

Thunder – March 29, 2000: I'm Embarrassed By This Show

Thunder

Date: March 29, 2000

Location: Astro Arena, Houston, Texas

Attendance: 5,727

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Bobby Heenan

This show is pretty much worthless given what's coming in a few weeks. Therefore, it's just another week of meaningless Thunder so at least it's a regular show. The promotion is so dull at this point that there's only so much they can do to make this last night before the reboot interesting. Let's get to it.

By the way, of those 5,727, only 1,727 were paid. In the year 2000, Houston, Texas had a population of 1.9 million people. You should be able to draw 2,000 people if you hang a sign outside the building that says STAY CLEAR! RABID SQUIRREL OUTBREAK!

Opening sequence. The fact that Oklahoma is seen having a match in the video tells you all you need to know.

As soon as we're in the arena, it's time to talk about Russo and Bischoff. This is going to be a very long night.

Chris Candido vs. Chavo Guerrero Jr.

Candido goes right after him to start as the announcers talk about Michael Modest's win on Monday. A northern lights suplex gets two on Chavo but the referee gets knocked to the floor. Cue the Artist to nail Candido and Modest comes in to go after Chavo, only to eat a DDT. He doesn't bother to sell it though as he has to hit a quick White Noise, setting up Candido's top rope headbutt for the pin. This match didn't break two minutes and had a ref bump and two run-ins. Oh yeah Russo is back.

They all brawl post match and Chavo dives onto Modest and Candido before chasing Artist to the back.

The announcers talk about Russo and Bischoff arriving soon. I should probably just copy that for later.

Recap of Nitro, focusing on Sting and Luger's comedy brawling and Hogan vs. Wall.

Dustin Rhodes asks a horse statue what he should think about Russo and Bischoff arriving. A lot of wrestlers are asked about this throughout the night so I'm not going to bother saying what they're talking about unless it's something different.

Kidman gets the same treatment, minus the horse. Instead he talks about politics and elevating young talent to get the ratings back on top. I think I'd rather hear from the horse.

Some WCW people were at a charity basketball game. Nothing wrong with that.

Jim Duggan vs. Barbarian

Oh come on. Like, come on. I'm a Jim Duggan fan and I even had the foam 2x4 on my wall as a kid. I met him at Axxess last year and he was the nicest guy in the world. But I have absolutely no desire to see him wrestling in 2000, especially against someone like Barbarian. The worst part: this is probably going to get way more time and have a much cleaner finish than the first match. Duggan comes out in his janitor's outfit with the TV Title on backwards (this is non-title because it's only defended on Saturday Night) because Jim Duggan is TV Champion in the year 2000.

Duggan slugs away with his big right hands and a clothesline sends Barbarian out to the floor. Tenay hypes up a bunch of wrestlers telling us their thoughts on Russo and Bischoff returning throughout the night. This announcement came out two days ago on Nitro and I'm already numb to it. Tonight's big draw is opinions on the new creative team? It's like a dirt sheet got a TV deal and is running matches with whatever talent they

could find, including these relics from the 1980s.

I mean, this match feels like it should be main eventing a legends of wrestling card at the county fair. It's bad enough that I'm seeing a match that probably took place at a dozen house shows ten years ago, but now it's the second match on Thunder in 2000 as Tenay promises more wrestlers discussing backstage politics, whatever that means to most wrestling fans.

I'm trying to get off of this and keep going with the match but I can't wrap my head around how far this show and company has sunk. How is it possible that less than two years ago, Goldberg was the hottest thing the company has ever seen and now this is the best they can do? That really is impressive when you think about it.

Barbarian puts Duggan in a bearhug because what else is he going to do to him. Some shots to the head break Duggan out, because of all the things they don't hold over here, they forget the racial stereotypes. Duggan finally bites the face to escape and now the right hands to the head work. The three point clothesline is countered with a boot to the face but Duggan shrugs it off, hits a horrible clothesline and drops the Old Glory knee for the pin.

Rating: F. I was right. It ran about four and a half minutes, or more than double the opener, and had a completely clean finish. The worst part is that the match actually had a story to it. A weak story but a story nonetheless. It's the lack of any kind of caring for the match that makes it a failure, because there is no justification for these two to be out there on this stage.

Torrie Wilson thinks it can get them back on top of the ratings war.

Norman Smiley is glad Bischoff is back because he hired Norman in the first place and Russo got behind the Screaming Norman character. Yes character, because the stuff you see on camera is fake, but this interview is real.

The Cat vs. Dustin Rhodes

Aren't these two both heels? Cat doesn't want to hurt Dustin so here's a replacement.

Mr. Jones vs. Dustin Rhodes

Yes it's Dustin Rhodes vs. Virgil. Dustin is rightfully ticked off so he punches Jones a few times, bulldogs him, gets distracted by Cat, and takes a chair to the head from Terry Funk for the DQ.

Cat dances and does the James Brown cape thing, only to elbow Jones in the process.

Tank Abbott and Curt Hennig are in the positive camp.

