

Thunder – November 11, 1999: By Jove They're Getting Better!

Thunder

Date: November 11, 1999

Location: Allen County War Memorial, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Attendance: 3,283

Commentators: Scott Hudson, Larry Zbyszko

We're closing in on Mayhem and I'm losing my will to fight. Thankfully this is a live show meaning it's only going to be mostly horrible instead of the scum of the earth that it can be when it's taped. One of the few good things about Russo TV is the matches are short so the horrors don't go on as long. Let's get to it.

One more note: of those 3,283 in attendance, 1,771 were paid. The WWF ran a house show at the same venue about seven months earlier and drew over 7,700 paid. The building's capacity for a basketball game at the time: 10,240.

Opening sequence.

Lash Leroux vs. Evan Karagias

Disco comes out for commentary, which will be a running theme tonight. For Nitro: Evan vs. referee Johnny Boone, who is working this match. Why? Actually I was hoping you knew. Feeling out process with Evan taking Lash down for a headlock but Leroux uses the ropes for a break. Evan starts arguing with Boone, so here's Madusa because the opening match on Thunder needs this many storylines. They start some basic wrestling to fill in time before the next story and Lash is clotheslined to the floor.

Cue the story as Disco hits on Madusa. That thankfully goes nowhere and Evan hammers on Lash, only to have Leroux flip out of a belly to back suplex and grab a Russian legsweep for two. Another suplex puts Evan down

as Disco says he's going to seal the deal with Madusa. Evan fights back with some chops and wins a slugout before getting two off a Thesz press. Instead of following up though, he goes after Disco for hitting on Madusa, who slaps Disco as she sees Evan. As he heads back inside, Leroux nails Whiplash for the pin.

Rating: D. This ran 4:34 and managed to fit all that nonsense in there. How in the world do they think this is the best course of action for the opening match? I have no idea who I was supposed to cheer for out there or what I'm supposed to focus on, but I'm pretty sure it's not the wrestling.

Disco laughs at Evan and says he'll bet \$25,000 that he can beat Karagias at Mayhem. Madusa helps Evan up, whispers in his ear and kisses him. Evan accepts and Disco is given another Whiplash.

Gene asks Berlyn why he stopped dancing, earning him a hand over his mouth and a threat. Were we really not supposed to realize that was Wright until now?

Sid is looking for Rick Steiner.

Berlyn vs. Curly Bill

My goodness. Of all the things in WCW, THIS is the thing that gets a blowoff??? Curly is announced from South Pittsburgh, Texas. Berlyn hammers him in the corner as you would expect but Curly slips out of an attempt at a slam. Cue one of the Misfits to tell Berlyn to come out back for a fight, but the Bodyguard goes instead. Not that it matters as Vampiro comes in to jump Berlyn for the DQ. See, this is one of those things where a simple tweak would have been fine. Why not have Berlyn get a quick pin on Bill and THEN do the angle? Would that have really hurt anything?

Post match, Curly covers Berlyn and counts his own three, so the Bodyguard comes in and throws him out. Thanks for wasting that extra bit of time guys.

Gene talks to La Parka and Silver King. La Parka speaks English here, on

orders from the Powers That Be. His English is actually fine, making me wonder why in the world he's never used it before. The guy was over, he was fine in the ring and apparently he could talk so wh.....oh right it's WCW. Or that wasn't La Parka under the mask, which is always a possibility.

Chavo tries to sell Amway products to a Villano. OH COME ON. They're making a throwaway line into an angle?

Rick Steiner rants about Sid dumping him for the Outsiders so Sid nails him. Security breaks it up and I guess that's our next HUGE match.

La Parka/Silver King vs. Lizmark Jr./Villano V

Before the match, La Parka talks about learning promos but still getting stuck in these lame matches. His lips don't move so maybe I don't have to be so annoyed at WCW for not pushing him. Well not really as he was good enough to be pushed harder but at least the talking wasn't as big of a deal. It sounded like Ed Ferrara this time. Everyone jumps La Parka for what he said and he starts with Lizmark. A tilt-a-whirl backbreaker puts La Parka down and Lizmark taunts King into the ring for a beatdown on the skeleton guy. King gets back at him with a knee to the spine and it's off to King and Villano.

King slams Villano down and does a dance (he's no Big Wiggler) before tagging La Parka back in. Villano avoids a dropkick and Lizmark throws La Parka to the floor for a suicide dive. With his partner in trouble, King busts out the yet to be named 619 to taunt Lizmark before sidestepping a charging Villano. Now it's King diving on everyone before what appeared to be an edit sends La Parka back to the ring. As in he was on the floor and a split second later he was on the mat. Lizmark misses a top rope backplash and gets caught by La Parka's corkscrew dive for the pin.

