

Monday Night Raw – March 3, 2003: We'll Get There One Way Or Another

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 3, 2003

Location: Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, Uniondale, New York

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

It's the week after Rock showed why he's one of the best of all time and now it's time for a showdown with Steve Austin. While Steve might not be the star he once was, those two around Wrestlemania time never gets old. On top of that, we'll get an update on HHH vs. Booker T. at the biggest show of the year. Let's get to it.

We open with Bischoff in the back with Rico and 3 Minute Warning. They're instructed to keep Austin out of the building tonight. Why do the evil authority figures hire such lame help?

Here's Booker T. to get things going. Last week he won the battle royal to go to Wrestlemania but here are Flair HHH to interrupt before he can get a minute in. HHH thinks Booker is a bit confused. Yeah Booker is going to Wrestlemania, but someone "like you" doesn't get to be a World Champion. That's reserved for people like HHH because Booker is here to entertain instead of compete. HHH asks for a little dance because people like Booker, "with your nappy hair and your SUCKAS" are very good at entertaining. The idea of Booker challenging HHH for the title makes the champ laugh.

Yeah Booker was a five time WCW World Champion but that title is a joke. That was back during the time when David Arquette and Vince Russo were World Champion, meaning Booker championshipped that place right into the ground. Booker wants to go to Wrestlemania to face the best in the world and he'll do what people like him always do: lose. Booker finally gets to talk and says somebody like him is going to take that title at Wrestlemania. HHH: "Well good luck brother." HHH reminds Booker that he

has Scott Steiner tonight and would be surprised if Booker makes it to Wrestlemania.

Allow me to pause and say WOW. I remember watching this back in the day and feeling uncomfortable with it, but this is mind blowing stuff now. I mean....HHH just basically said a black man can't win the title. Yeah later on they would change it to HHH meaning an ex-convict, but there is NO spinning what he was going with here. It was flat out "Booker, you're black" without actually saying it and I can't believe they didn't bail on it by the end of the show.

Jeff Hardy vs. Christian

Fallout from Jeff's failed save attempt last week. Jeff jumps him to start and hammers away in the corner before jumping to the floor and pulling Christian face first onto the apron. A top rope dive puts Christian down again as Lawler talks about Hardy being frustrated lately. What appears to be a moonsault is broken up as Hardy gets crotched on top for two and the fans go mild. We hit the abdominal stretch as JR gets in a Wilbur Snyder reference. That goes as far as most abdominal stretches go so Jeff comes back with the Whisper in the Wind for two. The Twist misses though and the Unprettier is good for the pin.

Rating: C-. Not bad but these two know each other so well that they can have a passable match in their sleep. They were pushing Hardy's impending heel turn which was an interesting way to go with him, but the fans weren't quite ready to boo him yet. Christian was starting to rise up the card at this point, which is a good sign as the tag teams were long past done.

In case Austin gets past 3 Minute Warning, Lance Storm is ready for him next.

Chief Morely vs. Spike Dudley

This is the perk of having a minion like Spike around. If he wins here, the Dudleys are unsuspected. Spike jumps him to start and stomps away in the corner, but amazingly enough a guy the size of a Diva with some meat on her bones isn't enough to stop Morely. The Dudley Dog is countered

into a kind of powerbomb for two before stomping away with some force in the corner. See Spike, that's how it's done. A suplex and the Money Shot end Spike in a hurry.

Eric wants Christian and Jericho to help guard him against Austin. Why don't evil bosses ever SEND ALL THE LACKEYS AT ONCE? If there was even an evil guy with a brain, the villains would win every time.

Trish Stratus/Jacqueline vs. Jazz/Victoria

The heels argue over who starts and Trish bulldogs both of them down at once. Jackie and Jazz get things going but Victoria offers a trip, allowing Jazz to take over with a dropkick. A sitout powerslam gets two for Jazz but Victoria kicks Jazz by mistake. Again, GET SMARTER VILLAINS. Victoria comes in for two off a snap suplex but Jackie slips out of a slam and tags in Trish. Everything breaks down and Victoria breaks up the Stratusphere, only to get rolled up for the pin a few seconds later.

