

Wrestler of the Day – November 25: Acolytes

Time for a good old fashioned brawling tag team: the APA.

The team, originally called Hell's Henchmen, became the Acolytes in late 1998. Here's one of their first beatdowns on Raw, May 3, 1999.

Mankind vs. Acolytes

Hardcore match. Mankind has his 2x4 and goes after Farrooq with it but Bradshaw pops him with a conveniently placed snow shovel and we head outside. The numbers are catching up with Mankind and we go back inside quickly. More beating follows but a Foley chant lets him hit a double clothesline. That of course doesn't last long and we head back outside. This is moving fast again.

Foley goes into various objects and Farrooq pounds on him. A low blow gets him a break and he fires off some bell and trashcan shots on both guys. Back inside and Foley gets two and a chair shot, in that order. After some heel miscommunication the Claw goes on Farrooq but Bradshaw breaks it up and a double powerbomb onto some chairs ends this.

Rating: D+. Not much here but there wasn't really a way to have Foley win this and make it look reasonable. That's one of the benefits of the Attitude Era: people didn't overcome ridiculous odds most of the time and it kept things a bit more reasonable than it gets today. Now that being said, the rest of the era was insane but that was always a perk.

The Acolytes would win the Tag Team Titles in May, lost them in June and get a rematch at Fully Loaded 1999.

Tag Titles: Acolytes vs. Hardys/Michael Hayes

Yep it's a handicap match. At this point I had zero clue which was Matt and which was Jeff. We start in the aisle where they just leave the belts. Who would have thought two of these four would win world titles? I don't think this has started yet.

According to Ross it has. Ah there's the bell so Ross was wrong.

We have Farroq and Jeff in there to start while Bradshaw beats up both guys on the floor. Matt takes out everyone with a top rope moonsault. They really were great fliers back in the day. Hayes is pretty freaking worthless here but what did you really expect? The APA takes over with just power. Matt picks to tag Hayes. Why in the world would you do that? We get a Freebird reference so I'm good for the night. There's Jeff. Crowd is DEAD for this.

I think Lita helped them a good bit to say the least. The Hardys simply aren't that good at this point. Bradshaw gets a nice belly to back suplex off the top. Not bad. Jeff clocks him with Hayes' cane over the head. Poetry in Motion is still very much a work in progress here. Hayes comes in and a double powerbomb gives the APA their titles back. Edge, Christian and a ladder would be coming soon.

Rating: D+. I didn't like it at all. Hayes was just in the way here as he's old and most of the people here don't know what he used to be nor do they care more than likely. The Hardys would dump him maybe the next night. Either way, the APA would lose the belts to Kane and X-Pac two weeks later so this was just to get Hayes out of the Hardy picture.

There was new tag team in the company around fall of 1999 and the APA had to reestablish their dominance. From Unforgiven 1999.

Dudley Boys vs. Acolytes

The Dudleys are BRAND NEW here and are the hottest team in the world at the moment. The referee is Jimmy Korderas who wasn't striking. Bubba has a stutter here. They were just so far ahead of every other team in the world at this time and it's insane to see what they are today. What are you expecting here really? Bubba telegraphs a splash worse than anything I have ever seen as he jumps at Farroq's knees. That was horrible looking.

The Dudleys are in tie-dye here and it looks great. Lawler keeps making fun of Moolah and Mae Young which is very amusing yet totally evil and wrong. Again I have to ask, what does it mean to do something with authority? That makes no sense at all. This is your standard big old brawl and that's all you could really ask for it to be.

Bradshaw gets an ok belly to back suplex off the top for two. And here's Stevie Richards dressed like an Acolyte. He kicks D-Von and Bradshaw pins him. Ok then. To say a lot, Bradshaw is the only non ECW guy in there. Yeah it meant a lot.

Rating: D. Way too quick of a brawl here and it meant nothing. This show has been horrible and we're just an hour into it so far. I was bored out of my mind here and I liked the Dudleys a lot back then. The ending was beyond stupid and it did the match no favors at all. Let's just get this over with.

We'll close out the year at Armageddon 1999.

Tag Team Battle Royal

Dudleys, Godfather/Mark Henry, Headbangers, Edge/Christian, Hardy Boyz, Acolytes, Mean Street Posse, Too Cool.

The Dudleys are out first and yell at Edge and Christian. They all get in a fight before the rest are here. The last man standing wins a tag title shot at the Rumble for his team. The Hardys get a big pop. Terri is with them and is not great looking and undesirable as ever. I love the Posse. I always did. Too Cool gets a solid pop too.

