

Monday Nitro – January 17, 2000: WCW Is Dead

Monday Nitro #223

Date: January 17, 2000

Location: Value City Arena, Columbus, Ohio

Attendance: 10,646

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Bobby Heenan, Mike Tenay

I have to say this way too often around here, but everything has changed again. Benoit won the World Title last night and that's the last you're going to see of him in WCW. Unfortunately that's also the case for Malenko, Guerrero and Saturn, who all quit when Kevin Sullivan was announced as the fired Vince Russo's replacement. The Filthy tried to get out as well but didn't have such an easy escape. Now we get to see how everything falls out so let's get to it.

The NWO arrives and Nash leaves Jeff's hand hanging in a funny bit.

Kidman vs. Psychosis

We immediately start with a match and Kidman gets an early advantage off a headscissors and stops a charge by raising a boot. A high cross body gets two but Psychosis low bridges him to the floor and hits a big dive over the top. Thankfully the whole landing on Kidman's head part didn't cripple him. Back in and a nice top rope spinwheel kick gets two as the announcers promise to address all the major changes after last night's show.

They head outside again with Kidman being sent into the barricade but he's still able to dropkick Psychosis out of the air back inside. Psychosis counters a superplex into a super sitout gordbuster for two, only to walk into a wheelbarrow suplex. That earns Kidman a DDT and the guillotine legdrop for a very close two. YOU CAN'T POWERBOMB KIDMAN though and the faceplant gets the pin. This would be four Kidman matches in two days without a Shooting Star.

Rating: B. Off the top of my head, the best match WCW has had since the main event of Mayhem back in November. You can immediately see the cruiserweights being brought back to a respectable place as they were allowed to just go out and have a good match instead of being used as target practice for the heavyweights. They're already off to a good start.

Now we get the big fallout from last night in the form of a statement from Arn Anderson. Terry Funk got beaten up last night for doing what he believed in and that's what a real man does. Anderson has always tried to do what he said and last night he promised to call the match down the middle. Then he started watching the match instead of refereeing and he didn't notice Sid's foot under the ropes when Benoit made him tap out. Therefore the title is vacant.

To recap our title holders, we have David Flair, Crowbar (both of whom lost last night), Brian Knobbs and Ed Ferrara.

The Harris Brothers are in suits again and now guarding the NWO's locker room. I'm so glad we had them turn a few weeks ago just to turn back already.

Booker says he hasn't forgotten where he came from and apparently he and Stevie knew Big T. back in the day. They decided he was all wrong for them and Booker didn't know he was out of jail. That's already more backstory than we get for most new characters.

Here's the new Harlem Heat, with Stevie saying he and Big T. are willing to give Booker another chance. Booker and Midnight come out but Stevie wants Midnight to leave. Stevie mentions Booker borrowing his bike to go get candy as a kid but the brawl is on. The team takes Booker down and Stevie wants a referee in here right now.

Booker T. vs. Big T.

Both guys are in street clothes. A quick Pearl River Plunge drops Booker and a World's Strongest Slam does the same. Booker comes back with a forearm and ax kick followed by the Book End but Stevie throws in a slap jack to knock Booker silly for the pin. This was nothing.

Vampiro vs. Disco Inferno

The Mamalukes are out with Disco and tell him there will be no dancing. During the entrances, Tony basically begs the fans to come to the Thunder taping tomorrow night. Vampiro nails a spinwheel kick to start and another spin kick to the chest. Disco's monkey flip doesn't get him anywhere and Vampiro plants him with a release Rock Bottom, only to miss a corkscrew moonsault.

The Mamalukes validate their paycheck by attacking Disco as this is actually a faster pace than you would expect. It's like they're actually being allowed to try for a change. A swinging neckbreaker gets two for Disco but Vampiro avoids an elbow and hits another top rope spinwheel kick, followed by the Nail in the Coffin for the pin.

Rating: C. Nothing great here but like I said, they were trying for a change. It's such a different atmosphere already with Russo gone for one show and you can see the quality and effort going up. Vampiro looked decent here and I can see why they wanted to push him, but they need to do something with him already.

Scott Steiner presents Nash with some women for secretary interviews, including the yet to be named Major Gunns, Shakira and Midajah. Steiner wants to play Twister.

Tag Team Titles: 3 Count vs. David Flair/Crowbar

We get a 3 Count performance before the match to really make this show feel better. Evan is the odd man out here. 3 Count dives onto the champs to start and here are Standards and Practices to scout the match. We settle down with David suplexing Moore and dropping him with a belly to back for two. Daffney hisses at Evan on the floor so David runs over for the save. Helms superkicks Crowbar down and Shannon adds a top rope spinning splash for two. David low bridges Shannon to the floor, allowing Crowbar to hit a reverse DDT for the pin.

