

Monday Nitro – May 31, 1999: Now They're Screwing Up Cage Matches

Monday Nitro #190

Date: May 31, 1999

Location: Astrodome, Houston, Texas

Commentators: Bobby Heenan, Tony Schiavone

We're two weeks away from the Great American Bash and the main event is still dominating the card. Thankfully we're getting some development on the rest of the card and hopefully the rise of Benoit and Malenko up the card as the new young stars of the company. Well Malenko is pushing 40 at this point so he can only be so young but you get the idea. Let's get to it.

We open with Raven arriving at the arena but getting attacked by Bigelow and Page in the parking lot. They throw him into a dumpster and slam the lid on his head.

Recap of last week with Piper beating up Flair and the Horsemen turning on their leader.

We see Tank Abbott getting into it with Rick Steiner on Thunder.

The announcers do their thing.

DJ Ran.

Here's Eddie Guerrero for the first time this year after a horrible car wreck. The announcers welcome him back and show us some photos of Eddie's totaled car. Eddie lists off his injuries and hopes to be back soon. He'll be doing some commentary to start things off.

Hak vs. Kidman

Hak has to lose the weapons to start and Kidman actually tries to make it

a wrestling match. I can't imagine it staying that way but it's nice to pretend for a bit. They stay on the mat for a bit with Kidman holding a headscissors...and now let's hear from Tank Abbott and his goons about how being in a cage is hardcore. He has history being in a cage you see, and he's going to referee the TV Title match tonight.

We cut back to the match with Kidman taking over again with a dropkick. Chastity gets on the apron with a chair, allowing Hak to send Kidman face first into the steel. It's weapons time now as I guess this was a hardcore match the whole time. Kidman is whipped into the ladder but avoids a Swanton through the table. He loads up the Shooting Star but here's Hugh Morrus to shove him off, somehow drawing a no contest in a hardcore match.

Rating: D. There was some decent wrestling to start but then we went to the hardcore stuff and a Tank Abbott promo because we can't do that at some other point. I don't know why they insist on wasting Kidman on something like this when he's capable of having good matches with any talented guy you throw at him.

Brian Knobs comes out to beat up Hak.

Flair is in his office and orders eight women to his room tonight. JJ Dillon says Savage's elbow is officially banned. So what else can he actually do?

Clip of Steiner and Abbott on Thunder.

Eddie thanks the fans and Bischoff for believing in him.

Here are Bigelow and Page with something to say. Page rips on the fans and says he knew it was wrong to put Hogan out with a knee injury. He tried to apologize but last week Hogan knocked him out with a crutch as he was leaving. Bigelow and Page threaten to put Hogan on the permanent injured list before turning their attention to Raven and Saturn. They took the trash out earlier and now don't want to wait for the Great American Bash for their title shot.

Kanyon is going to take Raven's place in the Tag Team Title match

tonight.

DJ Ran doesn't like Curt Hennig not liking hip hop. Oh geez they're going to have him advance stories now?

Curt Hennig comes out to the commentary desk and insists that rap is crap. Hennig likes country music better and is going to go sing a country song at DJ Ran's booth. Bobby Duncum Jr. comes out to sing with Curt and they belt out Blame It On Texas. It's not really singing as much as it is rhythmic talking but they're trying. Konnan and Mysterio come out in their Astros jerseys for the save. A tag match is made for later.

We look at Hennig and Konnan brawling last week. Wouldn't this fit better before the previous segment?

Van Hammer vs. Evan Karagias

Evan gets hammered on to start and is quickly put in a Tree of Woe. He avoids a charge though and grabs a headlock, only to be shoved away and shouldered down. A headscissors takes Hammer over but he counters another attempt with a hot shot. Hammer plants him with a backbreaker and Vader clothesline for two before putting on an abdominal stretch. Evan actually hiptosses the big guy over, only to get caught in a delayed vertical suplex. Hammer gets taken down again and a high cross body gets two, but he grabs the cobra clutch slam for a quick pin.

Rating: D. Hammer really needs something besides the cobra clutch slam. That's a move that almost anyone could do and while it's decent for a power guy, he needs to do something that looks a lot more devastating. Or we could just not have Hammer on TV and see how well that works for us.

Here's Piper to say God bless America and talk about the Horsemen breaking up last week. He calls Flair a gelding and asks Malenko to come out here for a chat. Piper praises Dean as the best cruiserweight of all time but Dean doesn't say anything. He takes the mic and says that Flair walked out on the Horsemen and last week was just them responding.

