

Monday Night Raw – March 17, 2003: We Must Defend HHH's Legacy!!!

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 17, 2003

Location: Scottrade Center, St. Louis, Missouri

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Jim Ross

With two shows to go before Wrestlemania, it's really hard to care about what's going on right now. Is it really any wonder why Smackdown was beating them at this point? Rock is trying as hard as he can on these shows but my goodness he needs ANYTHING else to help him carry things. Maybe that can be Shawn vs. Jericho but it would help if they actually did something. Let's get to it.

We open, again, with Bischoff, who says that his match with Austin will be a handicap match. He makes it even bigger by saying the Raw superstars will be the lumberjacks. Thanks for clarifying that as I was thinking it might be, like, the 1984 Atlanta Hawks or the cast of Tremors: The Series.

Chief Morley/Lance Storm vs. Rob Van Dam/Kane

Morley threatens the Dudleys with SEVERE consequences if they interfere here. The fans chant USA which tells me one of two things: they want Van Dam to win this on his own or they have no idea that Kane is from Spain. The monster slugs Morley down in the corner and drops him with a clothesline before tagging Van Dam in for the first time. Something like Rolling Thunder gets two on Morley but he drops Van Dam on the top rope to take over.

Rob's attempts at speeding things up again are broken up by Lance grabbing his leg (clearly still mad at Rob's post match promo at Barely Legal), allowing the Chief to get two off a good DDT. Morley shows some intelligence by going after the legs but Rob gets two off a rollup and

brings Kane back in. Storm gets a tag as well and Kane beats him up as a greeting. The top rope clothesline plants Storm but Morley makes the save, only to get kicked in the face by Van Dam. Everything breaks down and Kane chokeslams Storm for the pin.

Rating: C. I'm so glad Vitamin C beat Kane and Van Dam last week. It makes so much more sense after this match you see. Kane and Van Dam are one of the hottest acts on the show and thankfully they're getting a nice push as a result. I mean, I can't picture them taking the titles off of whatever combination of Morley/Storm/Regal winds up with the belts but they're hot at the moment and make for a good opening match.

Morley rolls away from a post match Five Star but the Dudleys come out....and put Kane through a table. Well of course they do.

Post break the Dudleys say they hate what they just had to do but need to feed their families. Simple story but at least it makes sense and was an actual explanation for a change.

Here are HHH and Flair with something to say. The champ doesn't like the idea of Booker thinking that he deserves a title shot so get out here right now and take this beating like a man. Instead he gets Goldust, which isn't exactly what he had in mind. JR screams that he's back despite being on the show last week. Goldust says that HHH's performance may have been Oscar worthy, but deep down ("down there") in the cock cock cockles of his heart, he must know that you can't judge a book by its cornbread. This still isn't funny if that wasn't clear.

HHH and Flair crack up and HHH imitates the catchphrases with the stutter, so Goldust lays both guys out. That lasts as long as you would expect it to but Booker T. comes out to save us from the stupid angle and Goldust from a Pedigree. They do realize the WORLD TITLE match is in 13 days right? And this is the best they can do? Goldust saying unfunny lines after being electrocuted is supposed to set up a World Title match at the biggest show of the year? I'm starting to understand why this show is so hated.

HHH wants Goldust later tonight.

Rico vs. Maven

You can literally see them going to the concession stands as the bell rings. They trade headlocks to start and Maven shifts over into an armbar. Can you blame the sudden nacho runs? Oh wait let's cut to Rock arriving, which is probably more interesting than what we've got going on here. Rico scores with some kicks, aided by a cheap shot from Jamal and Rosey. Maven comes back with kicks and a neckbreaker, followed by a bulldog for two. More 3MW interference sets up a neckbreaker but Maven counters into a backslide for the pin.

