

Thunder – October 7, 1999: Benoit's Limit

Thunder

Date: October 7, 1999

Location: UTC Arena, Chattanooga, Tennessee

Attendance: 2,411

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Larry Zbyszko

Back to this disaster again as it's we're still getting close to Halloween Havoc and the question this week is what can Goldberg do to Sid's car now. Actually the question would be why is this the best they can come up with. Russo and Ferrara aren't in charge at this point, so this might actually be the last taped event (save for Saturday Night with its insane schedule but who cares about that show at this point?) before they took over. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Dean Malenko vs. Blitzkrieg

Blitzkrieg has new attire. This could be interesting, especially if Malenko stretches him for doing too many ridiculous flips. Malenko easily takes him down to start and they trade some hammerlocks. Dean slaps on a front chancery followed by a quickly broken surfboard. Total wrestling clinic from Malenko so far. Back up again and Blitzkrieg tries to jump over Dean and gets dropped face first onto the mat for his efforts.

Dean stomps away in the corner but Blitzkrieg gets up and does an unnecessary backflip out of the corner, followed by a more necessary running dropkick in the same corner. A moonsault sets up a chinlock on Dean but he pops back up and drives a knee into the masked ribs. Well the ribs of the masked man. No one would put a mask on the ribs, though I have seen a claw onto the ribs.

Dean scores with a suplex for some two counts before cranking on the knee like you would expect from a submission specialist. Can you really call

him that when he only uses one hold 95% of the time? He stomps away at the leg before hitting a nice gutbuster for two. Blitzkrieg doesn't sell the leg so Malenko suplexes him over the top and out to the floor as the announcers talk about the Outsiders on Nitro.

Blitzkrieg sends him into the barricade and hits a big twisting dive over the top for a nice looking crash. Back in and the masked man slips, which is about as good as we're going to get for selling. Malenko plants him with a top rope belly to back superplex, followed by a quick pinfall reversal sequence. A wicked tiger bomb sets up the Cloverleaf to give Malenko the win.

Rating: C. There's something so fun about a technician like Malenko throwing around a high flier like Blitzkrieg, especially when it seems like Dean is annoyed at a lot of the no selling of the leg. I mean, the guy can't even limp a bit before he does the dives? Not a bad match here, but it's nice to see Dean win whenever he's not losing to people who don't deserve the push they're getting.

We run down the card for Halloween Havoc. That show is going to hurt.

Quick look at Disco Inferno winning the Cruiserweight Title again on Monday.

Cruiserweight Title: Disco Inferno vs. Evan Karagias

Disco's entrance is edited out because he wasn't Cruiserweight Champion when this was taped. The champ cranks on the arm to start but Evan trips him up and works on the arm as well. A pair of dropkicks send Disco to the floor before he comes back in for another armbar. We could have had Psychosis doing some nice dives or Malenko using 37 varieties of an armbar, but instead we get Disco who uses a total of one kind.

Disco's backdrop is countered with a simple shove to the mat because this match can't get past second gear. Evan rains down right hands in the corner but gets sent out to the floor. More whips into various steel objects get two for the champ. Now we get to the interesting stretch of the match as Disco suplexes Evan, then suplexes him again, then can't hit the third attempt.

A double clothesline puts both guys down before Evan gets up with some right hands and a slam. Evan goes to the apron for a springboard cross body for two more, followed by a powerslam for the same. His attempt at a headscissors is countered though and Disco hits the Last Dance to retain.

Rating: D+. The match isn't bad from a technical standpoint but my goodness Disco isn't going to work in this spot. Yeah he can have some acceptable matches, but after watching Malenko earlier tonight, it's really hard to sit through Inferno defending the title against someone like Evan Karagias.

Just to show how dense WCW is, they show Disco's entrance after the match, showing that he doesn't have the belt and completely defeating the purpose of not showing it in the first place.

Bret Hart is proud of his match with Benoit on Monday.

Clip of Brad Armstrong telling Berlyn to speak English in America. This is making me long for the days of Jim Duggan vs. Boris Zhukov.

Brad Armstrong vs. Chris Adams

England is evil now? This would have been a very fun back in say...1987. The fans chant USA as Adams takes him up against the ropes for a cheap shot. They do it again but Armstrong ducks a second cheap shot. Score one for the United States school system. An armdrag sends Adams to the floor before he comes back in to trade wristlocks. Is there a ban on working ANYTHING other than the arm, or did Blitzkrieg's no selling scare everyone off?