This brings out Flair and Anderson but Dean cuts them off and says the Horsemen weren't supposed to be about feeding Flair's ego. WCW needs to

be about passing the torch and letting the younger guys get their chance on top. Flair says he hasn't met anyone worth passing the torch to yet. Dean goes to Arn and says last week he promised to have Arn's back anywhere, but that was last week. Piper and Flair get in a fight and Flair runs away. Naturally that's the focus instead of Anderson and Malenko because it's Flair and Piper.

Nitro Girls.

Eric Bischoff joins commentary for no apparent reason.

Konnan/Rey Mysterio Jr. vs. Curt Hennig/Bobby Duncum Jr.

So much for Rey defending against Kidman, at least for now it seems. Konnan and Rey wear what appear to be prison uniforms. The cowboys try to sing a little bit but get dropkicked in the back to start fast. Mysterio dropkicks Curt's leg and shouts WEST SIDE on the middle rope. Hennig and Duncum are knocked out to the floor for a breather as Bischoff praises Rey. Back in and Hennig nails Mysterio in the ribs with a right hand before it's off to Duncum for a shoulder breaker.

Back to Hennig who whips Rey across for the Bret Hart chest first bump to the buckle. The cowboys keep up the fast tagging with Bobby throwing Mysterio around like a rag doll. Mysterio nails a quick dropkick to Hennig and slides between Curt's legs for the hot tag to Konnan and a genuine eruption from the crowd. There's the Tequila Sunrise on Hennig but Duncum breaks it up with the cowbell for the DQ.

Rating: D+. It's another culture clash feud but at least most of the guys in it are worth watching. Duncum had potential to be good but the cowboy thing was only going to take him so far at this point. It's not a bad match but I groaned at the cowbell ending. WCW was so obsessed with getting rid of the southern identity but they have that around?

Konnan gets hogtied post match.

Here's Savage on his own with something to say. He talks about Nash being on his way to the arena when Madusa comes out to say Nash is here. Savage calls Nash out for later in another segment that didn't need to be in the

arena.

Page and Bigelow are in the back, standing over an unconscious Kanyon.

David Flair vs. Erik Watts

Holy sweet mother of goodness they can't be serious. Bischoff just buries both guys, saying Erik got his push because of his dad and that David absolutely sucks. Well he had to be right at some point. He even says that his son would have a winning record if he was in charge. There were warning signs of Garrett Bischoff coming and no one stopped him??? Erik hammers away to start and clotheslines Flair out to the floor. He rams David into the buckle a few times and yells at Papa Flair.

David manages to avoid a dropkick and tries the Figure Four, only to get kicked out to the floor. A suplex brings him back in for two and Watts starts picking him up every time. David is tortured with a Rock Bottom, pumphandle slam and chinlock slam. He loads up another Rock Bottom but Anderson sneaks in for a spinebuster to give David the pin.

Rating: N/A. I can't rate this because I can't help but laugh. This is the kind of match that you see on lists of the worst possible matches you could imagine. Like, you say this as a joke instead of something that could actually happen. That's what we're dealing with here because WCW actually did it. Raw could be airing a midget Brawl For All against this and it might not be as stupid an idea.

Video on Nash vs. Savage.

Buff tells Flair he wants Savage again tonight but is given a suitable replacement: Bobby Eaton. Buff: "Does he even work here anymore?" Either way, Bagwell promises to hurt him tonight.

Ernest Miller comes out to call out Norton for a fight. Well at least that's what I think he's saying as Bischoff keeps talking about how the company in New York is beating them right now and he's partially to blame. Anyway here's Norton and we get a bell.

The Cat vs. Scott Norton

Norton immediately nails Cat with a headbutt and knocks him for a loop. He hammers away in the corner as we see the Black and White laughing in the locker room. With Cat down in the corner, Sonny slips him a crowbar to knock Norton silly for the surprise pin.

The Black and White runs out of the locker room.

Here are Savage and the girls again because we haven't seen enough of them. Well ok that's true in George's case. Nothing is said before Nash's music comes on and here's....a tall guy in drag wearing a replica belt. Savage says this is a match so we get a bell, allowing Savage and the girls to get in shots, such as a top rope hurricanrana from Miss Madness and a middle rope elbow from George. Savage drops the banned top rope elbow for a pin before celebrating with the belt. Again, is there a point to this or are we supposed to draw our own conclusions? For some reason Bischoff thinks Miss Madness is a man.

Nitro Girls.

Recap of Bagwell beating Savage by DQ on Thunder. That would be the second time Bagwell beat Savage by DQ on Thunder.