Wow the entrances took awhile for this. It's individual elimination mind you. Rodney is out. These are hard to call so I'll more or less be waiting until the end of things. The third member of the Posse keeps going in to cheat. Ok apparently if one guy is eliminated the partner is too. Headbangers are out.

Henry and Godfather are out. Like I said there's no way to talk about what's going on here since everything is just a mess. Edge and Christian get both of Too Cool out. It's Edge and Christian, Dudleys, Acolytes and Hardys. In other words, the four best teams are left. D-Von and Christian go through the ropes and fight on the floor. D-Von pulls Edge out so it's down to three. There was an affinity for the DDT in this era.

Jeff gets a What's Up before it was named. Jeff's crotch is the Promised Land apparently. Jeff takes 3D on top of that but Matt puts the Dudleys out so it's Hardys vs. Acolytes. Jeff is up after all that inside of a minute. Sure why not. Bradshaw and Matt go out at the same time so they just let us have the other two go at it instead. Bradshaw goes back in anyway so guess how this goes. Not as you would expect actually as Jeff puts Farroq out but it's not seem. Ok never mind as Matt is allowed back in. This needs to end like now. And so it does as Farroq LAUNCHES Jeff out to win.

Rating: D+. Fast paced but boring as are most battle royals. The constant cheating etc at the end just got annoying too. This wasn't very good but the crowd popped for most of the entrances so there we are. Not terrible but nothing great at all as this could have easily been done on Smackdown or Raw.

Time for another hardcore match on Raw, February 7, 2000.

Hollies vs. Acolytes

Hardcore match. The Hollies charge the ring and are immediately knocked to the floor. All four head into the crowd and to the concourse. We hit the concession stand and it's time to drink beer. Bradshaw loads up a powerbomb on a table but here's Viscera with a 2x4. After he slips on beer and gets up, he breaks the weakest 2x4 ever over Bradshaw's back to give Hardcore the pin. This was short but fun.

Another title shot at Fully Loaded 2000.

Tag Titles: Edge and Christian vs. APA

I miss Edge and Christian's old entrance where the camera flies all over the place and looks for them and they're in the entry way like normal wrestlers. Edge insults Dallas sports teams which makes me hate them quite a bit. They insult the Kennedy assassination before setting up for flash photography but the APA and their awesome music cuts them off. Bradshaw threatens to put his boot in their ears. Ok then.

He actually uses the term cheap heat. That came out of nowhere. He defends Texas by saying how many titles they've won. That just makes him sound like a geek. I didn't know FTS was more commonly known as Bradshaw. Farroq gets a great step shot in on Christian right off the bat.

This starts off as little more than a squash as Bradshaw just freaking murders Christian. Edge and Christian finally get some offense in as they get the advantage on Bradshaw. I like how they use such generic offense to stay in a match for as long as they can until they can hit a much bigger move. That's a nice little way to do something. It lasts for all of a minute though as the APA dominates again.

We hear for about the 12th time that Bradshaw is from Texas. Seriously, WHAT IS SO GREAT ABOUT TEXAS??? With the Acolytes hitting their finishers, Edge goes to the floor and grabs a belt. He gets the referee's attention and nails Farroq with it for the DQ. I kind of like that as it plays them holding the belts even longer. The same time though, it makes them look ridiculously weak and since they were known to keep stealing wins like that, it's rather stupid also.

Either way it was ok I guess. Post match the champions are beaten down even more which for some reason means we should talk about the Rock? That makes no sense but at least they saved it for after the match ended, unlike WCW who likely wouldn't have acknowledged the match going on at all.

Rating: C. It was really short and pointless but it was never dull.

That's the best thing here: they kept moving the entire time. That's always a plus as it kept things interesting and made you want to keep watching. I really don't like the whole cheating to keep the belts thing as it makes them look quite weak, but that's fine I guess as it fits them to the letter. However at just over five minutes they didn't have enough time to get anything going so it's about as average as you can get overall.

Next up was the feud with the Right to Censor, including this eight man tag at Unforgiven 2000.

Dudley Boys/APA vs. Right to Censor

"We're censors!" "We don't like censors!" "Let's have a pre-planned mostly athletic encounter to settle our scripted differences!" There's your backstory. The APA and the Dudleys dances with Too Cool on Smackdown which wasn't as funny as it sounds. Steven says his team will win in his hometown. D-Von vs. Goodfather to start which might be an Affirmative Action thing.

