

Thunder – July 26, 2000: More Painful Than A Shovel To The Head

Thunder

Date: July 26, 2000

Location: Wheeling Civic Center, Wheeling, West Virginia

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Mike Tenay, Mark Madden

The Russo style is back in full force, meaning it's time for this show to fall through the floor all over again. We're coming up on New Blood Rising and other than the main event, it's hard to say what kind of nonsense is going to take place there. These shows are starting to make less and less sense every week but you have to expect that when a nitwit is on top. Let's get to it.

The Cat is standing by his limo when the Jung Dragons attack, this time with a sledgehammer. Yang smashes the window by mistake and Smooth the limo driver freaks out. Cat gives him a 3-1 match later tonight.

3 Count vs. Juventud Guerrera/Rey Mysterio

Evan is out with a knee injury but before we get going, Tank wants a dance contest against Konnan and Disco. It's just a ruse though and the fight is on quickly. Shannon gets two on Rey off a springboard cross body but here are the Jung Dragons to interfere. We settle down to Juvy....possibly countering a German suplex. He was supposed to flip over and land on his feet but didn't get all the way over, making it unclear if he got hurt or not.

Rey springboards in with a clothesline for two as Tony talks about Latino style being very hot in popular music. Shannon drops Rey with a sleeper drop for two but the Animals come back with something like What's Up, only with a legdrop instead of a headbutt. Everything breaks down and a Samoan drop/neckbreaker combination gets two on Rey, only to have Shannon take the Juvy Driver and 450 for the pin.

Rating: C+. So we have these two fun teams but we're getting people like the Perfect Event in the title match. The Animals may be incredibly annoying but at the same time they can still go this well in the ring. On top of that, why are none of these guys going after the Cruiserweight Title? Why are we stuck with the nonsense we've had to see for all these months? We'll go with "because WCW" and move on.

Here's Booker T. with something to say. He doesn't like Goldberg but after Monday he has to respect him. However, Goldberg needs to save the trauma (yes trauma) for his mama. These are his people here and he'll die in this ring to defend his title. Cue Jeff Jarrett to say he wants a lights out, unsanctioned match against Booker tonight with the title NOT on the line to protect Cat's pay per view main event. The fight is on and Tony says there's no holding them back as security holds them back. So we have Goldberg, Scott Steiner and even Kevin Nash waiting to challenge Booker but we're getting Jeff Jarrett? Really?

Post break Cat makes the match but threatens to beat up Booker and Jarrett if they don't calm down.

Miss Hancock wants to arm wrestle Major Gunns tonight.

The Artist vs. Skip Over

That would be Elix Skipper and for reasons I've never been able to explain, I've always been a big fan. Artist superkicks him at the bell as Tenay calls Skip part of the new blood (not the New Blood of course). Over spin kicks Artist in the face and hits a nice looking missile dropkick. Artist grabs a northern lights suplex for two of his own, followed by an Angle Slam.

Since this is a meaningless match against a rookie, Artist needs a chair. Skip baseball slides it into his face but Artist pops right back up. Paisley tries to hand him the chair but Kwee Wee comes out to lure her away. So much for that idea. Back in the ring, the chair has disappeared and Over takes Artist down with a springboard spinwheel kick. The Overdrive (That ridiculous spinning Fameasser thing. I'm still not sure how that's supposed to be a finishing move.) gives Over the upset.

Rating: D+. Fun little match here but as usual it's bogged down by all the other stuff going on at the same time. The Paisley/Kwee Wee stuff needs to go somewhere already. Not that it's been a long, drawn out story but more along the lines of the faster that happens, the faster we can get Artist off TV.

MIA is in the back and Gene looks at Major Gunns' chest. See it's funny because he's old.

Judy Bagwell drags Buff Bagwell away by the ear so they can go find the Cat. I guess this is supposed to be funny too.