Rating: D+. Not much to see here but they set up the Wrestlemania title match well enough. Trish was really starting to figure out how to be the superhero of the division but it's really distracting with King freaking out that her top is so low cut. Victoria was awesome at this point too and I really want them to just get to the showdown between Victoria and Trish and cut out Jazz and Jackie.

Morely is going to help Storm against Austin.

Coach knocks on Rock's door (why did it take this long to get to Rock? Why is anyone else on this show?) for an interview. First words from Rock: "Coach, are you on crack?" Rock thinks they might be able to do this Wednesday and sends Coach off with instructions to wash up. The camera follows Rock into his dressing room and sees him get annoyed as the fans boo. He looks for his guitar to soothe his soul but finds Hurricane instead.

After being confused for a second after FINDING HURRICANE SITTING IN HIS LOCKER, Rock asks the obvious question: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN THERE??? Hurricane might have seen him walking around without any clothes on. Rock brings up eliminating Hurricane last week and asks about Ronald

McDonald and pals. Apparently Rock was screaming something in Hurricane's ear last week, but Hurricane only heard Rock screaming when Booker threw him out.

That's just a mistake though because Rock tripped. Fans: "BOO!" Rock: "THE ROCK SAID THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED!!!" Rock goes into a rant about how Hurricane is nothing but his phone goes off in his pocket. Rock: "Excuse the Rock one second. Oh hey buddy." After hanging up: "It's nothing! He says he knows you!" Rock gets even better when he sees that Hurricane has braces. Is he going to go sell band candy after the show? Last week, Rock was saying his lines from Scorpion King, which was in I think Arabic.

Rock asks if Hurricane knows what the line means. Hurricane: "If it's what I saw from behind that curtain, it means that the Scorpion King has a tiny ding-a-ling." Rock: "WHAT????? AND STOP LAUGHING!!!" We finally get to the point of this: Hurricane thinks Rock is scared of Austin and has had Bischoff sending the goons after him. Hurricane leaves and Rock tells his crotch that it's the king.

Sweet merciful goodness the Rock is on fire right now, but there's one thing more important than all others here: he's having these segments with Hurricane. Not HHH, not Austin, not Undertaker and not Hogan. He's doing this with someone who has never gotten a break and is just kind of there.

Rock isn't losing a thing with these segments and is going to have the real main event at Wrestlemania XIX. In other words, he's giving someone a rub because it's not going to hurt him and we get an entertaining segment as a result. Why can't more big names do that? Ah yes, because they're too busy telling their World Title opponents to dance.

Here's Chris Jericho for a match with Test, but of course he has something to say. Jericho wants to apologize to Stacy for hitting her in the face with a steel chair a few weeks ago, but he'd rather apologize for her hooking up with a lying cheater like Test. Jericho shows us a clip of Test signing a girl's chest, which leads to Stacy freaking out. Of course this leads to a plug for the Girls Gone Wild pay per view, but Test charges the ring as Jericho thinks it's going to be a countout.

Test vs. Chris Jericho

Test goes right for him as Christian follows Stacy out to the ring. That earns Christian a clothesline from Test and a toss over the barricade for some Canadian violence. Back in and a tilt-a-whirl slam plants Chris as this is all Test so far. Since he's Test though, Jericho quickly counters into a Walls attempt but Test kicks him off. A quick powerbomb drops Jericho but he distracts the referee so Christian can come in with a cheap shot to Test for two. Test plants Jericho with a full nelson slam but has to kick Christian off the apron, allowing Jericho to hit him low and hit the Breakdown (Skull Crushing Finale) for the pin.

Rating: D. This seems like the blowoff to the singles feud as Test either needs to get a partner or they need to split something off into another singles feud. Jericho and Christian were a good team but this was an awkward time for Jericho as he was main eventing Wrestlemania last year but a year later he's in a midcard tag team.

Post match Jericho and Christian give Test a Conchairto to really knock him out of the story but Shawn Michaels comes out to save Stacy. That earns him a chair to the face as Jericho means business. We actually get some blood to really make the Wrestlemania match clear. Jericho makes it even clearer by holding up the chair but says he wants to end Shawn's career at Wrestlemania.

