

Thunder – February 2, 2000: Screw You Hulk Hogan

Thunder

Date: February 2, 2000

Location: Broome County Arena, Binghamton, New York

Attendance: 2,323

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Scott Hudson, Bobby Heenan

The big story tonight is going to be the return of Hulk Hogan, who was casually announced to be coming back on Monday during a Shane Helms vs. Norman Smiley match. I'm not sure how much good Hogan can do to save this mess of a show, but at least he'll do boring stuff with some extra charisma. Let's get to it.

We open with the standard recap of Nitro.

Here's the NWO, complete with Scott Hall, to open things up. Hall can't quite get HEY YO out so let's look at the girls talking about what a sexy beast Scott Steiner really is. That brings us to still acting Commissioner Jeff Jarrett, who says that it's still his job to make Sid miserable. Therefore, tonight we're getting Sid in Triple Threat Theater. You cannot be serious. Like, tell me you didn't just say that.

Somehow this is true, and here's the lineup: a submission match vs. Mike Rotunda, a hardcore match vs. Rick Steiner and Caged Heat (could they at least try to hide their cries of PLEASE WATCH OUR SHOW) against the Harris Twins. Jeff repeats that he takes bribes, making me think this is the result of a bet to see how horrible of a show they can possibly put together.

The announcers run down the card, which will have nine matches total. Three of these will feature Sid Vicious. How much longer before this company goes out of business?

A limo arrives.

The NWO buys off referee Slick Johnson.

Norman Smiley vs. The Demon

In a line I think I'll be repeating a lot tonight, let's get this over with. Norman is in the Demon attire here but Demon comes out of his coffin to start fast. Demon rips his gear off Norman, revealing smiley face trunks. This earns Norman a suplex and a punch to the face, followed by a lot of growling from Demon. A clothesline in the corner staggers Norman, but he quickly goes behind Demon and hooks the Conquest for the win.

Demon, ever the salesman, shrugs off the submission and chases Norman to the back.

Lenny Lane and Lodi are now to be called Lane and Idol and are collectively known as To Excess. Yeah sure why not. As long as they drop the incest.

Sid Vicious vs. Mike Rotunda

Submission match because WCW thought making Kevin Sullivan booker was so important that we don't have the Radicalz anymore. There is however one cool moment in this entire thing: an elderly woman is holding up a sign that says "90 year old woman needs a hug" and Sid hugs her. I know he's annoying and being shoved down my throat but that genuinely gave me a bit of a smile.

Mike tries a go behind to start and gets elbowed in the face. Just like at Syracuse back in '81. Sid pounds away in the corner but misses a running knee, allowing Mike to take him down and slap on a Figure Four. That goes nowhere so Mike tries an STF but Sid quickly makes the ropes. Back up and Sid hits a chokeslam but Mike but Mike hits him low. Well in theory at least as the camera cut away, because all of Ferrara and Russo's schtick was fine but a low blow? That's too far. Sid escapes a fireman's carry and slaps on what is supposed to be a Crossface for the win.

Vampiro doesn't have much to say but would like to face Kidman again.

We finally get brackets for the Cruiserweight Title tournament. These are updated after the first three matches.

Psychosis

The Artist Formerly Known As Prince Iaukea

Lash Leroux

Shannon Moore/Shane Helms

Cruiserweight Title Tournament First Round: Shane Helms vs. Shannon Moore

Feeling out process to start with Shane getting in the first big move with a suplex. Shane bails to the floor for no apparent reason other than to let Shannon dive onto him. That's what a good bandmate should do. Sometimes you need a guy you can trust to dive on you. I hear that's how Hall and Oates got together. Back in and Shane scores with another suplex for two but walks into a crossbody for the same.

We're told that Madusa is in the building, freaking out Evan Karagias who is in on commentary. That's one thing I certainly don't miss about Russo's time: not every match needs guest commentary. He LOVED that idea. Shane counters a sunset flip and slams Shannon down again, only to miss a corkscrew moonsault. Shannon's big offense here? A snapmare for two. Oh come on man. You need a role model. Like Matt Hardy. Back up and Shane kicks him in the ribs but his neckbreaker is countered into a backslide of all things to send Shannon to the semifinals.

Rating: D+. A snapmare and a backslide? REALLY? We went from Mysterio, Guerrera, Malenko, Jericho and others tearing the house down to a snapmare and a backslide? The match was watchable enough but man, could we get more than one or two high spots in a match? Not a horrible match given their lack of experience on this stage and having about three and a half minutes.