Buff Bagwell vs. Bobby Eaton

For some reason Bischoff goes on a rant about how worthless Jesse Ventura was on commentary. Eaton hammers away to start and goes after Bagwell's face, only to get monkey flipped and dropkicked to slow him down. Two boots in the corner stop a charging Eaton and a clothesline drops him for two. Buff misses a charge and falls to the floor before taking a swinging neckbreaker in the ring. Bischoff keeps up his tirade by ripping on Bagwell for no apparent reason before switching over to Konnan. Buff comes back with a suplex and hiptoss followed by the Blockbuster for the pin.

We look at Raven getting taken out earlier.

Tag Team Titles: Saturn vs. Bam Bam Bigelow/Diamond Dallas Page

Bischoff calls Page one of the biggest mistake he's made in WCW. Saturn grabs a mic and says he'll keep the titles by himself tonight. Page calls

Saturn stupider than he looks. Bigelow gets things going for the only team in the match and shoves Saturn down with ease. A shoulder block does the same as Bischoff hypes up Tank being in the cage tonight. Saturn comes back with a springboard cross body to Bigelow and a belly to belly to Page. Some clotheslines put the challengers on the floor and we take a break.

Back with Bigelow getting in a knee from the apron, allowing Page to clothesline Saturn down to take over. It's back to Bigelow for a falling headbutt and a two count before the discus lariat gets two for Page. A Batista Bomb gets two more and things slow down a bit. Page comes back in with a top rope clothesline for another two and we hit the chinlock.

Bam Bam comes in off the top but misses the swan dive. Saturn superkicks both guys down and sends the challengers into each other. The Death Valley Driver gets two on Page and there's one for Bigelow as well. Cue Kanyon to stand in the wrong corner and get the hot tag, but Page hits him once for the pin and the titles.

Rating: C. Well it's clear that something is coming with the booking but again with the young and talented teams losing the belts so fast. Did they really have to change the titles in just a few weeks? They couldn't have waited for the pay per view? Page and Bigelow aren't even an interesting team as they're just two guys from Jersey. You wouldn't see Norton and Hennig as a team because they're both from Minnesota would you? At least the match was decent though.

Savage and the girls are trying to leave in the limo but it's blocked by a septic truck. You can see it coming from here. Nash is driving, gets out, puts a hose in the sunroof and the villains gets sprayed. Nash says something about this portion of Nitro has been brought to you by Septic Services, for all your savage septic needs. Ok funny line.

DJ Ran.

The cage is lowered.

TV Title: Rick Steiner vs. Sting

In a cage with a roof, Steiner defending and Tank Abbott as the guest referee. Sting sends Rick head first into the cage to start and stomps away with Steiner not all that interested in selling tonight. The champ comes back with a low blow and hard right hands followed by an elbow drop. A dropkick sends Rick through the ropes and Sting rakes his face on the cage before hitting a Stinger Splash, driving Steiner against the steel.

Rick comes right back with a suplex and a ram into the cage of his own. We hit the chinlock as Tank just kind of walks around and doesn't do anything of note. Sting fights up again and nails another dropkick as there isn't a lot of energy for this match. Some clotheslines look to set up a splash but Rick raises his knees.

Sting slips off Steiner's shoulders but can't get a backslide. Instead he tries a very modified Gory Stretch, only to have Rick get to the cage to escape. Sting sends him into the corner for the Splash but Abbott pulls Steiner out of the way. Rick tapes Sting to the ropes as Tank leaves, meaning in two weeks, they've now ended a cage match and a battle royal in no contests.

Rating: D-. Holy sweet Christmas they've managed to screw up a cage match. For one thing, it's WAY too early in this feud for a big gimmick match. On top of that, the match lasted less than eight minutes and was there to push Tank Abbott than for the match itself. The fact that it's Rick Steiner refusing to sell ANYTHING makes sitting through this even worse. Horrible match here and even worse storytelling and decision making.

Abbott and his goons walk out to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. So let me get this straight: we had two and a half hours of Bischoff's out there commentary, Tank Abbott screwing over Sting for a no contest in a cage match, a no contest in a hardcore match, Curt Hennig singing, more Flair vs. Piper and one of the worst possible matches in the history of wrestling. I know I've said this before, but it can't possibly get any worse than this.

Now to be fair there's some decent stuff in here, such as the Tag Team

Title match and most of the Horsemen segment, but the bad just cripples anything the good can do for the show. The big story needs to actually go somewhere and that doesn't seem to be happening anytime soon. It's far more old vs. old with talk of the old vs. new not going anywhere. There's still time, but we need to get there and actually fire up the company a bit.