

Monday Night Raw – February 24, 2003: One of the Best Heel Promos I've Ever Heard

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 24, 2003

Location: Air Canada Centre, Toronto, Canada

Attendance: 10,000

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

I really do need to stop waiting a year and a half between these sets of shows. It's the night after No Way Out 2003 and thank goodness that means Scott Steiner is out of the main event scene. Unfortunately it means we're further into the era of HHH's World Title run and the start of the Wrestlemania XIX build. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence. I miss Across the Nation.

Here's a banged up Eric Bischoff, fresh off getting beaten up by the returning Steve Austin, to open things up. Bischoff says he's here despite what Austin tried to do to him last night and Austin is banned from the building tonight. JR: "THE AUDACITY!" That's not really audacity JR. Tonight's main event is a 20 man battle royal with the winner going on to Wrestlemania for the World Title shot at Wrestlemania. So it's the TV version of the Royal Rumble? Next week, Austin gets to meet Bischoff's own personal welcoming committee.

As for tonight though, it's all about the biggest star in the history of this industry, and here's Hollywood Rock. Yeah he's a Smackdown guy at the moment, but I can't stop looking at his massive Brahma Bull belt buckle. I mean....dang man. Rock is so awesome in this role as he can turn on the evil jerk persona at the drop of a hat. After nearly four minutes of an entrance and glaring at the crowd, we hit FINALLY but he can't finish saying Toronto, because he's FINALLY back Toron-his mouth on all of us.

He cuts the fans off for chanting Rocky too early before talking about whipping Hogan last night, earning him a free pass to come here tonight from Vince. Rock finally says Toronto and goes into a hilarious imitation of fans being SO happy that he said the town they live in. It was here in Toronto that the people turned on their champion last year at Wrestlemania like a bunch of mother-Canuckers.

The fans chant for Hogan but Rock points out that he's not here tonight. Of course it doesn't matter what these people think, because they didn't vote for him as Superstar of the Decade at the Raw Tenth Anniversary (easily one of the stupidest shows I've ever seen). That award went to Steve Austin, because everyone loves Stone Cold. Everyone that is, except the Rock. There's only one true star of the decade and guess who that is. That's Wrestlemania people. He's as strong as a buck and the biggest thing to hit Toronto because the MAPLE LEAFS SUCK.

The fans aren't pleased with that one and tell Rock that he sold out so he says he's going to clean house in the battle royal tonight and go to Wrestlemania, if you smell....whoa whoa whoa time out. "You were the very first to boo the Rock so you lose that sing-a-long privilege!" Someone in WWE put this on a loop for today's heels, because this is one of the most perfect heel promos I've ever seen. Rock made this crowd do every single thing he wanted and made them hate one of the most popular guys on the roster at this point. Outstanding stuff here.

Jackie vs. Jazz

Victoria and Steven Richards are on commentary. Jazz goes right after her to start and holds Jackie up for a slam. I can't believe I'm saying this but I'm for Jazz in a match. They head outside with Jackie scoring with a chop to Jazz's chest tattoo. Now it's time for JACKIE TO SHOUT A LOT BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT SHE THINKS PERSONALITY IS. Thankfully Jazz takes her head off with a clothesline and gets two off a legdrop. Jazz drops her when trying a sitout powerbomb so Jackie comes back with forearms, only to get caught in a half crab into the STF for the submission. Now stay out of here Jackie.

Victoria looks nervous about giving Jazz a title shot. Jazz grabs the mic

and says she's back but Trish makes her return for the big showdown. She hammers on Jazz as Victoria comes in, only to eat a Chick Kick. Jazz and Trish get into it again and Jerry is thrilled because clothes could come off.

That right there is the mentality that has caused the 2015 Give Divas A Chance idea to be dead on arrival. That's the idea that we heard for so many years and it's what the Divas are thought of as a result. Yeah it's a lot tamer today, but it's still what they were known for all those years. Also of note here, JR says this is the same building where Jazz legitimately injured Trish's leg. That's not a word you hear that often in WWE.

Marketing director Stacy Keibler has Test involved with Girls Gone Wild. My goodness this is such a different time. Test gets to pick the finalists for Ms. Girls Gone Wild. We see a party in a club with Test dancing with the girls and telling them to go wild.

