deserved to be. Nick Dinsmore, the guy that played him, is a good wrestler but this character simply didn't work at this level. If you give this a legit finish, the match is FAR better and makes my head hurt far less.

Overall Rating: B-. It's good, but at the same time this could have been SO much better. Orton vs. Edge is just not that good. It's decent enough but at the same time it's just the last 4 minutes or so that's any good. The first twenty is like a REALLY long set up sequence. It's good enough I guess but you chop ten minutes off of it and it's VERY good. It's good but could have been far better. There's no other way to put it.

The main event is solid for the most part but it is dying for a better finish. One thing you can't say is that they didn't give the main matches enough time as of the two major ones the short one is over 26 minutes long. It's definitely not a bad show at all, but this could have been a much better show given what they had. Oh and less Eugene. That would have helped a lot.

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