

Thunder – December 20, 2000: Ending Like It Began

Thunder

Date: December 20, 2000

Location: Richmond Coliseum, Richmond, Virginia

Attendance: 2,872

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Mike Tenay, Stevie Ray

This is the final show for the year for WCW as the next two Nitros are canceled due to Christmas and New Year's Day while next week's Thunder is a Best Of show. Believe it or not, WCW is actually on a roll at this point, or at least as much of a roll as you can be on with one good show. Let's get to it.

The opening recap focuses on the World Title situation which might be more interesting if Lance Storm was involved but instead we're getting Steiner, Jarrett and another mystery man. Steiner's last surprise challenger was Sid so this could be anyone from Rollerball Rocco to Flyboy Rocco.

Ric Flair is in the back of his limo and talks about how great the pay per view is going to be. The Mystery Man is hyped up again and we hear about tonight's tag team battle royal.

Opening sequence.

Cruiserweight Title: Chavo Guerrero Jr. vs. Jamie Noble

Noble is challenging. Before the match, Chavo talks about being ready to face Shane Helms at Sin. However, if he somehow loses here, it would be a rematch at Sin and Shane would be left out in the cold. What an odd threat. Noble starts fast with a dropkick and slam before putting on a quickly broken up STF. Chavo is sent out to the floor and grabs his title but goes back inside so Noble can roll him up for two.

What appears to be a low blow puts Jamie down and Chavo's dropkick gets

two more. Jamie gets in a quick neckbreaker and fires off some right hands to send Chavo backing into the corner. Noble loads up a superplex but here's Shane to hold Noble's leg, allowing Chavo to send him down. A frog splash and the brainbuster retain Chavo's title.

Rating: C. This wasn't the most exciting match in the world but I'm really digging the storytelling here. It's a basic, logical story that makes you wonder how Chavo is going to get out of this at Sin. That's the kind of thing that would have done WCW a world of good in their main events over the last year or so. A lot of the time a basic story will give you more positives than almost any overly complicated story like a big swerve and a heel stable headed by a corrupt boss.

Crowbar is ready for Terry Funk at Sin.

Cat rides up to Flair on an ATV (Which you can WIN!) and asks for a match with Scott Steiner tonight. Flair, realizing that Cat has no chance of actually beating Steiner, is fine with this.

Bam Bam Bigelow is ready for Crowbar tonight.

Here's Jim Duggan in street clothes with something to say. Duggan doesn't want to take up too much of our time so we can get back to the show. He's made a decision and it's caused him some issues. About three months ago, it was decided that he needed to retire because it was past his time.

For twenty years, Duggan has shared his life with us because this is who he is. Then he made the mistake of turned his back on his country and gave up on everything. Now he needs to apologize for everything, including to his father, his wife and his children. Above all else though, he wants to apologize to the fans. After those twenty years, they deserve an apology because he can only hope they understand. I like the idea here and it's another story that is always going to work but couldn't this be used on someone with a bit more upside than Jim Duggan?

After a break, Duggan is leaving but Mike Awesome offers him a ride after the show is over.

The Natural Born Thrillers are ready for the battle royal and Gene

Okerlund's insults don't seem to sway them. Stasiak insults Okerlund and that's about it.

Hugh Morrus thanks Duggan and accepts his apology. There will be no taking Hugh's beer though.

Tag Team Battle Royal

3 Count, Jung Dragons, Meng/Kwee Wee, Filthy Animals, Noble and Karagias, Harris Twins, Sean O'Haire/Mark Jindrak, Perfect Event

The winners get a title shot at the pay per view. The fight starts during the entrances and it only takes one member being eliminated for a team to be out. Yang is eliminated early to get rid of the Dragons and thankfully clear the ring out a bit, which would go much faster if there wasn't a referee included.

Noble and Karagias go out next as those pesky cruiserweights are being cleared out. Everyone slowly beats on everyone until 3 Count is eliminated. This nonsense is getting ridiculous. Cue Vito to beat on Reno (standing at ringside with the Thrillers) and Johnny the Bull of all people to make a return and blast Sanders with a kendo stick.