Goldust arrives (an hour and ten minutes into the show) and freaks out 3 Minute Warning.

Christopher Nowitski wants to help fight Austin but gets a surprise 3D for his efforts.

Scott Steiner vs. Booker T.

They slug it out to start with Steiner getting the better of it until Booker nails the flying forearm. He's still no Tito Santana. The ax kick misses so Steiner nails the Namesake Line and a belly to belly. It seems that Steiner has morphed into a heel in the span of a week. The elbow into the push-ups gets two but Booker comes back with a running elbow.

The side kick out of the corner looks to set up the Spinarooni but Steiner plows over him because Booker is kneeling in the middle of the ring with his back to his opponent. Cue HHH and Flair as Steiner is bleeding from the eye. That goes nowhere so Booker botches the sunset flip out of the corner for the pin.

Rating: D. My goodness how did Steiner convince anyone to keep him around after those HHH matches and then this one? They've managed to make Booker look horrible because he can't carry Steiner (who could at this point?), after making him look like a fool because HHH is doing a racism angle for reasons I still don't comprehend.

Rock is singing about how a big star like him has to deal with being in Long Island when Bischoff comes in. That's not cool with the Rock as he yells at Bischoff for sending all the goons to stop Austin. If there's anything left of Austin, Bischoff can make some rattlesnake dip out of him, but Rock will walk back to Smackdown if anyone goes after Austin.

Al Snow/Tommy Dreamer vs. Rob Van Dam/Kane

Hardcore of course. It's a brawl on the floor to start until Rob slides in and dives out onto Snow. Dreamer brings in the first cane because he doesn't know how to wrestle a regular match. It's Kane coming off the top this time with the flying clothesline to knock Dreamer silly, only to have the ECW guys come back with trashcan shots. This goes as well as you would expect as Kane chokeslams both guys down, setting up a Five Star to pin Dreamer in a short match. Apparently this was punishment from Morely. It's punishment to face a couple of lower card guys?

Austin fails to run over all the lackeys with his truck so Bischoff yells at them. That's a surprising result.

Here's Austin in the arena for a pretty weak reaction. The interest just wasn't there at this point. He isn't sure what to talk about first, but before he gets into anything else he needs to thank the fans for sticking with him after he left. Then he got tired of sitting at the house and now he's back and ready to beat up anyone in that locker room. This brings Hollywood Rock out to the stage, complete with an open bottle of water.

Rock is glad to see him back but gives Austin some advice: as soon as you become successful, these people will turn on you. Rock isn't here to talk to the people though because he has something to say to Austin. There's one thing Rock needs to do in his career and that's beat Austin at Wrestlemania. How about it? It one corner the baddest man in wrestling, the man who revolutionized Monday night and the biggest star in this industry. Then in the other corner, Steve Austin.

Before he can answer though, here's Bischoff to offer make Rock vs. Booker T. next week. If Rock wins, he can have his choice of Austin or HHH at Wrestlemania. HUH? Why in the world are we talking about HHH now? Booker vs. HHH is set and Austin vs. Rock III needs to happen. Instead, here's 3 Minute Warning to get beaten down as you would expect them to. Austin turns around and sees Rock face to face. Rock teases leaving but comes up swinging, only to run away from an attempted Stunner to end the show. That's it?

Overall Rating: D+. What the heck was that ending? We've spent all night setting up Rock and Austin's showdown and get a culmination of the Bischoff stuff which was already blown off back at No Way Out? This was a mess all around though as the build isn't working for the most part. We're getting to the big matches, but HHH has already cut Booker's legs off and now they're postponing the announcement of Rock vs. Austin for another week for no adequate reason. The wrestling was mostly horrible here but that's nothing out of the ordinary.

If nothing else though, it's amazing how much easier these shows are to sit through than the three hour versions. No these aren't great episodes, but they don't have time to drive you crazy or to wear me out. I can live with short matches and some questionable endings as long as the show just doesn't drone on and on. This show would be fine if they just let Austin and Rock talk all night, but Booker needs to get something back on HHH next week after that mess to open the show.

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