Rating: D-. Oh just....yeah. This is another good example of having no idea what else to do with your two hours so they just throw two guys out there to kill the crowd. Maybe it would help if you had some stories to tell instead of HHH crushing everyone in sight and Rock having to do whatever he can to drag a bored Austin to one last match. Or maybe you could have a midcard title instead of having HHH be CHAMPION OF EVERYTHING.

Shawn and Austin had a discussion about Shawn being a lumberjack. This is news, despite Bischoff saying the entire roster would be at ringside. Austin, as expected, really doesn't care.

Teddy Long tells Rock that Rodney Mack will take care of Hurricane next. Rodney Mack says the same thing, marking the biggest moment of his career: that time he was on camera with the Rock.

Hurricane vs. Rodney Mack

Mack gets rolled up for an early two and Hurricane elbows him in the jaw for good measure, only to have Teddy Long grab his foot to break it up. Rodney drops some elbows for two but Hurricane hits his usual, including the Shining Wizard. The high cross body and Blockbuster look to set up the chokeslam but Rock runs in for the DQ. This is where the booking goes out the window as there was no reason for Hurricane to not get a pin here. The DQ was just a waste, but at least Hurricane didn't get pinned.

Rock beats him down post match with stomps and a chair. The idea is supposed to be that Rock is losing his cool over Austin, which they're

somehow doing without having Austin show up that often.

Jazz/Trish Stratus vs. Victoria/Steven Richards

Trish vs. Victoria vs. Jazz is set for Wrestlemania. Maybe this match can go on longer than 20 seconds. Before the match we get a creepy video of Victoria sounding like she wants to sleep with the title. Jazz and Victoria slap it out to start with the former getting the better of it but Victoria gets two off a powerslam. That's fine with Jazz who gets the same result off the same move, but shockingly enough, NO ONE CARES ABOUT JAZZ. Off to Trish to wake the fans up a bit, including due to a Chick Kick for two.

A victory roll is quickly countered with a faceplant as Lawler says he'd always hook Trish's leg. Steven tries to get involved and gets Victoria's head shoved into his crotch. The Stratusphere takes Steven down but Victoria throws her around by the hair. Lawler freaks out over a shot of Trish's chest but she avoids a slingshot legdrop. Richards crotches himself in the corner and Jazz short arms Trish on a tag attempt. A Sky High from Richards sets up the Widow's Peak to give Victoria the pin.

Rating: D+. Was there really no one else they could put in this story other than Jazz? The fans like Victoria and Trish but my goodness they just died once Jazz came in. Oh and then she walked out on the match and fans still didn't care. There are some wrestlers that fans just can't get behind no matter what and Jazz is one of them.

Jeff Hardy runs out to save Trish and gets a kiss for his efforts.

Video on Shawn's career at Wrestlemania, which is the biggest night of the year for him. This was around the time where he started being considered Mr. Wrestlemania.

Chris Jericho says he wanted to be Shawn Michaels but now he wants to end him.

Stacy tells Test that she's found him a perfect tag partner and leaves. Test has Torrie Wilson's Playboy and has to hide it from her. To recap, Test is dating Stacy Keibler and we're supposed to feel sorry for him.

Test/Scott Steiner vs. Christian/Chris Jericho

Oh man it's the start of THIS story. Test charges the ring to start and elbows Jericho in the face. Steiner gets in some shots on the floor but it's quickly off to Christian, who eats a shoulder as well. We get the tag to Steiner, who somehow was in the World Title scene just a few weeks ago. The flexing elbow into push-ups gets two and it's back to Test. Keeping Steiner out of the ring most of the time is a good thing for this match.

Jericho gets in a cheap shot from the apron, allowing Christian to hit a spinwheel kick on Test. That advantage goes nowhere as it's already back to Steiner for Rick Steiner's powerslam/backdrop on Christian. Scared to death of the idea of having to deal with Scott Steiner, Christian grabs the referee and kicks Scott low before bringing Chris back in. That earns the king of the world a belly to belly (that's one) and another tag brings in Test.