Rating: C-. Totally standard lucha tag with nothing interesting and the clipping being more distracting than anything else. So much for the show being live too. One might think they're going somewhere with the La Parka stuff, but if he never gets near the title scene, none of it is going to mean much.

Post match La Parka chairs Lizmark and Villano.

Berlyn and the Bodyguard beat up Curly Bill in the back. This thing is continuing???

Hennig says he isn't losing and going anywhere.

Chavo sells a childless Kaz Hayashi a bunch of diapers. I think this speaks for itself.

Recap of Nitro.

Booker says he and the woman from Nitro go back a long way. More on this later I'm assuming, but we might have to see Chavo selling stuff again.

Sid stares at Rick Steiner on a monitor. Steiner doesn't seem to know that there's a camera on him.

Disco is on the phone and says he'll have their money. Maybe he can get some additional money if he gets rid of Hennig.

TV Title: Rick Steiner vs. Booker T.

Steiner is defending and hammers Booker down in the corner to start. Back up and Booker ducks a Steinerline and hits the flying forearm and a side kick. They have to get all their stuff in though as this match isn't likely to break five minutes. Steiner comes back with two straight belly to belly suplexes (check those off the list too) and clubbing forearms before we hit the chinlock. Booker quickly fights up with his series of kicks but Steiner shoves the referee in front of the missile dropkick. Cue Sid to shove Steiner off the top and plant him with a powerbomb to give Booker the pin!

Rating: D+. And never mind as this happens.

Other referee Johnny Boone comes out and we've got a Dusty Finish. Sid powerbombs both referees and brawls with Steiner. The match was nothing special and your standard angle disguised as a wrestling match.

Curt Hennig vs. Dean Malenko

Douglas is on commentary and Hennig is fired if he gets pinned. I believe this is the third week where we still have no explanation for why that's the stipulation. They do some of that wrestling nonsense to start with Dean grabbing an armbar before opting to hammer away in the corner. You can see his soul dying with every punch. Curt gets two each off a sunset flip, backslide and rollup as he tries to keep his job.

Malenko bails to the floor before heading back inside, only to get punched in the face to send him back outside. Back in again and Dean grabs a quick belly to back before putting on a chinlock. Curt comes back with his usual but Dean hits a very unusual (for him anyway) low blow but gets small packaged to counter the Cloverleaf. Back up and Malenko misses a charge in the corner, only to have Asya distract the referee so Shane can hit Hennig with the cast.

This brings out Disco Inferno as Malenko covers off a suplex. Disco shoves Malenko off and covers Hennig but Curt gets up and hits Inferno. Dean suplexes Hennig again for two but Benoit runs out for the Swan Dive on Malenko as Disco keeps everyone else at bay, giving Hennig the pin.

Rating: C-. It's kind of interesting that you have easily the best wrestling match of the night going on when they have a nonsensical run-in followed by a more sensible run-in to end the whole thing. As many people have said before: Russo did not know how a wrestling match was supposed to go so he watered it down into something he did understand and the wrestling fans suffered as a result. It's so sad to see Dean clearly just there because he has to be and doing things he doesn't want to do. You can see how miserable he is out there and I completely understand him leaving soon.

Rick Steiner and Sid fight.

Maestro is ready for his match with Brian Knobbs tonight and promises to go heavy metal if necessary. Well he's already below Van Hammer so it can't hurt.

Knobbs and Hart aren't happy with Norman Smiley. I am as he's one of the funniest things on the shows lately.

Maestro vs. Brian Knobbs

Hardcore. Smiley comes out for commentary with a violin case to distract Knobbs but it doesn't work so well (imagine, mind games not working on Knobbs) as Brian nails Maestro with a trashcan a few times. It's cookie sheet time but a chair shot doesn't work as well as Maestro scores with a dropkick. Maestro gets in some basic weapons shots but Jimmy Hart grabs his leg, allowing Brian to take over again.

Smiley yells at Hart to scare him off and the guys in the ring trade more basic weapons shots. There's not much to say here other than "Knobbs hits Maestro, Maestro hits Knobbs, Knobbs and Maestro are hitting each other." They head outside where Smiley goes after Jimmy to distract Knobbs, allowing Norman to hit Brian with a pipe. Maestro rolls Knobbs up for the pin.