Shannon Moore/Shane Helms vs. Los Fabulosos

If there is ANY justice in the world, this will be a 45 minute match. 3 Count performs before the match but Miss Hancock cuts them off. I really shouldn't be conflicted about this but I'm not sure which I'd rather see. For some reason Tenay is stunned that Hancock is with Los Fabulosos. Evan is the one on the floor here. Los Fabulosos try a double sunset flip to start before double teaming Shannon. Evan unsuccessfully hits on Hancock (can't blame a guy for trying) as Los Fabulosos have some miscommunication. King is hurricanranaed out to the floor but Evan isn't ready for the double teaming. Instead, Dandy rolls Shane up for the pin.

Chavo thinks it could work.

The Cat hopes it means more TV time.

Here are Disco Inferno and the Mamalukes, with Disco saying that if the Mamalukes can beat Harlem Heat, they get a title shot. However, Vito isn't happy. First off, they're Paisans, not Mamalukes. Secondly, Disco isn't doing anything for them, so until he learns how to manage them, they're going to manage him. That starts with this match.

Disco Inferno vs. Tank Abbott

Tenay: "OH YEAH!" Disco faints but Tank picks him up for some slams and the big right hand ends this in less than a minute.

We're five matches into this show and Duggan vs. Barbarian is still the longest match on the show by far.

One of the Twins likes the idea of a 1975 booking style in 2000. What does that even mean?

US Title: Jeff Jarrett vs. Booker

Jeff is defending and lets the NWO girls stick around again. Booker hammers away to start and gets a quick two off a rollup. The ax kick is broken up by the Harris Twins though, which the referee somehow misses. Back in and the champ chokes on the ropes but crotches himself by mistake. You know, as opposed to those times where you intentionally crotch yourself.

Instead it's time for the sleeper but Booker fights back because Jeff's sleeper doesn't have the best track record. Jeff gets crotched against the post and Booker scores with a missile dropkick. The Twins offer a distraction (because you can't just not look at them) and Jeff gets in a belt shot for two. The referee goes down but Jeff's middle rope guitar shot is caught in a Rock Bottom, only to have the Twins come in for the DQ.

Rating: D+. Well it beat Duggan and Barbarian. It was by thirteen seconds, but at least it did beat it. Of course it required two run-ins, a ref bump a belt shot and an attempted guitar shot before the interference to end the show, but it was longer than Duggan vs. Barbarian. Booker is getting closer but I don't see anything good for him out of this new regime. Maybe he'll tell us about it later!

Booker cleans house post match.

Miss Hancock, called Stacy, is happy with the returns.

Duggan thinks it could go well for him if they stop being prejudiced.

Mamalukes vs. Harlem Heat

I think the winners get a title shot but it's not clear if Disco was lying earlier. Vito and Stevie get things going but it's quickly double

teaming to put Stevie down. Johnny comes in to try a springboard but he gets kicked down to change control. Big T.'s spinebuster drops Johnny again as the announcers actually call the match for a change. Johnny's spinning kick to the face sets up the hot tag to Vito so house can be cleaned. Everything breaks down and Harlem Heat takes over again with Cash sending Johnny into the post on the floor. Cash comes in and the match is FINALLY thrown out.

Rating: D. Bad match here as the Mamalukes are now somehow one of the best teams in WCW. Now what do I mean by that? Are they better than the Jung Dragons or 3 Count? Probably not, but those teams are cruiserweights and therefore totally different than the regular tag teams. That's one of those WCW things: people are put in slots and that's where they are no matter what they do.

Vampiro is happy. He looks weird without paint on, but he's happy with the new writers.

This Week in WCW Motorsports. You would think they would ask the driver about the new writers.

Shannon thinks it's a plus.

Kidman vs. Ron Harris

Kidman gets a jobber entrance because of all the time spent on talking to wrestlers about writers. Kidman tries to speed things up but the wind from a missed big boot puts him down. Some right hands have little effect on Ron so Don low bridges Kidman out to the floor. A whip into the barricade keeps this match going because you need more Ron Harris in your life. Back in and a middle rope dropkick drops Ron and an awkward looking high cross body gets two. That's enough though so here's Don for the DQ.

Rating: D. So let me get this straight. They took a team like the Harris Brothers, who aren't interesting, aren't over, and aren't very good and gave them the Tag Team Titles. What do they do next? Take away the one thing they have going for them (being twins in case you were trying to figure it out) and get rid of it for the sake of a lame fake injury angle. I know I say this company can't get any dumber but they continue

to astound me.

Shane Helms says yay and Johnny the Bull agrees.

Hardcore Title: The Dog vs. Brian Knobbs

Yes Dog is back and this time Billy Silverman has him on a leash. Brian is defending and brings out a dumpster full of weapons. Dog gets in a good trashcan lid shot but Knobbs sprays him with a fire extinguisher. They head outside with Dog being whipped into the barricade before it's table time back inside. Knobbs charges into a boot but Dog bites instead of covering. Brian sends him through the table in the corner before a middle rope trashcan shot is enough to retain the title.