M.I. Smooth vs. Jung Dragons

As usual, Mark keeps saying "last night" to refer to Monday, as in two days earlier. During the entrances, Tony says Goldberg can't make his scheduled appearance. Instead: Lance Storm and Mike Awesome. Oh I'm sure the fans are going to be thrilled. Like all three of them who show up. Smooth is in a shirt and tie and the Dragons stomp him down for three straight near falls. Jamie and Kaz are sent to the floor, leaving Smooth to powerslam and full nelson bomb Jamie for the pin.

So let's stop for a second here and look at what we're supposed to just accept here: Smooth, a non-wrestler (yes I know he was Ice Train but that's never mentioned here) just happened to debut here, wore street clothes, had theme music, knew wrestling moves, and beat a team in a featured pay per view match completely clean in under two minutes.

We're supposed to just go with this and then pay to see the Dragons, who are more guys who should be in the Cruiserweight Title hunt, at New Blood Rising. You can blame a lot of things for WCW going under, but this is the kind of thing that really should be near the top of the list. These things happened WAY too often around here and the fans are just supposed to go with them. At some point the fans are going to get tired of having their intelligence insulted and watch something else. WCW reached that point a long time ago and it's a big reason why they're not around today.

The Bagwells come into Cat's office and Judy says she can be the solution to the ratings problem. Cat gives her the match she wants, whatever that

is. Another reason this company is a mess right now: middle aged women coming in off the street and talking about ratings like they're something people discuss in casual conversation. I write about wrestling for a living and I barely discuss ratings with my wrestling friends, let alone some random person I strike up a chat with at Wal-Mart. As usual, Russo and Ferrara or whoever is writing this show has no idea how normal people talk in real life and it sounds really awkward.

It's time for arm wrestling and I'll let you fill in most of the details here. Hancock is in a red shirt here and takes off the jacket for a change. David Flair is guest referee for the sake of comedy and makes sure to cheat to help Hancock win. Gunns freaks out so Hancock sprays hairspray in her face. There goes Gunns' top but the Wall, now in MIA gear, comes out to chokeslam Flair. He talks to the blind Gunns and says "it's me, it's me" (that D-O-Double G?) to calm her down.

Kanyon says he needs to find a Kimberly. Judy is feeling the BANG tonight though.

The MIA rename the Wall as A-Wall (that's actually kind of clever) and shave his head.

Muta and Vampiro have beaten down Kronik.

Great Muta/Vampiro vs. Sean O'Haire/Mark Jindrak

This is the result of Muta and Vampiro issuing an open challenge. O'Haire starts with Muta and takes him down with a dropkick off those long legs of his. Vampiro and Jindrak fight on the floor before coming in, which I guess counts as a double tag in this match. Jindrak kicks him in the face and brings Sean back in for a clothesline.

It's already back to Jindrak so Muta comes in and kicks him a few times before officially coming in off the tag. The refereeing sucks around here. The heels pound away on Jindrak for a bit until he snaps off a powerslam and tags in Sean to clean house. Muta will have none of that and snaps off a dragon screw legwhip before twisting on the knee to make Sean tap. Too short to rate but it was energetic while it lasted.

Post match Demon comes out to help with the beatdown but Kronik makes the save and hurts people.

Judy puts Buff in a room and tells him to stay there. What in the world did Buff do to deserve this story?

Big Vito wants a rematch with Lance Storm.

Judy Bagwell vs. Canyon

After Judy comes out to Buff's pyro and Madden reminds us that she used to be a World Tag Team Champion (gah), Canyon says he's Diamond Cut her already. Tonight though, it's going to be the Canyon Cutter so Judy needs to leave before this gets bad. The match starts and it's a bunch of shoving and slapping until Canyon grabs her for the Canyon Cutter. This brings out Buff, who is told to stay in the aisle or his mom gets hurt. Canyon wants a match at New Blood Rising and if Judy wins, she's Canyon's Kimberly. Buff agrees and the camera cuts away as Canyon lays her out (thanks to TBS).

Shane Douglas and Torrie Wilson talk about the G-rated tape from Monday.

Kidman has another tape.

Canyon is driving away, gets out and Canyon Cuts a guard, then leaves. Funniest thing on the show by about a mile so far.

