

Thunder – May 27, 1999: Well....It Was Better

Thunder

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Commentators: Mike Tenay, Larry Zbyszko

Believe it or not things are looking up just a bit in WCW. The most recent Nitro was just a disaster instead of the worst show ever. There is an interesting story coming up with the old guard not being happy with the lack of respect they've been getting from the younger crowd, which led to Benoit and Malenko turning on Flair earlier this week. Let's get to it.

We open with a video of Savage's recent path of destruction, even though his girls have done most of the work.

The announcers do their thing. It's Sting vs. Rick Steiner in a cage on Nitro.

Lash Leroux vs. Kaz Hayashi

Leroux takes him down to start and works on the arm before putting Kaz on the mat again with an armdrag. Back up and Kaz offers a handshake, only to kick Leroux in the ribs instead. A dropkick puts Leroux down again but he avoids a spinwheel kick, only to get caught in a backslide for two. Things slow down a bit as Kaz gets into kick and chop mode before dropping an elbow.

We cut to the back to see Savage and the girls because this is his company now. Savage is looking for Bagwell but beats up Disco Inferno and Scotty Riggs instead. Back to the match happening in the background, Leroux hammers away in the corner with right hands. We get more kicks from Kaz because he's from Japan, meaning he only knows how to kick you see. He mixes things up by going to the eyes, only to have the fans chant that both guys suck.

Leroux comes back with some very basic offense before a kind of sitout Dominator for two. The Whiplash is countered and Kaz kicks him in the ribs again, followed by a quick hurricanrana. Lash crotches him on top but gets shoved right down, only to dropkick a diving Hayashi out of the air. Now it's Lash going up but getting superplexed down, setting up a top rope senton splash to give Kaz the pin.

Rating: C-. This wasn't bad but the Savage thing put a big halt in the middle of it. These are the kind of guys that WCW could use to help flesh out the cruiserweight division a bit and thankfully they were able to have a match without Hugh Morrus interfering and eliminating them both. This is what Thunder should be about: showcasing guys that don't get time on Nitro.

Van Hammer vs. Prince Iaukea

Time for more of Hammer's latest push that won't go anywhere. Iaukea tries to speed things up to start and actually hits an enziguri to stagger the big man before dropping him with a springboard dropkick. Not that it matters as Hammer kicks Iaukea's head off to put him on the floor. The beating continues outside until Hammer launches him back inside. We cut to UFC fighter Tank Abbott in the front row. UFC wasn't a huge thing yet as they had only had nineteen shows at this point. Abbott had fought for them as recently as October 1998.

Iaukea gets sent into the apron a few times and goes head first into the steps. Back in and we hit the bearug for a bit with Iaukea saving himself using the power of a hard head. He tries to slam Hammer and gets crushed for two for his efforts. Iaukea goes back up and gets crotched, setting up a superplex (same sequence from the first match) followed by the cobra clutch slam for the pin.

Rating: D. When I was talking about showcasing talent that doesn't get the spotlight on Nitro, I meant guys that you would want to see getting spotlight like that. Instead here we had two guys who either aren't interesting or haven't been interesting in years. Thankfully it was a pretty short match but anytime Iaukea is out there it gets painful.

Video on Nash vs. Savage.

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Video from Nitro of Savage attacking Nash and lipsticking him.

Gene brings out Savage and the girls for a chat. Savage thinks Nash fears him, that Bagwell disrespected him, and that he'll take the title at the Bash. The girls all think Savage rocks and that's about it. This really didn't need to be an in ring segment.

The Cat vs. Vampiro

This is the result of an open challenge after Cat ripped on Scott Norton, calling him Yogi Bearer for some reason. Sonny Onoo offers Vampiro money to leave, allowing Miller to get in some cheap shots from behind. Vampiro comes back with kicks to the ribs and ducks a kick that winds up hitting Sonny. More shots to the face have Miller in trouble but he nails Vampiro low to escape. It doesn't seem to have a long lasting effect though as Vampiro keeps kicking and nails a Rock Bottom. Onoo knees him in the back though and Miller finishes Vampiro quick with the Feliner.

Benoit goes into Flair's office to yell at him but Page jumps Chris from behind and beats him down.

Here's Brian Knobs with something to say. He brags about being hardcore and all that jazz until Jimmy Hart interrupts. Jimmy says he managed Brian in the past and wants him back for the First Family. Brian isn't sure but will think about it.

Clip from Nitro of Flair and Piper fighting.

Clip from Nitro of Hennig and Konnan fighting.

Konnan vs. Kenny Kaos

We get a bunch of catchphrases from Konnan followed by him praising all of his friends. Feeling out process to start until Kaos' wristlock is countered with an armdrag. Kaos drops him again with a a clothesline and elbow before we hit the way too early chinlock. Back up and Konnan hits his wrap around bulldog and the low dropkick followed by some right hands in the corner.

A few clotheslines and a suplex get two on Konnan and we hit another chinlock. Kaos shouts at the crowd a lot and gets caught in a DDT for a quick two. We get the usual from Konnan but he charges into a powerslam. Kaos goes up, misses a guillotine legdrop and gets caught in the Tequila Sunrise for the submission.

