

Thunder – December 23, 1999: A New Breed Of Failing

Thunder

Date: December 23, 1999

Location: Wicomico Civic Center, Salisbury, Maryland

Attendance: 4,000

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Mike Tenay, Scott Hudson

On Monday, this company replaced wrestling with some weird shoot style which involves whatever Russo and Ferrara feeling like throwing out there being presented as the new reality. The big story was the reformation of the NWO because....normally I would complain here but it was probably the most logical thing all night. I have no idea what I'm about to watch but let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Monday's main story. The two minute version doesn't make it any better than the three hour edition.

Tenay promises to prove that Thunder is special again.

Here's the NWO to open things up and Tony is RIGHT THERE to tell us how strong the NWO really is. Bret brags about all the gold and says they couldn't make this any more black and white. This has been in the works for over a month and the stupid wrestling fans never saw it coming. We see some clips of the Outsiders helping Bret out over the last few months with Bret conveniently never seeing a thing.

This is the one and only one thing I can give Russo some slack on: the big conspiracy stories don't hold up if you know what to look for, so tying all this together probably did work a lot better when this show was airing live. Basically the NWO lead Goldberg and Benoit along so the four of them wound up with all the belts and it was a big swerve all along. It still doesn't make up for Monday's debacle or the holes in the logic, but at least it's there. On the screwjob at Starrcade, Bret: "That was better than Shawn Michaels!"

Nash rips on the fans for only cheering the Outsiders because they wanted to be hip. They're a bunch of \$5 an hour workers who have no idea what it takes to be this great. They've never needed the people but they don't mind taking the money. Hall says a bunch of stuff that has to be censored but Jeff cleans it up by declaring this crowd the first annual slapnuts convention. Again he declares himself the chosen one, which makes me wonder why he isn't the World Champion.

Jeff: "No one saw it coming!" Hall: "I didn't know where we were half the time." This NWO is only going to be the elite, because once you've had the black, you never go back. That line is SO out of place from Jarrett. Cue Goldberg, who is quickly told he sucks. He's going to rip the NWO's hearts out and it's not going to be who's next but who's left.

The announcers eat up time by running down the card. Tenay is lead announcer and Tony is playing second fiddle. That's quite odd to see.

Token footage of Leia Meow stretching.

Two helmeted bikers arrive.

Benoit says he prefers life's hard decisions because they require sacrifice. He modeled himself after Bret for living his life the way he believed it should be lived. That ended Monday, so tonight he's taking Bret's heart.

PG-13 vs. Varsity Club

Steiner and Rotundo here but first, a rap from PG-13. Leia is forced to exercise before the match and I'm sure you get the idea here. PG-13 gets beaten down to start and Steiner runs over JC Ice. Sullivan says the Varsity Club is too smart to get conned like Goldberg. A combination of clotheslines and Steiner Lines knock PG-13 into oblivion but the referee throws it out. Tenay says it's a double DQ, even though PG-13 literally had no offense.

Wolfie D. is put in the Tree of Woe for a low blow from Meow. Who in the world thought these teams needed to be brought in?

David Flair beats up a fast food worker for not getting his order right.

Russo is yelling at Hennig in his office, which has been put back together but still has the damage from Piper. So they dragged the broken walls to the arena and set them back up? Hennig didn't seem to know what was going on in the big scheme but here are the bikers to interrupt. It's the Harris Twins who turn over Russo's table and yell at him for screwing with their lives.

Here are the Filthy Animals and Jim Duggan with something to say. Eddie says the Animals are a lot of things but above all else, they're Americans. The Revolution left them by the roadside but they're back to knock the Revolution down. Kidman and Konnan say the same thing as Eddie, albeit in very, very different methods of speaking. Rey promises to beat the Revolution like the dogs they are.

Duggan of course says H0 and USA. He wants to make the Revolution his personal H0 so here's the Revolution with Dean ranting about the flag of the Revelation (yes the Revelation because Dean doesn't even care what stable he's in). Saturn starts talking about Fred Flintstone never realizing that the rack of ribs is too big for his car, making him by far the most entertaining thing in this story. Shane wants to break Duggan's neck and complains about Americans. The fans are the ones that suck off the government programs and Duggan's comeback is just him being an idiot. Apparently there's a match tonight.

Russo sends Hennig and Jarrett after Creative Control.

Tank Abbott vs. La Parka

A right hand puts La Parka down and Tank hammers away in the corner. La Parka hits him with the chair and gets knocked out cold for a no contest.

Tank knocks Doug Dillinger out too.

Norman Smiley hides from Goldberg. Why is Goldberg having issues finding the NW0? Why didn't he just wait for them to come through the curtain earlier?

The Artist still has issues recording his music but still won't speak. Paisley gets on the producer for questioning the lyrics.

Hardcore Title: Fit Finlay vs. Norman Smiley

Smiley is defending but Finlay knocks him into the weapons cart to get things going. They fight into the crowd and into the back as we hit the hardcore requirement from the WWF. Knobbs shows up and helps beat Norman up in the concession stand. They lower a metal door and try to crush Norman but Meng makes the save. Norman is thrown on top of Finlay for the pin.

Meng gives Norman the Death Grip post "match".

Jeff Jarrett finds a paper.

Goldberg chokes Jarrett against a wall and says he's coming for the NWO when they least expect it.

Creative Control comes out to say they're no longer Creative Control. Now they're Ron and Don Harris because I guess that's supposed to make us care about them. They and their country accents are coming for the Powers That Be. Side note: if they're the Powers That Be, why do we never hear another voice?