The fans, to no one's surprise, want tables. Let's see...four former ECW guys in this. No wonder the fans are into it. Bubba comes in quickly and the Ho Train misses. Belly to back gets two for Bubba. Buchanan is so mad he took his tie off. Bradshaw comes in to a nice pop and beats up Buchanan for awhile. Buchanan hits his pretty awesome walk up the ropes and hit a turning clothesline for two.

Venis comes in with his white pants and jokes run rampant. Fallaway slam puts Venis down and it's off to Farroq (how DO you spell that anyway?). This has been one sided so far which almost guarantees an RTC victory. Venis hits what is called the Blue Thunder Bomb on No Mercy and it's off to Goodfather. D-Von is the one getting beaten down at the moment.

Val misses an elbow and there's the hot (it's Philly so it's automatically hot) tag to Bubba. He cleans house 4-1 and again, why do face teams allow their partners to fight such

huge odds? Doomsday Device puts Val down and it all breaks down. Steven slips in a kick to Bubba and that's enough for Val to pin him. Steven was never legally in.

Rating: C-. Just an 8 man here and the fans are into the show already so it's not like it took much. The ending was pretty clear after the RTC got beaten down so much. To be fair though every company has tendencies in their booking like that which if you watch enough you can almost always pick up. ECW was really bad about that. Anyway, this wasn't great but it did its job well enough I suppose.

The team was good enough to be brought in for some rare main event shots, including this one on Raw, January 15, 2001.

Kurt Angle/Edge/Christian vs. Steve Austin/???/???

That's quite the heel team as they're all champions at this point. Out of nowhere the APA run in and they're the partners apparently. Austin and Angle start but Angle tags Christian in almost immediately. Off to Edge and Bradshaw now which goes badly for the Canadian. Double spinebuster to Edge as Farroq comes in. It's weird to see Austin beat up Edge. They're tagging that fast mind you.

Angle vs. Austin now and Austin shockingly BACKFLIPS out of a suplex. Edge and Christian grab some chairs but can't hit a Conchairto on Austin. The APA chases them off and we're down to the two stars. Superplex gets two for Austin. HHH comes out to the ramp and Austin stares him down. Low blow by Angle and Kurt takes over. Austin manages to counter an Angle suplex and takes over again.

There's a belly to belly for Austin's trouble though as Angle pops those hips like only he can. Angle Slam is blocked as they're flying through this. Thesz Press and Austin hammers away. Angle goes up but jumps into a Stunner to end it. More or less a one on one match but that's fine by me.

Rating: C+. WAY fast here and it worked pretty well I thought. This works

fine as HHH not getting involved here and having Austin do his dirty work for him was perfectly fine as it kills two birds with one stone for him. The tag team aspect meant nothing for the most part but the match was still incredibly energetic and fun.

Another day, another chance to beat up the Hollies on Raw, April 30, 2001.

APA vs. Hollies

It's a big brawl to the shock of no one paying attention. Bradshaw vs. Hardcore to start with the future WWE Champion in control. Hardcore manages to send him to the floor and that gets him nowhere. Farroq gets the stairs and they go upside Hardcore's head as Crash accidentally has the referee. They throw him into the crowd and Bradshaw keeps up the dominance. Crash tries to help his cousin and that gets him nowhere. Crash is supposed to be a bit drunk here. Hardcore keeps fighting and escapes the Dominator but Crash accidentally takes him out with a missile dropkick and the Clothesline ends Hardcore.

Rating: D. Just a comedy match for the most part and not a particularly funny one. This is something you never see anymore: a random match on a story made earlier on in the night. Anymore you would expect a swerve or a run-in here because that's what you've been taught to expect. Not much of a match but Crash was always good for a chuckle.

They did a double shot on Raw, July 9, 2001.

Tag Titles: APA vs. Dudley Boys

Apparently Spike is going to be out for awhile with a broken leg. The APA clears the ring to start and we get down to Bubba vs. Farroq. Off to Bradshaw as the Dudleys take over. The reverse 3D gets two. D-Von pounds on him and it's off to Bubba. He goes to the corner for the ten punches but gets powerbombed out and both guys are down. Off to Farroq and D-Von with Simmons getting a spinebuster for two. 3D doesn't work but What's Up does to Farroq. Bubba goes for a table but Spike comes out, hits Bubba

with the crutch and throws him in where Bradshaw's Clothesline gives the APA their third tag title.

Rating: D+. Pretty boring match but I guess the idea here is that if the APA is leading the WWF's army so give them something to make them seem important. That's not a terrible idea actually and it's better than another boring Hardys vs. Dudleys feud for the 7000th time. Not a terrible match and it did its job I guess.

And now for the important match from the same show.