Rating: D+. I loved 3 Count and there's nothing bad about looking at Stacy Keibler but this really didn't work. At the end of the day, David Flair just isn't ready for this spot. He's trying, but it's very similar

to Erik Watts in the early 90s: he needed a lot more seasoning before being thrown into this spot.

We get an encore!

Nash asks the ladies to leave so they can have some NWO business. Bret is nowhere to be seen. They need to get rid of the Old Age Outlaws but Arn can stick around for some reason.

Maestro vs. Tank Abbott

No piano, 13 seconds, one right hand for the knockout. This was a shoot fight, because the Brawl For All didn't teach WCW anything.

Norman Smiley comes out to stare down Abbott but Meng shows up to give Abbott someone a real challenge.

Most of the midcard is coming to the arena. Since this is WCW, it takes far longer than it should have. They couldn't have had them come out during the break? Nash and the Harris Brothers come out for the first official address of the roster. Nash praises himself but says he has goals for everyone out there. Tenay needs a personality, Knobbs needs a brain, Abbott needs a heart and Smiley needs courage. Nash: "I sound like Oz up here."

The fans cut him off with a Goldberg chant so Nash threatens to fire him. This brings Nash to his first real act: Jeff Jarrett is officially the US Champion again. Jeff: "HOLY SLAPNUTS!" Next up is health, which is why there will be mandatory rectal exams before every match with Dr. Jellyfinger. Also, everyone is going to be in the same locker room no matter what level they're on and no one can look at Nash but they all must call him Lord Master.

Nash will decide what happens with the World Title at a later date. He's rapid firing through these ideas. There will be no illegal substances in the locker room, including Viagra. Nash: "Sorry Lex!" He praises Bagwell and Page for their match last night. Nash: "Buff, you doing Kim or what?" As for the first main event tonight, it's Bagwell vs. Page in a rematch from last night with Kimberly as guest referee. They're the NWO, they're

in charge, and they are gods.

Kimberly comes in to see the NWO and is given her referee outfit and asks if Page or Bagwell was better.

Team 2000 vs. Varsity Club

Team 2000 is Masahiro Chono and Super J (From what I can find it's Jeff Farmer, better known as NWO Sting). There's actually a story here: Rotundo was part of NWO Japan but left to reform the Varsity Club. Yeah this match is actually getting a story over a Japanese faction that most people didn't know existed.

It's a brawl to start until Chono starts driving knees into Mike's ribs to take over. Off to Steiner but Chono wants Rotundo back in, which the fans find boring. I can't say I blame them as there's no reason to care about this story. Steiner suplexes Chono down and easily takes J to the mat. Steiner whips him into the barricade and Rotundo has a lame slugout as this just keeps going.

Rotundo chinlocks J as Steiner and Chono brawl in the aisle. Back in and Rick gets double teamed for a bit but they're quickly back on the floor to keep up the brawling. A big boot to the face out of the corner blasts Rick again but Chono dives into a belly to belly. Everything breaks down again and the referee misses a small package from Rotundo to Chono. J comes in and rolls it over to FINALLY give Chono the pin.

Rating: D. This is one of the first major cases of the show having to throw in ANYTHING else besides Benoit/Guerrero/Malenko/Saturn. There was no reason for this to be a nine minute match and the fans might have been on to something with the boring chant. It wasn't the worst match in the world, but like I said, there's no reason to care about these teams fighting. The match wasn't good enough to overcome that problem and it dragged on and on as a result.

Sid Vicious vs. The Wall

Sid runs him over to start and Wall bails to the floor for a breather. Wall is thrown over the announcers' table as this is full squash mode so

far. That's it for the play by play right now as we cut to Disco and the Mamalukes coming in to say they'll get the NWO anything they need. Nash asks if they've ever heard of Vinnie Vegas. Their assignment: go beat up Sid. Then get some grinders. We cut back to the ring to see Sid chokeslamming Wall for the pin.

The Mamalukes come out but eat powerbombs.

Scott Steiner, in a Michigan jersey and flanked by Midajah and a girl in a Michigan cheerleader uniform, comes out and beats up the Ohio State (Michigan's big rival) mascot. Steiner does his usual stuff about how all the women want him and tells them to take a number and wait in the back. Michigan beating Ohio State was easy, just like the women in Ohio. An Ohio State fan argues with him from ringside and gets beaten down. Security quickly takes the bloody fan away as we're firmly in the Scott is nuts phase.