Test and Maven (what a pair) are watching the video in the back with Test saying it was a great appearance after all the stupid ideas Stacy had for her. Stacy comes in and doesn't like what she sees on the tape. Chief of Staff Morely comes in and makes Stacy/Test vs. Christian/Jericho for Test and Stacy laughing at Bischoff's beating last night.

We look back at Evolution electrocuting Goldust a few weeks back.

Goldust says he lived through the electrocution and is going to be back soon. Oh and he has Tourette's Syndrome now but doesn't notice. This isn't funny and destroys whatever sympathy they had building up. But hey, Kevin Dunn is laughing right?

Kane vs. Lance Storm

Kane has Rob Van Dam in his corner, despite having some issues with him last night. Storm's big dramatic entrance is still cool to see, especially for how basic he looks. Kane kicks him down to start but misses an elbow, allowing Storm to actually pound Kane in the back to take over. A missile dropkick gets two but Kane sits up and plants Storm with a good looking chokeslam for the pin.

Randy Orton's shoulder is now 99% and he's ready to go tonight!

Scott Steiner/Booker T. vs. Randy Orton/Batista

JR: "Scott Steiner, ready for some tag team wrestling." Sign of the times: he would probably be publicly reprimanded for that line today. Booker and Orton get things going, with the latter looking almost unrecognizable with hair and limited (by his standards at least) tattoos. Booker drops him to start and scores with a running forearm but gets caught in the spinebuster as Steiner chases Flair around the ring. Batista's running clothesline staggers Booker in the corner and Evolution takes over again.

Some right hands stagger Orton and the 110th Street Slam plants Randy but a Flair distraction breaks up the hot tag. This isn't exactly setting the world on fire. Off to Batista for a bearhug before it's back to Orton for a chinlock. A quick ax kick drops Orton and keeps the fans as dead as they've been in years.

Since it worked so well before, Flair's distraction breaks up a hot tag attempt. Scott comes in anyway with some clotheslines as the fans boo him out of the building. Naturally Steiner hits a belly to belly suplex to tick them off even worse because he's just kind of a jerk. Flair gets put in the Recliner but Batista makes the save. Everything breaks down and Booker rolls through an Orton cross body for the pin.

Rating: D. In the span of 24 hours, Steiner has gone from a pay per view World Title match to not even getting tagged into a first hour midcard tag match. Booker was the right choice out there as the fans hated Steiner even though he was beating up the top heel stable in the company. The dude was a disaster in WWE and it was only going to get worse for him.

We look at Rock being better than any other heel in years to open the show.

Chris Jericho/Christian vs. Stacy Keibler/Test

Stacy gets one of the pops of the night for a tied off Maple Leafs shirt

and some very nice shorts. Test charges at Jericho to start but Christian cuts him off. A tilt-a-whirl slam plants Christian but Jericho goes after Stacy for another distraction to keep being totally evil. Test loads up a gorilla press but Jericho brings in a chair to take him down for the DQ in a hurry.

Test gets handcuffed to the ropes as the Canadians (well the other Canadians) bring Stacy inside with Jericho putting her in the Walls. Cue Jeff Hardy for the save but Christian plants him with an Unprettier. Instead Shawn Michaels runs in for the real save.

Post break Jeff is still down (how nice of Shawn and Test to check on him) when Christopher Nowitski comes out to laugh at him. After finding a microphone that works, he calls Jeff a failure, only to get caught in a reverse Twist of Fate and a Swanton. The bell rings as Jeff goes up and the pin takes about nine seconds, or not enough time for me to bother calling it a match. Jeff hammers on him post match, meaning it's a reversed decision. They really did that for a nine second match? Dang it really is 2003.

Kane and RVD are getting ready for the battle royal with the masked man ranting about Rock. Rob thinks he'll win though.

Rock is on the phone in his dressing room and talks some trash about Austin. He busts out the guitar for some practice and sings about how much he hates Canada. This brings in Hurricane, who wants to know whatupwithdat about Rock trashing the people. Rock has no idea who Hurricane is but thinks he might be the Hamburgular. He's not impressed with Hurricane though because Rock can beat every superhero.