We get a Mamalukes reunion as Meng is eliminated by the Twins, only to have them get eliminated as a result. We're back from a break with Kidman/Mysterio, Jindrak/O'Haire and Perfect Event. The Thrillers clean house because it's four against two meager cruiserweights. A dropkick eliminates Kidman so we're down to the Thrillers...who split the win, basically repeating the same idea that 3 Count had in the ladder match at Starrcade.

Rating: D-. Make sure to treat those cruiserweights like they're the most worthless things in the world. I mean you have SHAWN STASIAK out there to get a title shot and stand tall. The idea is fine but it's really not going to hurt you to let some of the other teams look like something important on the way to having these two teams stand tall.

Sanders runs his mouth a lot post match. Apparently any two of these Thrillers will be challenging the Insiders but we won't know until Sin.

Riveting indeed.

Scott Steiner shouts that Flair doesn't control him and he wants that Mystery Man tonight.

Konnan vs. Elix Skipper

Konnan does his catchphrases, which I really should understand by this point. They start screwing stuff up early as Konnan botches something off the ropes, prompting the camera to cut away to the crowd in a never good sign. Back with Konnan getting stomped down and put in a chinlock for a bit. The rolling clothesline and a reverse DDT put Elix down, only to have him get to the apron for a springboard missile dropkick. We hit the chinlock again because Konnan needs to rest three minutes in. A springboard legdrop gets two for Skipper but Konnan hits another rolling lariat and grabs the Tequila Sunrise for the tap out.

Rating: D-. And that's ALL on Konnan, who looked like a disaster out there, barely being able to do anything without being worn out in a short TV match. Skipper was doing his usual stuff but Konnan is a big deal in another country so it's time for Elix to lose cleanly. Thanks for the cool spots but drawing power from years ago is all that matters.

Jeff Jarrett is ready for Scott Steiner at Sin. I can't believe we have to sit through more Jarrett main events. Was anyone asking for that?

The Misfits yell at Hugh Morrus over him accepting Duggan's apology while turning his back on Chavo. Morrus says the difference is Chavo not realizing what he's doing is wrong. Point to Morrus on that one.

Bam Bam Bigelow vs. Crowbar

Bigelow is still limping. Crowbar is quickly thrown into the corner for an Avalanche because what else is someone Bigelow's size going to do at this point in his career. A huge toss sends Crowbar flying but Bigelow makes the mistake of screaming at Daffney who easily destroys him with some more vocal eruptions. Crowbar gets smart and goes after the knee before they take it outside. Bigelow sends him into the barricade but gets his eyes raked by the banshee, allowing Crowbar to chop block him

down. Cue Meng to lay out Crowbar, allowing Bigelow to mostly botch Greetings From Asbury Park for the quick pin.

Rating: D. I'm not sure what's worse: Bigelow going over Crowbar or the fact that these two just had a better match without weapons than they've had with them in what feels like years. These guys are capable of wrestling a coherent match with a simple story in Bigelow's knee injury but for some reason they're stuck with the weak weapons stuff most of the time.

Norman Smiley is still too excited about Glacier returning but is told he has a match. It's a makeup match from a few weeks ago.

Norman Smiley vs. Goldberg

Norman is in street clothes. Goldberg actually gives him a few seconds before the spear and Jackhammer make it 33-0.

Shane Douglas pays Kronik off.

The sitdown interview this week is with Ric Flair, who won't say who the Mystery Man is despite Tenay asking him over and over. Why Ric just doesn't say "it's a MYSTERY" isn't clear. Flair praises Steiner's abilities but says the title has a big target that comes with it. The title is all that matters though, unlike this interview which was the same stuff that Flair has been saying for weeks now.

Ernest Miller is ready for his title shot.

Shane Douglas/Kronik vs. Filthy Animals

Shane does the same promo he always does before the match, which to be fair still works well enough. Douglas is about to start with Morrus but brings in Adams before there's any contact. I'm not a Shane fan but he knows how to use the most basic heel stuff to good results. Morrus clotheslines Adams and brings in Lash for an ax handle.

The dancing punches don't seem to work so Lash settles for kicking Adams low. It's not exactly a crushing blow however as Adams takes over with an easy slam and brings in Clark for the first time. Lash's offense has

about as much effect as you would expect so it's off to Wall for a showdown that could set wrestling back a hundred years.