They hug it out post match.

Madusa tells the NWO she wants a match tonight.

Hogan was in the limo. Again, you would expect this to be treated as a bigger deal.

Here's Hogan for the big return speech for a big ovation. It's definitely Hulk instead of Hollywood here, which is definitely the right move at this point. Hogan talks about having a chat with Goldberg and Sting about all the pre-taped scenes and the writers (oh geez) and now he's here to get something off his chest. He's tired of a bunch of young nobodies trying to act like they mean something. Ric Flair has been talking about taking the business back and for once Hogan agrees with him.

This brings him to Luger, presumably one of the young guys, who immediately comes out with Liz. Luger thinks Hogan is a coward, just like Sting who never comes out when Luger calls for him. We see a clearly fake Sting (complete with a wig) coming to the ring but Hogan jumps Luger before that can go anywhere. Liz gets an atomic drop (with Hogan barely dropping her) and Hogan ducks a bat shot to send Luger running. So that's the co-main event at SuperBrawl I'm guessing.

Quick recap here: all the rookies suck, and all the veterans are awesome, except for that horrible Luger. This is the savior's big return speech, where he rips the youth apart and basically says everything since he's been gone has been a waste of time. Also, not a word about what happened at Halloween Havoc, meaning we're never going to get an explanation.

Kidman and Torrie have the KidCam.

Jeff Jarrett talks to Oklahoma about a women's division. We're really doing this again?

Kidman vs. Vampiro vs. The Wall

The small guys go after Wall to start with a spinwheel kick and double clothesline putting him on the floor so we can have a talented (though worthless according to Hogan) pairing. Vampiro suplexes him down but Wall comes back in and blasts Vampiro in the back, followed by a gorilla press drop to Kidman. The double teaming continues but Wall shrugs off a cross body.

Instead, Torrie distracts the crooked referee (at least he has good taste), allowing Kidman to blast Wall with a chair. Those are completely no sold (concrete over steel I guess) so Kidman throws the chair at Vampiro and is immediately knocked to the floor. A chokeslam from Wall ends Vampiro to finish a fairly packed yet quick match. So after Vampiro and Kidman have two good matches, Wall gets the push. Raise your hand if you're surprised.

Sid is ready for Steiner.

Lane and Idol want a Tag Team Title shot but the Mamalukes aren't interested.

Sid Vicious vs. Rick Steiner

Hardcore match, and I can't believe it but they actually bring up Sid powerbombing Steiner through the stage a few months back. Who would have guessed they could work a tape machine, let alone remember that? Steiner tries to get smart and is almost immediately clotheslined out to the floor. They fight into the crowd with Rick chucking a chair towards ringside, nearly wiping out a fan or two in the process. Maybe he can get fired! I'm willing to have a few fans suffer to get rid of Rick Steiner.

Rick can't entirely suplex Sid onto a table but drops him on it anyway. Close enough I guess. We hit the front facelock on the outside after a devastating two minutes of not wrestling. A whip into the barricade and chair to the back....seemingly fire Sid up as he comes back with a chair of his own and they head towards the entrance. Sid ducks for a backdrop but someone blasts Steiner with a bat, allowing Sid to get an easy pin.

Rating: D-. So let's get this straight: Sid won the title twice last week in three matches in two days and now he's having three matches in one night after winning the title? Who writes these contracts? Hogan only had to wrestle at three Starrcades out of the six he was around for but Sid can wrestle seven times in four shows?

This Week In WCW Motorsports.

Hogan leaves.

Diamond Dallas Page vs. The Machine

Now here's an interesting case. Throughout the night there have been vignettes for the Machine, who is apparently coming. Machine was a masked man named Emory Hale (also spelled Hail at times) who floated around WCW for years because he had a great look and could conceivably be turned into a good monster. The problem was that even after years of training, he was one of the absolute worst workers in history. I distinctly remember watching this match for one very infamous spot and I'm curious to see if it's as bad as I remember it.

Machine gets a big, overblown entrance with a silhouette entrance with Hudson wanting to know why the Machine is here. It's not really that surprising. Everything else in WCW is stuck in 1986 so why not bring back the Machines? Machine shoves him into the corner a few times but Page grabs some armdrags to put him down. There's the discus lariat followed by a Cactus Clothesline as Page is in full control. This has been acceptable so far and Machine keeps the level up with a low blow and snake eyes before jumping up and down to stomp Page on the mat.