Adams throws him to the floor and stomps away outside. Back in and Adams hits a top rope clothesline, followed by a variety of suplexes. He misses a top rope knee drop but avoids a charge and hits the superkick for two. Brad avoids a charge of his own and hits the Russian (some American hero) legsweep for the pin.

Rating: D. They expect to put Berlyn vs. Brad Armstrong on pay per view and have people pay for it? That's really the best lower card match they can find? You know who won't be on the card at Halloween Havoc? Dean

Malenko. Dump Berlyn and let Armstrong have a match against Dean if nothing else. No it won't be the interesting build in the world, but at least the match will be entertaining. Armstrong is still decent in the ring but my goodness they're not giving him much to work with at the pay per view. Adams is way past his prime here at 44 years old but he still has a decent superkick.

TV Title: Chris Benoit vs. Brian Knobbs

Benoit is defending because Heaven help us if Knobbs ever got a singles title. Brian talks trash on the floor as Jimmy Hart has to tell him to get in the ring. This is like that angle where Bobby Heenan had to give Terry Taylor specific instructions on everything to make him win but without the angle part. He finally gets in and they shove each other a bit before Benoit just fires off right hands, likely at frustration for having to fight someone like Knobbs, and dropkicks him out to the floor.

After about 45 seconds of stalling and not even a single count from the referee, we actually continue the match. Back in and Benoit blocks a charge by raising his boots but runs into a powerslam. Some right hands send Brian back to the floor but he blocks a baseball slide and throws Benoit into the steps. They head into the crowd as referee Nick Patrick argues with Jimmy Hart.

This show seems to be in a ventriloquist convention as the fans sound like they're going nuts but they appear to just be sitting there. Amazing how Smackdown and Thunder crowds always go that way. They fight up towards the chairs (minus the fans in them) and we take a break. Back with nothing having changed and no reason to believe the referee has even started counting. If you want to have a hardcore match then have a hardcore match. Just say that's what it is so the fans don't get confused by the referee's lack of actions.

They go back to ringside with Benoit being sent into the steps twice in a row. Knobbs chokes a lot and throws a chair at Benoit but the champ wins a slugout and takes it back inside for a nice change of pace. The Swan Dive misses though and Brian covers for two before using his usual lame offense. Knobbs elbows out of a German suplex attempt but Benoit goes

into Wolverine mode and hits back to back Germans. Since WE MUST PROTECT BRIAN KNOBBS, Jimmy Hart breaks it up at two and we have a ref bump. Hart accidentally nails his man with the megaphone though, allowing Benoit to hit the Swan Dive to retain.

Rating: D+. Benoit is great, but there's a firm limit to what he's capable of doing and we found it with this match. Who in the world can carry Brian Knobbs to a ten minute match without the use of weapons for a crutch? This is another case where there had to be someone else capable of having a better match. Even Hugh Morrus would have been miles ahead of Knobbs here, but Morrus isn't friends with the right people. Who was going to stick around with this show to see Brian Knobbs get a title shot?

Lash Leroux vs. Silver King

King grabs him to start but gets taken down in an armbar. Some right hands and a clothesline have King in trouble but he sees Lash duck his head and takes him down with a tornado DDT for two. In a bad looking botch, Silver King moonsaults onto Lash's head for another near fall. Thankfully Lash doesn't seem to be badly messed up but that looked scary.

Lash comes back with a headscissors but his hurricanrana is countered into a good looking superbomb. We hit the chinlock but King throws in some gnawing at the head to keep it interesting. Lash fights to his feet and goes up top, only to dive into a right hand to the ribs. After an unnecessary trip to the floor, Lash escapes a powerbomb attempt and hits Whiplash for the fast pin.

Rating: C-. Not bad here but this was the lower end of the cruiserweight division. Leroux wasn't bad but he needed to do something besides just be a Cajun. There wasn't anything to this one other than Silver King's powerbomb and biting at Lash's head. Why didn't Silver King win here again?

Bret still really liked that match on Monday.

Death of Lex Luger video.