Team WWF/WCW vs. Team ECW

It's the 10 ECW guys listed earlier for their side. WWF is Big Show/Billy Gunn/Hardcore Holly/APA and WCW is Jindrak/Stasiak/O'Haire/Palumbo/Kanyon. WWF and WCW get in a fight before the ECW guys even get here. WCW is sent to the floor and here comes ECW. The ECW guys fight the WWF team and WCW stays on the floor. ECW clears the ring and calls out the WCW guys. And they all hug, officially forming the Alliance. No match obviously.

Vince comes out and wants to know what's going on. Shane says watch the WWF guys get destroyed. Each one is thrown in and takes various finishing moves (including an F5 to Bradshaw from O'Haire). Shane says he can't outspend Vince but he can outsmart him. Vince told Shane he was personally responsible for what happens out here and that's true.

He's responsible for ECW being here tonight and for the merger of WCW and ECW. Vince's jaw is further into the Earth's crust with every word. At Invasion, it's the two companies against WWF. Oh, and here's the new owner of ECW: Daddy's Little Girl, Stephanie McMahon. The place ERUPTS at that. Vince's eyes roll back in his head and here's Stephanie, looking drop dead gorgeous in a pink dress. I think that's why I loved this show when I was 13. Shane and Stephanie pose to end the show. Now THAT is how you end a TV show.

We'll jump ahead a bit to the team in its dying days at Wrestlemania XVIII.

Tag Team Titles: Dudley Boyz vs. Hardy Boyz vs. Billy and Chuck vs. APA

Saliva plays the Dudleyz to the ring which gives us the VERY nice image of Stacy in the Dudley attire dancing to the song. I've always thought she never looked better than she did in those outfits. Billy and Chuck are defending and this is elimination rules. Bradshaw jumps Chuck to start but Billy saves him from the fallaway slam. Instead it's Billy taking it as it's all Bradshaw so far.

A big belly to back suplex puts Chuck down again and it's off to Faarooq. The crowd is eerily silent for this. Chuck clips Faarooq in the jaw with a right hand and it's off to Billy for some choking. Billy loads up the Fameasser but gets caught in a wicked powerslam. Back to Bradshaw as things break down a bit. Billy tags in D-Von but the APA breaks up a 3D attempt. Faarooq hits a spinebuster on Chuck on the floor and there's the big Clothesline to Billy, but Bradshaw walks into the 3D for the elimination.

The Hardys and Dudleys start fighting for old times' sake before Matt and Jeff start beating on Chuck. The Dudleys load up a table but the Hardys dive on them to slow it up. Back in and there's the Whisper in the Wind to Bubba. Stacy gets up on the apron and pulls up her shorts to distract Jeff, only to get spanked and kissed. A Bubba Bomb slows down Billy before Bubba chokes on Jeff with his shirt.

Things finally calm down a bit until we get to Jeff vs. Bubba again. With D-Von's help, Bubba manages a backdrop to put Jeff down again and puts on a chinlock. D-Von comes in and runs over Jeff before pounding away in the corner. A belly to back suplex gets two and it's back to Bubba. Having a regular tag match between these two is probably the best idea given how lame Billy and Chuck were in the ring. Bubba stands on Jeff's crotch in the Tree of Woe before tagging in D-Von for some choking.

A clothesline by Jeff allows for the hot tag to Matt, only to see him immediately run over by Bubba. The backplash misses of course though and Matt tries to speed it up a bit, only to get caught in What's Up. Before D-Von can dive though, the champions remember they're in this too and shove D-Von through the table on the floor. Matt pops up and it's the

Twist into the Swanton for the pin on Bubba, leaving us with Billy and Chuck against the Hardys.

A Side Effect puts Billy down and there's Poetry in Motion for good measure. Chuck gets the same along with a Twist of Fate. Jeff adds in the Swanton but Billy sneaks in with a Fameasser on Jeff but Chuck can only get two off of it. Instead it's a belt shot to Jeff's head for the pin by Chuck to FINALLY end this.

Rating: D. This was only thirteen minutes long but MAN ALIVE was this a chore to sit through. There was no need for this to be on the card and everyone from the commentators to the fans had no interest in it. The only good thing about this was how insanely hot Stacy looked. This could have easily been cut and made this already bloated show a bit easier to sit through.

The APA even had a match named after them. From Vengeance 2003.

Bar Room Brawl

Shannon Moore, Doink the Clown, Faarooq, Bradshaw, Brother Love, Nunzio, Matt Hardy, Chris Kanyon, Danny Basham, Doug Basham, The Easter Bunny, Sean O'Haire, John Hennigan, Orlando Jordan, Funaki, Los Conquistadores, The Brooklyn Brawler, Johnny Stamboli, Chuck Palumbo, Matt Cappotelli, and Spanky.