Rating: D. Gah these matches can be dull. Kaos is a guy that doesn't have anything going for him and Konnan is suddenly all cool with Nash again despite having issues with him just a few months back. This was just wrestling to fill in space on a card which can be the least interesting things imaginable when there's no motivation.

This Week In WCW Motorsports.

Video on Nash.

Lenny Lane vs. Evan Karagias

Evan hammers away to start and grabs a hammerlock before dropkicking him down. A clothesline puts Lane on the floor and here's Lodi to watch they match. Lane sends Evan into the apron and then the steps before they head back inside for an elbow from Lenny. He sees Lodi and....doesn't seem to mind. Evan jumps over him in the corner and drives in ten right hands. A springboard clothesline gets two on Lenny but he grabs an airplane spin of all things.

Evan gets dropped with a gutbuster as Lodi seems very pleased. Back up and Karagias gets two off a cross body. Lodi: "Looking really, really good." Evan pops back to his feet and floats around into a faceplant. A cross body gets a delayed two but Lane gets Karagias onto his shoulders for an electric chair slam for two. Not that it matters as Evan slams him down and hits a corkscrew splash for the pin.

Rating: D+. This could have been worse and was somehow a breath of fresh air after all of the boring stuff we've sat through for the last hour or so. That being said, I have a bad feeling about where the Lodi stuff is going as it's likely going to be yet another big embarrassment for the company.

From Nitro: Piper yells about Flair a lot.

Video on Sting/Luger vs. the Steiners.

Gene talks to Tank Abbott at ringside and Tank doesn't seem to be all that happy with what he's seen so far. This hardcore division is a joke and the wrestlers all look pathetic. Gene says there's going to be a "shoot" cage match on Monday between Sting and Rick Steiner, which Tank of course laughs off. This brings out Rick Steiner to yell, start a fight, and get pulled away. He wants Abbott to come to Nitro as Tank is taken out by security.

Recap of Flair giving the Jersey boys the Tag Team Title shot and the Horsemen quitting as a result.

Chris Benoit vs. Diamond Dallas Page

This has potential. Benoit comes out to what used to be Dean's theme for some reason. They immediately slug it out to start and Benoit has him in the Crossface fifteen seconds in. Page gets to the ropes and bails to the floor, only to have Chris take him out with a dive. He sends Page head first into the post but walks into a knee back inside. A belly to back suplex puts the Canadian down but Benoit just chops him into the corner and stomps him in the chest.

Page gets back up and counters a whip with an elbow to the jaw to put both guys down. They roll outside with Page being sent into various steel objects, only to send Benoit into the barricade as we take a break. Back with Benoit catching Page coming in but his right hands in the corner are countered with a low blow and hot shot. A stomping puts Benoit on the floor before a big gutbuster has him in trouble back inside.

Benoit gets tied up in the Tree of Woe for another stomping. We hit the chinlock, complete with something like a chinlock slam for two. Off to a sleeper on Benoit but he jawbreaks his way to freedom. Some running right hands put Page down and a bridging German suplex gets two. That's not enough for Benoit so he rolls some more Germans until Page breaks it up with a low blow. A big sitout powerbomb gives Page a near fall but Benoit counters the Cutter and puts on the Crossface in the middle of the ring.

Since we can't have someone lose clean around here though, Bigelow runs out for the DQ.

Rating: B-. This took its time to get going but once they got to the trading big moves section, they really started to cook. The ending was inevitable though as they couldn't put Benoit over because Page has a title shot coming up and you don't want to put Page over because Benoit is coming off a big turn. Good match though and a nice pick up after the bad show so far.

Flair, Bigelow and Page beat down Benoit and no one makes the save.

Another video on Nash vs. Savage.

Randy Savage vs. Buff Bagwell

After some jawing from both guys and a few Nash insults from Savage, the girls shove Bagwell to give Macho the early advantage. Savage busts out a wide variety of choking before taking it outside to drop Buff's throat on the barricade. Back in and Miss Madness nails a top rope missile dropkick to prove her worth. Savage ties Bagwell in the Tree of Woe before choking even more. Off to a neck hold as Patrick yells at two of the girls, allowing George to use her shoe on Buff's throat. Savage yells at Patrick so he actually gets a chair to defend himself. That's fine with Randy, who takes the chair away and nails Buff for the DQ.

Rating: D. If this is supposed to get Bagwell over, they're doing a horrible job of going about it. This was a total squash until Bagwell won on a DQ due to stealing a referee's weapon. Again, the girls help him out WAY too much as well, even though in this case he could have won on his own pretty easily.

Overall Rating: D. Somehow this was an upgrade over some of the recent shows. Above all else, there was nowhere near as much talking on this show. That being said, it meant that we had a lot more time for wrestling, and that has rarely been Thunder's strong point. The Benoit vs. Page match was good and a very nice break from the norm, but this old vs. new thing has a big hole to dig them out of.

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