Maestro vs. Dale Torborg

Torborg is....the love child of Sting and Knuckleball Schwartz. Baseball jersey with MVP written on the chest, baseball pants with pinstripes, and red and black facepaint and gloves. There's no other way to describe him. Maestro armdrags him down a few times before cranking on the arm. That's not exactly how you want someone who looks like Torborg to have their first match in a new gimmick. Torborg kicks him in the back and drives in some elbows for good measure, only to get caught in a belly to back suplex.

Something like Steve Austin's flip off elbow gets two for Maestro but a Rock Bottom gives Torborg the quick pin. What an odd match and I'm assuming Maestro is a good guy after the way he was going out there. Just bizarre though as both guys were making their in ring debut (at least in these characters as Torborg had a match on Nitro earlier in the year) and Maestro went from a grand entrance to easily losing a match.

Road report. These aren't as good without Lee Marshall, and that's REALLY not saying much.

Rey Mysterio Jr./Kidman vs. Disorderly Conduct

Disorderly Conduct cheat to start (well that certainly is disorderly) and get dropkicked to the floor where the Animals hit stereo dives to take them down. We settle down to Kidman beating up Mike in the ring. Tom comes in and gets the same treatment, meaning Kidman is running out of tricks. He gets a bit more complicated though by headscissoring Mike and headlocking Tom at the same time.

Rey comes in with a Lionsault for two on Mike before it's off to Tom who can't powerbomb Mysterio. Does being Kidman's partner mean you get to share his powers? Tom finally hits a kind of reverse powerbomb on Mysterio to take over with a lot of stomping keeping him in trouble. An Earthquake style powerslam plants Rey and we take a break. Back with Tom tilt-a-whirl slamming Mysterio for two as the themed jobbers keep up the double teaming. A top rope ax handle to the head gets two for Tom.

Mike distracts the referee so Rey's small package only gets two so it's

back to the double teaming, including an ax handle to help Mike's neckbreaker. Off to the chinlockery portion of the match with Tom hooking two of them in a row. That's quite the feat. Back to Mike for a slam but he misses a top rope elbow. The hot tag brings in Kidman for a BK Bomb to Tom as everything breaks down. Kidman puts Tom up top and launches Rey into the super hurricanrana (that always looks cool) for the pin with Kidman baseball sliding Mike just in case.

Rating: C. Take two power heels and put them against two high flying good guys and you're almost always guaranteed to have a passable match. This is a formula as old as professional wrestling itself and it will still work to this day. Power vs. speed is one of the most basic matchups you can see and Kidman and Mysterio were as good of a combination as there was at this point.

From Monday, Bret Hart talks about how special that match with Benoit was. You can see how important this really is to him and it's always good to see Hart a happy man.

US Title: Stevie Ray vs. Sid Vicious

It's about time Sid defended that thing. Believe it or not, this actually has a story behind it as Sid and Steiner attacked Stevie a few weeks back so Stevie wants revenge. That's better continuity than WCW has shown in months. Ray jumps him on the apron and clotheslines Sid out to the floor.

A few whips send the champ into the barricade and Stevie slams him down on the floor. I don't know what's gotten into Sid recently but this is the second match in a row where he's actually sold something. Therefore, here's Rick Steiner to hammer Stevie from behind as referee Charles Robinson stops to tie his shoes. Back in and Sid only gets two off Steiner's attack so he beats on Stevie to relieve that tension.

Ray comes back with right hands but Steiner trips him up one more time and a legdrop to the back of the head gets two for Sid. We hit the worst chinlock ever (a record Sid breaks twice a week) as Sid LAYS DOWN while barely cranking on Stevie's neck. Stevie fights up but eats a forearm from Steiner. Somehow he's able to backdrop his way out of the powerbomb, but the referee stops to tie his shoe for the second time. The Steiner

Bulldog and a double powerbomb is enough to make Sid 128-0, after he was 120-0 on Nitro.

Rating: D+. Maybe it's the wrestling version of Stockholm Syndrome, but these Sid disasters are starting to turn into something resembling tolerable. No they're not good matches or anything really resembling such, but they're at least they get in and get out without making things too stupid. They have an idea now, even though it doesn't seem likely to go anywhere.

Overall Rating: D. This is a tricky show to grade as the wrestling wasn't the worst in the world, but the lack of star power REALLY hurt things. I can tolerate low name guys if the matches are really good, but that just wasn't the case here. You need someone to invest in and Brad Armstrong just doesn't fill that role for fighting a German who is more annoying than bad.

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