There's a bar set up in the arena and we're just going to fight in there. Los Conquistadores are Rob Conway and Johnny Jeter in case you're wondering. Aaron Stevens is the Easter Bunny. He was on Smackdown for a cup of coffee as Idol Stevens in like 05 or 06. McCool managed him. John Hennigan is more commonly known as John Morrison, and this Doink is played by Nick "Eugene" Dinsmore.

In essence, this is a big OVW party as a ton of these guys were in OVW at the time. Most of the jobbers don't get intros. Spanky is up on the bar dancing. Bradshaw says the rules are that the last man drinking wins as we're testing the toughness and their livers. Ok that's creative. Brother Love wants to

pray before we start. Naturally it's just a massive fight with no rhyme or reason to it. The Easter Bunny is drinking bears and getting punched. This is wrong.

O'Haire beats the APA up with pool cues. This is idiotic. Brother Love beats up Shannon Moore. I'd think that sums up why no one buys him. The Easter Bunny goes through a window. A bunny watching this would be traumatized for life. Hardy can't break a table which is kind of funny. There's nothing of any kind of logic going on here at all. Funaki passes out from beer. Bradshaw beats up Brother Love and I guess that gives him the win. He's the last man standing even though Farrooq is standing next to him.

Rating: N/A. This was a waste of about 5 minutes. Moving on.

They had to try to beat up another tag team at No Mercy 2003.

Basham Brothers vs. APA

This is about the APA hurting the Basham's manager Shaniqua. The Bashams are named Doug and Danny, which are the names of my uncles so I've always liked this team. Bradshaw is blonde here which doesn't work for him at all. He and Doug start things off but it's off to Farrooq quickly. Off to Danny who has no luck, just like his brother. Were they brothers? I know they really aren't but were they on screen? I'm not sure.

Doug gets in a shot to take over but his splash hits Farrooq's knees and a brawl breaks out. Cole and Tazz get into a stupid argument as the Dominator is escaped. The Bashams hit a double belly to back suplex for two and Farrooq is in trouble. Bradshaw runs in to try to help his partner, because doing it a minute ago worked oh so well.

Off to a chinlock to eat up a few minutes until Farrooq hits a spinebuster and makes the hot tag. Bradshaw cleans house and hits the powerbomb for two on Danny. Everything breaks down and it's Last Calls (fall away slam) all around. There goes the referee and Bradshaw hits the Clothesline. Shaniqua comes in and hits Bradshaw with a club of some sort for the pin.

Rating: D. The match wasn't terrible I guess, but what in the world was the reason to give this nine minutes on PPV? Also why did we have to see Shaniqua in a dominatrix outfit? The match should have been on Smackdown or cut in half, but that's the danger of single branded PPVs. The Bashams were the flavor of the month on Smackdown while the APA would split in March.

We'll wrap it up with the team having one last shot at glory at Wrestlemania XX.

Smackdown Tag Team Titles: Too Cool vs. Basham Brothers vs. World's Greatest Tag Team vs. APA

That would be Scotty and Rikishi who are defending coming in. One fall to a finish again. Bradshaw and Shelton start things off with the Texan taking him down with a shoulder and getting two off an elbow drop. Doug Basham comes in to beat up Shelton now and it's off to Danny. Shelton tags in Haas for a slam onto Haas' knee in a cool spot. Scotty comes in to fight Charlie as this is going nowhere.

In another creative spot, Scotty skins the cat but lands in the Shelton jumps over Charlie's back to land on Scotty for two. Charlie tags off to Doug for a kick to Scotty's face. The hot tag brings in Rikishi to clean house and knocks Shelton to the floor to break up the German suplex. Charlie gets a Stinkface and Bradshaw launches Doug to the floor with a fallaway slam. There's the Clothesline to Danny but Bradshaw walks into a Samoan Drop. Rikishi sits on Danny to end it and retain.

Rating: D. Whatever man. Seriously, I wouldn't have remembered this match if you put a gun to my head, just like with the other tag title match. They're just not interesting at all and there was nothing here to remember at all. There needed to be just one set of tag belts at this point and these matches make it painfully obvious.

The APA isn't a hard concept to figure out. They drink, they fight, they drink some more, then they destroy a bar in Rhode Island. This is an idea that has been around for decades and it's always going to work, especially if you have two monsters like Faarooq and Bradshaw to hand out the beatings.

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