Jericho quickly escapes a powerbomb and everything breaks down. The evil Canadians are sent into each other and Test's pumphandle slam plants Jericho but Christian makes the save. Belly to belly #2 sends Jericho flying but this time the powerbomb connects with Christian breaking up another save. Christian goes after Stacy and Steiner makes the save, only to have Test get distracted, allowing Jericho to grab a rollup for the pin.

Rating: D+. The match wasn't horrible but why is Jericho feuding with Test instead of Shawn Michaels, as in the guy he's fighting at WRESTLEMANIA in two weeks? This was nothing special or even good for the most part with the majority of the match being spent on wasting time until we finally got to the point. As mentioned, Steiner has fallen a long way in just a few weeks and it's not likely to get better anytime soon.

HHH vs. Goldust

Non-title of course. Booker and Flair are the seconds as WWE suddenly remembers that HHH and Booker are fighting soon. Feeling out process to start until Goldust hits him in the face for the first shot. More right

hands from Goldust set up a right hand from HHH to take over as it's pretty clear they're not in the mood to try here. HHH sends the injured (from the electrocution) arm into the post a few times and we hit the armbar. Goldust starts fighting back but that's too threatening to HHH's legacy as a main event star so he plants Goldust with the spinebuster.

Something like a Boss Man Slam puts HHH down and Goldust gets two off a clothesline. Again HHH feels the power of insecurity and sends Goldust outside where Booker beats up Flair. The injured Randy Orton gets in a crutch shot from the crowd to knock Booker silly but Goldust hits the bulldog on HHH. The arm gives out before he can try Shattered Dreams and it's jumping knee into the Pedigree to give HHH the soul redeeming pin.

Rating: D. I don't know about you, but I feel so much better now that HHH has overcome career midcarder Goldust and his neurological issues. It was getting pretty dicey there and you could see HHH's entire Hall of Fame career melting away every second he was down from a clothesline. I mean.....HE WAS HAVING TO SELL SOMETHING! Oh and get used to seeing Booker down and out like that, because you know that's what's coming at Wrestlemania.

Bischoff is warming up when Rock comes in with his guitar to sing about beating up Hurricane. Rock is thinking about having a Rock Concert right here in St. Louis but there are too many ugly women in this town. Next week in Sacramento sounds a bit better. What doesn't sound better is having a lumberjack match, because all those guys around the ring make Bischoff look bad.

Instead, make it No DQ and Rock will be there to have Bischoff's back. So why set up the lumberjack match in the first place??? Just set up the No DQ and go with that. It's like changing Smackdown matches today: just get it right in the first place and you won't have to keep pulling these bait and switches.

Steve Austin vs. Eric Bischoff

No DQ and Morley is with Bischoff. Eric wisely runs away to start so Austin beats up Morley as a warm-up. A right hand puts Bischoff down and the mudhole is stomped. He puts Eric in a Boston crab of all things but

Morley offers a distraction for the break. That's not enough for the Chief as he comes in for a low blow but Austin easily beats them both up. Cue Rock for a Stunner on Austin but Bischoff can only get two. Rock comes back in to stomp on Austin but misses the Elbow. A clothesline sends Rock to the floor and Morley and Bischoff both get Stunners for the pin.

Rating: F. Yeah whatever. What else do you want me to say here? The only note: this was Austin's last match on Raw to date and likely ever. That's how Austin, the greatest superstar of this era, goes out: beating up Bischoff and Val Venis in a nothing match to set up a match at Wrestlemania. It kind of makes you think that you never know when you'll never see these guys in the ring again.

Austin gets a Rock Bottom and Rock sips at a beer to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. How in the world was this leading up to one of the best Wrestlemanias of all time? These shows lately have been horrible and it's like they have no idea what they're doing going forward. Shawn vs. Jericho is barely getting any build other than the superkick last week and HHH is squashing everyone he can find while Booker is lucky to win a tag match. Nothing to see on this show and it's becoming very clear why this show is so loathed among fans.

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