Hurricane knows one he could beat though: the Scorpion King. "Brendan Fraser beat him!" Rock: "THAT WAS A SPECIAL EFFECT!" Rock says he can fly, which Hurricane says is a good thing because tonight he's flying over the top rope. After the great promo, this would be the start of Rock making Hurricane a bigger deal than he ever was in his entire career.

Jerry Lawler vs. Chief Morely

No DQ. This is a result of last week where Lawler tried to save Jim Ross

from a beating. Morely hammers him into the corner to start but Jerry scores with a running clothesline and a backdrop. That's a bit too extreme for him though as Lawler hammers away with right hands, sending Morely out to the floor. Lawler whips him into the steps but gets reversed into the post for his efforts.

Back in and Morely hits Three Amigos (Eddie stole one of his signature spots from VAL VENIS?) for two and a spinebuster puts the King down again. The Money Shot connects but Morely doesn't cover. Instead he tries to bring in a chair, only to have the Dudleys come in for a 3D, setting up Lawler's fist drop for the pin.

Rating: D. This was just an angle but I'm getting tired of the announcers in the ring. Lawler wrestling doesn't work so well outside of Memphis as he's just a veteran who wrestles once in a while. Morely continues to be one of the more underrated guys in the ring as he looks perfectly smooth out there and never gets the recognition.

Ross and Lawler talk about Austin being here next week.

Flair gives Orton and Batista their marching orders for the battle royal.

Battle Royal

Booker T., The Rock, Randy Orton, Batista, Chris Jericho, Jamal, Rosey, Rob Van Dam, Test, Hurricane, Rodney Mack, Stevie Richards, Al Snow, Christian, Jeff Hardy, Kane, Lance Storm, Maven, Scott Steiner, Tommy Dreamer

Winner goes to Wrestlemania to face HHH. Sweet goodness the entrance music was better back in the day. Half the people go after Rock to start as Jericho dumps Test. That guy is just such a loser that the face pushes never worked. Jericho eliminates himself to run from Test though, like any good heel should. Van Dam kicks Jamal out as there's actually a referee in there for some reason.

JR ignores the Corporate Rumble and says there hasn't been a battle royal on Raw since 1995. The eliminations slow down until Dreamer is eliminated like the schnook that he is. Rock eliminates Maven with a clothesline and

Kane nails RVD to no reaction from the announcers. Next up is Steiner tossing Richards and things slow down again. Evolution gets rid of Rob for a pretty early elimination before Batista saves Hurricane for no adequately explained reason.

Snow is out and so is Rodney Mack as we get Rock vs. Hurricane. They trade right hands until Rock kicks him low and dumps him. Booker and Rock go through the ropes to fight on the floor as we ignore everyone else. We're down to Booker T., Rock, Orton, Batista, Rosey, Christian, Hardy, Kane, Storm and Steiner. Rock starts walking up the ramp and goes to do some commentary. Lawler: "He has to be better than Coach!" Orton dumps Hardy but Steiner tosses Randy, only to get eliminated by Batista.

Booker gets rid of Batista a second later and we're down to five in the ring and Rock on commentary. Rosey and Storm double team Kane but the masked guy avoids a charge and clotheslines Rosey out. Storm is out a few seconds later as Rock demands a cameraman watch him drink water. Rock goes back to the ring as Kane chokeslams Booker and kicks Christian in the face. Christian tries a sleeper on Kane but Rock dumps them both to get us down to Rock vs. Booker T. Rock does the Five Time pose but Booker pops up and throws him out in a big surprise.

Rating: C-. Just a battle royal here with Rock stealing the show and putting Booker over like a guy of his stature should be doing. It's nice to see someone getting a new main event push, especially when Rock is clearly getting ready for a big showdown with Austin. Most of the people here didn't mean much and that makes for a dull battle royal.

Overall Rating: C+. Can we give Rock a two hour block every Monday night to let him do whatever he wants and show everyone how to be entertaining? This was ALL Rock tonight as the rest of the show is paling in comparison. I can barely think of anything else on the show other than Booker winning, which tells me how dominant Rock really was tonight. The wrestling meant nothing here but Rock was pure gold. Find that opening promo though and take notes.

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