Total Package vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

Luger is finally out of the Sting attire. Bigelow elbows him out to the floor and pounds in some big forearms to the back. Back in and Bigelow slugs away, eats the metal forearm, and continues slugging away. The top rope headbutt connects but Liz distracts Bigelow to break up the Greetings From Asbury Park. Cue Kanyon but Bigelow nails him, only to take a champagne bottle to the head from Luger for the pin.

Rating: D-. Is there a point coming to this Bigelow vs. Kanyon feud anytime soon? They've been feuding, with Bigelow consistently coming out on the losing end, for weeks now and there's no real progression to the story. This was another match that didn't do anything for anyone and was just there to fill in time.

Diamond Dallas Page vs. Buff Bagwell

Kimberly's referee outfit is exactly what you would expect it to be. Page starts fast with a shoulder and spinning Rock Bottom but Kimberly takes her sweet time counting. Buff comes back with a clothesline and they fight to the floor then into the crowd. Time for the ECW phase of the show it seems. A trash can shot knocks Page back to the barricade and

they head back inside.

Bagwell nails a hot shot onto the turnbuckle but he stops to hit on Kimberly. Page gets back up and crotches Bagwell against the post. The Diamond Cutter is blocked by grabbing a rope (and it actually works unlike last night) and both guys are down again. The double arm DDT from Buff (well maybe an arm and a quarter) gets another very slow two count.

Back up and they fight over a backslide before the Diamond Cutter connects but Page can't cover. Instead Buff gets up and loads up the Blockbuster, only to get crotched down. Page's superplex attempt is countered with a low blow and now the Blockbuster connects. Kimberly "accidentally" collides with Buff and knocks herself down, allowing Page to get up and hit the Diamond Cutter for a slow pin.

Rating: D+. This is another feud that is just meandering along with little development in sight. It's no longer about whether Kimberly slept with Bagwell but rather if she's going to leave her husband for him. That's about all there is as far as advancement goes, but it's not enough to validate the boring matches that come with the feud.

Kimberly bolts from the ring and Page follows to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. Suddenly Russo is out of power and this feels like a wrestling program again. It's certainly nothing great but we had storyline progression that you could follow, some watching wrestling getting time (three matches broke six minutes and with ten more seconds on the opener they all would have broken seven) and nothing horrible/insulting to my intelligence. In other words, it's a middle of the road wrestling show.

That's the key though: this show still isn't really good. A lot of the wrestling was uninspired at best and the stories were only ok. Nash as the power mad yet entertaining boss has potential and the lack of the focus on the mostly retired crew helped a lot. Unfortunately, I have a feeling the bottom is going to fall out very soon because they're going to have to find something to fill in the void left by all the people leaving, and it's not NWO Japan.

This is where the problems are going to crop up and there isn't much WCW can do about it. The Radicalz leaving at once was like taking the walls out from a building. No matter what was going on, you could count on those four guys to put on a decent wrestling match if you gave them the chance. Now that they're gone, there isn't much left to take their places.

What's supposed to make up for those guys missing? Page and Bagwell having lame matches? More Varsity Club? Ahmed Johnson? Jeff Jarrett cutting the same promo with the same slap nuts line every single week? WCW has lost the meat of their company and there isn't much they can throw in there to fill in the gaps. That brings me to the big point here: the Radicalz leaving was the point of no return for WCW.

Now here's the thing: WCW was going to die no matter what. In the long run, there was too much money being burned and too much of a mess to possibly fix the place. Somewhere along the line it was going to go under and Vince would be left smiling. However, as long as you had those four guys (or at least a young core group of wrestlers who could one day take over), there was always a hope. It may have been just a glimmer, but it was there.

However, all that went away when they left. Those four leaving took the hope away from WCW fans. Any chance they had to see something fresh come in and take the company back from the Good Old Boys network at the top was gone and the hope was destroyed. Now there's just the old guys hanging around at the top, collecting their paychecks and putting on the same pitiful matches that no one wants to see except for the diehard fans.

Benoit finally got to the top last night and it felt like yet another Dusty Finish. Yeah he got there, but never mind because we need to take the title away from him and just let it sit around until we find some other old guy to put it on so he can talk about having some big match but never be able to live up to those promises. The fans have no reason to believe it's possible now and once that happens, the faint chance that WCW could turn it around was gone.

WCW was already a very wounded animal before those four left, but there was always the chance that they could tape themselves up, get on their feet and nail one big right hook to knock the WWF back and have one more chance in this fight. Instead, and no one knew how bad it was going to get in just a few weeks when they showed up on Nitro, WWF just cut off WCW's arms and punched them with their own fists. WCW may appear to still be alive and trying to come back, but at this point, without the core talent that they built up being around anymore, there is no more hope. WCW is dead.

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