Rating: D-. I just sat through five minutes of Maestro to set up a Norman Smiley vs. Brian Knobbs match. This is what I've come to in my life. It's also proof that there's more to this kind of stuff than just hitting people with weapons. People remember Road Dogg, Al Snow and Crash doing the same weak spots because they did them with some charisma and other creative spots to go with it. Also it helped when they did things outside the ring area but that could go horribly for WCW. Anyway, match was as bad as you would expect it to be.

We look at Malenko beating Mysterio on Nitro.

Tag Team Titles: Kidman/Konnan vs. Barbarian/Jerry Flynn

I'm assuming this is a title match with Kidman and Konnan defending in case you're really new at this. Torrie is in a backless green top and even Barbarian seems to notice her. After far too many catchphrases and unintelligible gibberish from the Animals, Flynn goes outside to hit on Torrie and gets slapped in the face. She's not into mullets I guess. Eddie goes after Flynn and gets both himself and Torrie ejected. There goes the interest in the match. As this is going on, Konnan and Kidman double team Barbarian with Kidman getting two off a middle rope Thesz press.

Barbarian shoves him out of the corner though and it's off to Flynn for a spinwheel kick. Yes Jerry Flynn is throwing kicks people. I'm stunned too. A belly to belly gets two on Kidman before it's off to Barbarian for a headbutt and a powerbomb, putting him on the same list as Lodi and Sid. Now there are three names you'll probably never see together again. Barbarian misses a top rope headbutt but catches Kidman on top with a huge belly to belly superplex. Cool move actually. Everything breaks down and Kidman hits a high cross body to pin Barbarian.

Rating: C. This was WAY better than I was expecting but that might be due to it being so simple. The Animals were never in any danger but you have two guys get in some decent looking offense on them and it's a nice little match. I still stand by my theory that Barbarian is very underrated. The guy kept getting steady work for over ten years and had some good looking power moves. He was a great role player and nothing more but he was good at what he did.

Luger says he meant to mace Goldberg on Monday and promises to make it up to Sting. The fact that these two are in a feud in 1999 tells you almost everything you need to know about where this company is heading.

Video on the Nitro Girls civil war. They really think we remember which of these are which?

The Revolution says they're not done. Saturn starts talking about the Beatles so Malenko asks him who writes his promos. In an actually funny reply, Saturn pulls out a notebook and says "I do! I've got a hundred of them!" That one caught me by surprise. Well done.

Total Package vs. Kaz Hayashi

During the entrances, Norman Smiley vs. Jimmy Hart is announced for Nitro. Yes, that's a match they want to advertise in advance. Luger comes out with a knee brace and street clothes on, saying he's wrestled over 3,000 matches in thirteen years and won't be able to compete on this knee. Kaz is annoyed that Luger mispronounces his name and calls him a chicken so the fight is on. A suplex, choking and a clothesline set up the Rack to end this in less than a minute and a half. Total squash.

Luger holds his knee post match. There's nothing wrong with a good old fake injury.

Sid Vicious vs. Perry Saturn

Sid shoves him down to start and nails a clothesline as Shane Douglas jumps in on commentary again. Saturn's cross body is countered into a backbreaker as we seem to already be in squash mode. Malenko offers a distraction but gets stared down, only to have Saturn dive on his stable mate by mistake. So Sid is so insane that he makes the other wrestlers make mistakes?

After being dropped on the barricade, Saturn grabs a quick t-bone suplex back inside, followed by a springboard leg for two. A springboard forearm staggers Sid again but he kicks Saturn in the face to take over. Saturn kicks him low to break up the chokeslam, only to jump into it a second later. Powerbomb is good for the pin.

Rating: D-. Oh sweet mother of goodness they're turning Sid face aren't they? I know it's been hinted at all night but he's wrestling this match as the good guy. Just....no people. I know he's insane and the crowd likes him but I can't just forget all the matches he messed up, ruining Benoit's push and EVERYTHING ELSE he's done in the last few months to accept him as a face now.

I rant and rave about a lot of things WCW does but this actually bugs me. Sid needs to do WAY more than fight Rick Steiner (after turning on Steiner like a heel would. So yes, Rick Steiner should be the face in this feud and good night does that sound wrong to say) to be forgiven for what he's done in the last few months but this is the new WCW I guess.

Sid teases powerbombs on Malenko and Asya but has to fight off an invading Rick Steiner to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. Somehow this was one of the better shows of the Russo run so far. It's another meaningless show with no connection to most of the main stories, but now we get a SID face push. I can tolerate these shows a lot more easily than Nitro as it's shorter and less insane, but it doesn't mean they're fun to watch.

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