Clark uses a drop toehold of all things so he can tag in Shane for the reverse Hennig necksnap. Raise your hand if that's the sequence you were expecting. Wall gets in a spinebuster on Shane as everything breaks down. Clark gives Lash a Meltdown for no cover, followed by Morrus slamming Shane and hitting the moonsault for two. Adams cleans house with a chair though and the Franchiser puts Morrus away to give us a reason for a rematch at Sin.

Rating: D+. This actually didn't suck as they went with a simple formula until right up to the ending. Kronik as partners for hire isn't the worst idea in the world and it's a lot better than having them be paid off for half of a fifteen minute match and not being able to read a stopwatch. Douglas isn't great either but he's as good as any other midcard heel so him getting Morrus again worse as well as anything else would.

Post break, Morrus yells at the Misfits.

Here's Team Canada with something to say. After the now traditional complaining about the Presidential elections, Storm rips on Duggan for turning his back on Canada. Of course cue Duggan again and amazingly the fans go INSANE with patriotism. By that I mean they do nothing and WCW pipes in USA chants. Duggan goes in for the fight and hangs on, only to have Mike Awesome come in and take him out to become the newest member of the team.

Post break, Awesome declares himself the Canadian Career Killer. I would have gone with the guy fighting to become World Champion because he's the kind of guy that might get some attention because he's an athletic freak but this is a major step up from That 70s Guy.

WCW World Title: Scott Steiner vs. The Cat

Cat is challenging of course. Steiner pounds him in the back and stomps Cat in the corner because this is Scott Steiner vs. the Cat. The Push-Up elbow gets two and a backbreaker allows Scott to yell at Ms. Jones. Cat comes back with a few kicks, including one to put Steiner on the floor.

We get the catfight as Cat stays on Steiner, including a shot to the throat back inside. Never mind though as we get the spinning belly to belly, only to have the Mystery Man come out and distract Steiner, setting up the Feliner for two. A t-bone suplex sets up the Recliner and we're done.

Rating: D. Yeah this was exactly what you would expect with the Cat basically getting destroyed and only a few kicks keeping this from being a squash. At the very least, and I do mean VERY least, Cat is able to work a match without looking like he's about to have a mild heart attack during the match. That's something isn't it?

Steiner chases after the Mystery Man to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. They've had worse shows but it's definitely a big letdown after Monday. This was all about the questionable decisions like having Konnan go over Skipper clean and WCW thinking Bam Bam Bigelow is anything but nostalgia in the year 2000. It's a pretty standard WCW show for the time: a decent opener and then a bunch of uninspiring stories centered around people who aren't all that interesting in the first place.

That's it for WCW 2000 as the only thing left is a Best of Thunder show and I don't think anyone is going to be wanting to read that. This year is definitely divided into different sections. The earliest part of the year, as in from the start up through Russo/Bischoff resetting things, is flat out boring. The stories weren't any good and the shows were just big wastes of time as Sid held the title for months at a time.

Then it was the New Blood Era where we were supposed to buy that the younger guys were important, even though it was Jeff Jarrett and his thirteen year career running things for the new generation. The rest of the main event was all the old guys being treated as the heroes while the actual new blood was lucky to get a midcard title shot here and there. On top of that you had Russo and Bischoff turning the show into a circus as the fans turned away in droves.

Oh and always remember: Vince Russo is MANLY and can hold on in the Figure Four for over a minute because even though there was a problem in

there, they couldn't possibly change the story to protect the move and make Russo look like any normal person in one of the most famous finishing holds of all time.

Then Russo left and Booker T. won the World Title a few times and things got a little bit better, only to have him drop it to Scott Steiner (which was fine) to make sure the most technically sound main eventer they had went away. Booker winning was a genuinely cool moment as he remains one of the only people in WCW to have a traditional rise up the card before winning the title. After that, the show fell back into the same problems it had earlier in the year: boring stories, lame wrestling, the entertaining people being shoved to the side so the "draws" could get all the glory.

WCW was almost entirely dead coming into 2000 and their Hail Mary of Russo and Bischoff working together failed more spectacularly than anyone could have ever imagined. The company was more than living on borrowed time and they didn't do themselves any favors by going with the things people didn't want to see while getting rid of the stuff that wasn't like the WWF. Yeah Raw was on fire at this point, but WCW was standing in the way of the flames to burn themselves alive. This year was nothing short of a disaster all around and a fitting way to set up the final months of the company.

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