Ron Harris/Don Harris vs. Curt Hennig/Jeff Jarrett

And there's no Jarrett, so the heel is now in a handicap match. Hennig tries to fight back as Tony tries to keep the Twins straight. The Twins throw Hennig around and a side slam gives we'll say Ron the pin. Total squash in less than two minutes.

The NWO comes out gives the Harris the NWO treatment, complete with spray paint.

Bam Bam Bigelow vs. Maestro

Kanyon comes out to do commentary for reasons of storyline development and immediately starts a BRING BACK JUVY chant. Well it's a one man chant but you get the idea. Maestro goes right at Bigelow to start but gets thrown away when trying a bulldog. Symphony comes in to prevent the diving headbutt so Bigelow dives at her anyway, sending Symphony running away. The distraction lets Kanyon hit Bigelow with a champagne bucket to

give Maestro the pin.

Diamond Dallas Page says there's nothing between Buff Bagwell and his wife. He's booked against the Wall but won't fight him until he gets a match with Bagwell.

Recap of Madusa and Karagias.

Evan is in the ring and YES! IT! IS! TIME! Evan says it's time for a comeback and introduces us to his friends Shannon Moore and Shane Helms. Their collective names: 3 Count. They may not be N'Sync or the Backstreet Boys but they'll charm the pants off everyone's girlfriend. Now hit the music. We get a music video for the yet to be named single, spliced together with the guys singing the song (I Can't Get You Out Of My Heart). The tasteless fans hate the song and here's a now serious Chavo Guerrero to clean house with dropkicks.

I know they're not the best remembered team but I loved these guys and thought they were a great idea. Boy bands were huge back then so why not go with a gimmick based on them? It's certainly better than Evan being the schnook who keeps getting beaten up by women every other week.

David Flair shows up at a gas station and runs into a guy named Crowbar. The Misfits show up and beat the two of them down for no adequately explored reason.

Konnan/Kidman/Jim Duggan vs. Revolution

Saturn/Malenko/Asya here with Shane on commentary. Konnan hammers on Malenko to start and Kidman comes in with a slingshot legdrop. Off to Saturn who eats a Bodog and a high cross body for two. Asya gets knocked off the apron as well but Saturn suplexes Kidman in half.

Back to Malenko for two off a suplex, followed by Saturn's top rope elbow for the same. Duggan gets the hot tag and cleans house with his variety of right hands and slams. He goes to hit Asya but takes a low blow from Saturn. Shane wants Duggan to denounce America and everything breaks down. The hobbling Rey distracts Dean and Saturn, setting up a sloppy double sunset flip to give the Animals the pin.

Rating: D+. Boring match but somehow this was the first one tonight to break three minutes. Duggan (why is he still the janitor?) doesn't fit in this story and there's no reason for the Animals vs. the Revolution to keep going other than they have nothing else to do. At least they gave this match something close to time.

The Revolution gets in some crutches shots to make themselves feel better.

Kevin Nash vs. The Wall

It's Hall's turn to be on commentary. Nash takes him into the corner for some knees to the ribs to start but Wall comes back with right hands to the head. A clothesline and big boot put Nash down and it's Hall coming in with the pipe for the DQ.

Wall gets spray painted and beaten up even more.

Post break, Wall gets off a stretcher.

As Nash gets in the shower, Hall finds Goldberg in his room. Back to the shower, where Nash doesn't seem to notice the camera, and Goldberg is there too. Is he multiplying or something? We see both Outsiders out cold. Is it possible to like, SLOW DOWN on having him go through the NWO?

WCW World Title: Bret Hart vs. Chris Benoit

Benoit is challenging of course and erupts on Hart in the corner to get things going. They fight over to the announcers' table with the champ getting control. Back inside with Bret dropping a leg and an elbow, followed by a DDT for two. Benoit fights back with a kick to the ribs and elbow to the jaw for two of his own. The champ nails a low blow as the fans are just silent. Benoit reverses him into the corner and grabs the Crossface, drawing in Jarrett for the DQ.

Rating: D. Just a punch and kick match until the finish with no one believing that Benoit was going over here. That silence for Bret tells you everything you need to know though: this storyline is just a disaster. Monday was too much for the fans to take and there's no reason to care. They weren't even booing, but rather just sitting there in

silence. That's a bad sign after your big angle of the year.

Cue Goldberg to spear Jarrett and chase Bret to the back. Bret gets away in a car but Goldberg sees the Powers That Be's limo. One right hand through the window and see you in June Goldberg. By the way, for those of you that have never seen it, that injury is what Nash said killed the Fingerpoke of Doom fallout story with Goldberg rising up through the ranks to get Hogan. You read that right.

Overall Rating: F. You know the amazing thing about this show? That Bret vs. Benoit match took place after the show was supposed to end. Why is that amazing? That match (the longest of the night at 4:54) took us to our grand total of less than 21 minutes of wrestling. In other words, in the two hours Thunder was scheduled to be on the air, the total time spent on wrestling (and that's including Norman vs. Finlay in the back) was 15:41. If you add in the World Title match, the total time was 20:35. It took overtime to break 20 minutes of wrestling on a two hour show. That is unacceptable.

Now onto the good. This show wasn't the abomination that we saw on Monday. It was a disaster and one of the worst wrestling shows I've ever seen with almost no action, mostly worthless matches and a story that ran in two hours instead of two to six months, but it was NOT this past Monday. They reigned things way back in tonight and it made the show tolerable, but that certainly doesn't mean it's good. I think I can live with it like this, but there are far more changes needed here than WCW has time for.

The show isn't airing next week due to a college football game so that's it for Thunder in 1999.