Here are Torrie and Shane with Torrie being annoyed at Kidman for what he did on Monday. Torrie: "Do you know what kind of a position you put me in?" Shane says play the new tape and it's the two of them sitting on a bed. Shane apologizes over and over again for "performance issues" and they storm out of the ring.

Storm says he'll give Vito a Hardcore Title match with no weapons allowed.

Shane leaves to get some air when Kidman comes up to laugh at Torrie. This is of course stupid and Shane beats Kidman down.

Hardcore Title: Lance Storm vs. Big Vito

Vito is challenging and jumps Storm during 0 Canada, sending Madden into hysterics again. The usual low level offense sends Storm outside and it's a superkick and kind of fall away slam for two on the champ. A good looking top rope elbow gets two for Vito and the referee gets bumped, allowing Storm to hit Vito with a chair for two. Vito comes right back with a German suplex and clothesline but Storm calmly grabs the Maple Leaf for the submission to retain. Again too short to rate but Vito comes off as a guy who tries when he's out there.

Awesome runs in and lays out Storm.

Just like last week with Nash, here's a sitdown interview with Goldberg. First up is Hall blaming Goldberg for Scott Hall being gone but Goldberg really doesn't care what Nash says. The Outsiders wanted Goldberg on their side because they knew he was going to be a big deal. Nash has no appreciation for the fans but Goldberg does everything he does for the fans. As a heel remember. Hudson: "For the last few months you've played the heel for World Championship Wrestling." Goldberg says he hasn't been comfortable with it because that's not who he is.

Someone thought turning him heel was a good idea that might help the ratings but it's totally against what Goldberg is. With his eyes bugging out but in the same voice, Goldberg wants to refute what Nash said last week. The last thing he thought he was going to do was be a wrestler because he wanted to be a pro football player. Now he has a chance to give back to the fans. He can shake a sick kid's hand and give them a smile which is worth more than anything else he could get. Goldberg: "Nash is right. I don't love this sport."

Hudson calls the work with the kids paying his dues. Goldberg says Nash has "paid his dues" for fifteen years and he won't ever be in the spot Goldberg reached in three years. Amen brother. Goldberg brings up Nash breaking the Streak two weeks after Nash got on the booking committee. Hudson brings up the three way at New Blood Rising and Goldberg says his immediate goal is to make Nash suffer for all the damage Nash has done to his career.

What Goldberg is doing right now is taking one for the team instead of

what he wants to be doing. When a promoter is looking at a card, he doesn't care about paying dues because it's all about who is going to draw the most money. All it means is that he's the right character and the right person to see this through. Hall and Nash didn't pop the business like he and Hogan did. Hogan, Flair and Arn Anderson made this business what it is today. I love Arn but that's more of a stretch than I can handle.

The only way Nash is winning in Vancouver is to put himself back on that booking committee because Goldberg is going to kill him. Nash saying he doesn't care what the bookers say sounds like a challenge because Nash can't run away on those old knees of his. Goldberg recommends ice and Advil because Nash is going to need them. That wraps things up with no mention of Booker T. and Monday's match whatsoever.

.....WOW. Just like last week, this would have been one heck of a shoot interview. If this had been from RF Video or something like that, it would be really entertaining to listen to. The problem is THIS IS A MAJOR WRESTLING SHOW. Think back with me to CM Punk's Pipe Bomb. Punk ranted about how Cena was just an act and how he was being held back, but it was all building to a wrestling match, not some scripted deal where they may or may not do what the bookers (more on that in a second) told them to do.

This brings us to the big problem that was there last week: how many fans knew what was going on? Serious question: how many fans watching this heard the word "booker" and thought they were talking about Booker T.? I know it sounds stupid today but is it really that much of a stretch?

This is more of Russo trying to make himself sound smart and thinking that EVERYONE is on Meltzer's mailing list in July 2000 because he reads that stuff every five minutes. This probably went over the heads of 98% of fans and it's really annoying to sit through these ten minute interviews to set up a match that is going to suck because Nash is involved and can barely do anything. But hey, they're WORKING US and that's what matters, even if no one but them cares.