Rating: D. As usual, there's nothing to this idea and the match was the same one we've seen Knobbs have for months. The worst part here is the Dog, which has to be one of the worst gimmicks of all time. Above all else with it though, it's not even a complex character. It's like wrestling as the Wolfman or putting the word Big before your name. There was clearly no effort put into this, but they somehow made it as stupid as it could possibly be. I mean THE GUY IS A DOG! How can they possibly think this is the best they can put on TV? These things astound me more and more every single week and my mind can't handle much more.

Bagwell and Knobbs like the idea. Wait...has ANYONE been against the idea? For something that's so controversial, the results have been nearly unanimous. They can't even keep their storylines right with worked shoot promos.

Buff Bagwell vs. La Parka

The Skull Captain is in the hizz-ouse! He loses control of the mic again and starts talking even when the mic isn't at his lips. The voice calls Buff lumpy and promises a beating as La Parka holds up a sign that says I'M SORRY. This is another good example of why WCW is so frustrating. The whole La Parka vs. the voice thing is actually a clever idea.

Unfortunately, he's being fed to people like Tank Abbott who is still doing the same thing he was doing when he started or Buff Bagwell, who is

doing the same thing since he became Buff Bagwell because La Parka isn't a guy that can go anywhere, like say into the Cruiserweight Title picture over someone as boring as the Artist. Therefore he's stuck working as hard as he can and getting nowhere while Buff stayed around WCW's midcard despite being a jerk who never seemed to put in any effort.

La Parka punches and kicks before nailing a hard clothesline, only to get backdropped down. Probably out of frustration, La Parka hits him low and then drills Buff with a chop. An enziguri gets two as the announcers mostly ignore the match to talk about the Wall. La Parka goes up and mostly botches a split legged moonsault for two. A corkscrew moonsault misses (on purpose this time) and the Blockbuster gives Buff the pin.

Rating: D+. So yeah, the over and skilled guy gets to lose to the guy who has been here nine years and barely ever accomplished a thing because one of them has star potential. We'll ignore the fact that Bagwell hasn't actually lived up to any of that potential since he got to WCW but it's still there so let's keep giving him wins.

Ric Flair is asked his opinions and says he'll need ten minutes on Nitro to get through them all.

The Wall vs. Vampiro

Wall throws the chair in but eats a Van Daminator to knock him to the floor. I'm not even going to bother to complain about the lack of a DQ. Vampiro dives to take Wall down but Wall drops him ribs first across the top rope. Back up and Wall punches the chair into Vampiro's face before drawing out a table. Vampiro chairs Wall through the table though and that's the DQ.

Wall gets up again and slugs it out with Vampiro but security breaks it up. The guys beat up security and slug it out as the show ends.

Overall Rating: E. As in embarrassed. WCW should be embarrassed for putting this on. I know that WCW isn't known for having the best brain trust behind it, but I refuse to accept that anyone who works in wrestling can look at this show and think that it's the best possible product they can put out there.

In about 82 minutes of TV time, we saw 11 matches, none of which broke five minutes. Now there are shows that can have short matches and make it work. The old WCW show did and NXT makes it work a lot of the time today. However, that idea doesn't work when five of the eleven matches have clean finishes, assuming you count the hardcore match as a clean finish. Other than that, every match ended in a DQ or was thrown out. How is that good wrestling? How is that good television?

Oh but wait because there's other stuff besides wrestling. I can go with that. 1997 Monday Night Raw had some horrible wrestling but the promos were so awesome that it was one of the best years the company ever had. What did we get for promos on this show? Sixteen soundbytes from wrestlers and a valet, saying they think the new writers can turn WCW around, basically saying "yeah we kind of suck right now."

That's Thunder this week. 11 matches, nothing over five minutes, five clean finishes (one of which was Tank Abbott over Disco Inferno in 50 seconds) and 16 quick promos all saying some version of the same thing. Any guesses as to what Smackdown aired the next night for the WWF's mid week show? Chris Jericho vs. Eddie Guerrero and Rock vs. Kurt Angle. The oldest of those four at this point: Eddie Guerrero, age 32. In other words, not Jim Duggan vs. the Barbarian.

I've watched a lot of wrestling, including every Nitro, Thunder and Raw. I've sat through the old Herb Abrams UWF, Wrestling Society X and some flat out awful old school and indy shows. This show in particular got to me though, because it felt like the people producing it were laughing at wrestling fans and trying to insult them.

As bad as wrestling can get at times, you very rarely get the feeling that there isn't at least some effort. Even in a company like TNA, it feels like they're trying but just lost their way a long time ago. This show felt like WCW was saying "Those idiots are still watching. Let's see how much they can take." Then they sat back and laughed at the people who actually stuck with them because their salaries were guaranteed no matter how bad their product became.

This show was an embarrassment for WCW and wrestling fans in general. I

feel sorry for the people who tried to make it work, because they're fighting a battle that the people in power don't want to win. The reboot is coming soon, but if this is what we're going to have coming with it, things are going to get a lot sadder before they get better.

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