A Russian legsweep with little snap gets two and a World's Strongest Slam plants Page again. Now here's the big moment. Machine goes up top, in the corner on the far left from the camera. That's important as Page shakes the rope to crotch him, but for some reason he shakes the rope facing the entrance, meaning a rope that Machine wasn't touching. This must have thrown Machine off as he jumps halfway across the ring to crotch himself on the ropes instead of just, you know, dropping down. Page hits two more clotheslines (his fourth of the match) followed by the floatover Diamond Cutter for the pin.

Rating: D. You know, bizarre spot aside, this wasn't the worst match I've ever seen. The problem here is they built Machine up as someone important but Page beat him clean in four minutes. Page was getting back to the style that worked so well for him so maybe putting him nearer the top of the card could work. He's old but at least he hasn't been near the top of the card for fifteen years or so and is relatively fresh.

Arn Anderson says the Funk vs. Flair feud got him into wrestling. Wait

what? I'm not the best NWA historian in the world, but is there another major Flair vs. Funk feud other than the one in 1989? I'm sure they had matches before (I can find two World Title matches between them in the early 80s and a tag match in 1985), but unless I've never heard of it, they never did anything major other than their famous matches. Anyway, Anderson respects both guys but he's wanting WCW to stand up to the NWO and wants the two of them to lead the charge.

Villano IV vs. Tank Abbott

Meng is watching from the back as the Villanos try twin magic and are both knocked out in about a minute.

The Harris Boys talk about being NWO and show why you never hear them speak.

Funk asks Anderson whose side he's on but Arn won't answer.

Mamalukes vs. David Flair/Crowbar

Non-title and Crowbar starts with the Bull. Disco is on commentary again and asks a good question: why are these teams always paired together? As the match we've seen a few times already continues, we see Daffney go up to Ms. Hancock for watching the match, but let's cut away from that and see Crowbar hitting a slingshot splash for two. That's not the worst idea in the world.

Johnny comes back with a gorilla press drop and brings in Vito before it's off to David, who is brought in by Crowbar throwing him over the ropes. Makes sense. David dances over to Vito and gets kicked in the face for his efforts. Vito comes off as a Saturday Night Fever enthusiast, which is possibly why I've always kind of liked him. Vito drops a middle rope elbow for two and it's back to Johnny. The hiptoss into the powerbomb is enough to set up the tag back to Vito as the beating continues.

Vito goes back to the middle rope for a knee drop but David rolls away. Granted he rolled towards the corner and hit Vito's knee because the idea of left and right is too complicated for him but at least he tried.

Crowbar comes in off the hot tag and everything breaks down with Vito hitting the Impaler on David but Daffney offers a distraction. In the melee, David hits Vito with the crowbar to give Crowbar the fluke pin. Longest match of the night here at about 5:45.

Rating: D+. Disco brought up a good point: why are these teams always fighting? Is there no one else that you can put in there against the champions instead of Flair and Crowbar? You have a roster this big and they don't have a combination to put together against the Italians? The match was watchable as long as Crowbar was in there and Vito was his usual self.

Sid Vicious vs. Harris Twins

This is inside Caged Heat because that's how WCW thinks it gets ratings. They start fighting in the aisle and the Twins knock the World Champ onto a table. That goes nowhere so they try this cage thing with the Twins stomping away in the corner. A bunch of elbow drops have Sid in even more trouble and they clubber him down to keep the advantage. There is zero reason for this to be in a cage so far.

We hit the chinlock less than three minutes in and my goodness just close this company now. It's early 2000 and I'm watching one of the Harris Twins chinlock World Champion Sid Vicious inside Hell in a Cell on a Wednesday in front of 2,300 people in Sid's third match of the night. Sid fights back, throws we'll say Ron over the ropes and powerbombs Don for the pin, wrapping this up in less than four minutes, giving him a total in ring time of about ten and a half minutes for three gimmick matches.

Rating: F. If you need an explanation, you fail as a wrestling fan.

Post match the NWO raises the cage and comes in to destroy Sid as the cage....doesn't lower back, again defeating the purpose of the cage being there in the first place. Steiner puts him in the Recliner and Sid gets spray painted as Jarrett promises to make Sid miserable to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. There was some good stuff going on with this show but my goodness HIRE SOME NEW PEOPLE. WCW still had money at this point and there had to be someone out there they could snatch up. I know the main

event is Valhalla and no one new is cracking into it, but get someone new to fill out the midcard. It's a bad show but the main event stories are doing most of the damage. Oh and Hogan saying the young guys are worthless. That was bad too.

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