Madden: "So no matter what the creative committee tells Nash, Goldberg

and Steiner, they're just going to do what they want?" Oh screw off WCW. Good grief man. Like I said: Punk vs. Cena came together in a wrestling match, not some thing where they were going off script. Mainly because THEY NEVER SAID THEY HAD A SCRIPT because that's the stupidest thing you can do in a wrestling promotion.

Booker T. vs. Jeff Jarrett

Non-title and anything goes. Jeff has a Sting style trench coat on for no logical reason. Cat is on commentary and says he's not Commissioner at this point, though he insists Madden call him Commissioner. This is billed as a Bunkhouse Brawl because we're all cowboys who love to ride horses. They brawl into the crowd to start with Booker in control until Jeff hits him in the head with a shovel. Tony tries to call it but Cat cuts him off to announce Sting vs. Booker T. for the title on Monday.

Amazingly enough Booker isn't dead after BEING HIT IN THE HEAD WITH A SHOVEL so Jeff puts him in a wheelbarrow and rams him into the barricade. Back in and Booker chokes with a bullrope but Jeff hits him in the face with....something made of metal. A middle rope guitar shot misses (Tony: "This pales in comparison to being hit in the head with a shovel." I actually stopped the video and shouted "WHAT???" at the screen when Tony said that. Ignoring that it's a breakaway guitar, METAL IS A LOT HARDER THAN WOOD YOU STUPID STUPID MAN!) but Jeff starts choking with the bullrope.

Cat stays on his ratings kick as Jeff chokes Booker with a rope for two arm drops. Booker fights up and hits the spinning forearm as Tony admits that Booker is a superhero. The ax kick and a Spinarooni connect but Jeff guitars the bad knee and puts on the Figure Four with Booker hanging over the apron. Booker passes out from the pain. Well in theory at least as he was still conscious and didn't say he gave up but the referee stopped it anyway.

Rating: D. It's not often in my life as a fan that I'm disgusted by how stupid something is but that's what happened here. This was giving away what wasn't going to be an interesting main event in the first place and having them use a bunch of weapons before we get the boring version in a

few weeks. Oh and make sure the champion loses because that's going to draw interest in the rematch.

I looked at Jeff after the match and my goodness the level of not caring went through the roof. He's just so uninteresting in this role and unfortunately we're stuck because Russo, the undisputed king of insanity and over the top booking, thinks the most generic heel in forever is worth pushing on top.

Overall Rating: F. Let me make this clear: there was good stuff on this show. The opener was fun and some of the Kanyon stuff was amusing. If you take those parts on their own, you would have had a pretty entertaining show and WCW would have come off looking a lot stronger than they did coming into this week. However, there was a lot of other stuff this week too.

I know I often talk about WCW acting like its fans are stupid. However, in this case, it felt worse than ever. This actually felt like they wanted me to be angry at them and walk off, never to watch again. Between the Goldberg shoot, a shovel to the head not putting someone down for more than twenty seconds, Kanyon suddenly wanting Judy Bagwell as his valet, everyone (and their mother in this case) talking about ratings and a man having performance issues, I felt like I was watching the kind of show that non-wrestling fans pretend all wrestling is to make fun of it.

That's what Thunder and WCW as a whole have become: juvenile, unfunny people making fun of wrestling because they want to laugh instead of trying to take this seriously. This felt like a parody of a wrestling promotion but it still wasn't funny. What is there on here that makes me want to come back? I'm not seeing it anywhere and I really don't want to see where things go from here.

It's not funny anymore and I don't know why people would think it's going to get any better from here on out. More than anything else, that makes me sad, because it feels like the people in charge are glad it's going under because it makes them feel better about whatever is going on in their lives. This really is a case of people treating this place like a playground and not caring at all what happens to anyone as long as they

get a good laugh at our expense. Enjoy what you're getting WCW, because this is all on you.

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