

Thunder – January 24, 2001: The New WCW

Thunder

Date: January 24, 2001

Location: Lawrence Joel Memorial Coliseum, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Tony Schiavone

We're still just living in Ric Flair's WCW as he and the Elite (the unofficial name at the moment) destroy everything in sight, though to be fair it's more interesting than the Sid Rules The World stuff we sat through for so long. It's getting closer to SuperBrawl with Kevin Nash getting the World Title shot against Scott Steiner because we're just that lucky. Let's get to it.

Cruiserweight Contender Countdown

I could go for this no promo to start thing. This is basically a singles version of Tag Team Turmoil with the winner getting the title shot at SuperBrawl. Works for me. Shane Helms and Elix Skipper get things going and it's already time to run the ropes. Elix grabs a quick suplex for two and spins off the middle rope into a legdrop for two more. The Play of the Day is countered into a Vertebreaker for the very fast pin. Oh so it's one of those gauntlet matches.

Evan Karagias is in at #3 (of 10) and misses an early top rope Lionsault, setting up the Vertebreaker for the second pin in less than two minutes. Kidman is in at #4 and quickly knocks Shane outside for a nice plancha. Back in and a TKO into a facebuster onto the knee drops Kidman but there's no selling since this is a cruiserweight match. Instead Kidman grabs the BK Bomb but Shane pops back up for two off the X Plex. Another Vertebreaker is countered into the Kid Crusher to get rid of Shane. They're certainly in the "hurry up and get your stuff in" formula.

Yang is in at #5 (with a much more covered up Leia Meow) as we take a break. Back with Yang grabbing a neckbreaker across the top rope. A headscissors sends Kidman face first into the mat and Yang gets two more

off something like an Iconoclasm. For absolutely no logical reason, Yang sits on the second rope to try and suplex Kidman to the floor. Instead Kidman hits a super Kid Crusher for the elimination.

It's Jamie Noble in at #6 and scores with a missile dropkick, only to get caught in a reverse suplex. Kidman throws him down with a belly to belly suplex and takes Jamie to the top for a super Michinoku Driver and another near fall. Noble better win if they let him kick out of that. Jamie gets in a jumping tombstone to put Kidman away and Rey Mysterio is in at #7.

Rey quickly sends him outside and slides under the bottom rope into a tornado DDT on the floor. I don't think I've seen him do that one since, or at least not very often. Back in and Jamie catches a springboard in a sitout powerbomb for two, only to have Rey hit his sitout bulldog. A springboard diving headbutt gets rid of Jamie and it's Lash Leroux in at #8. Lash grabs a tilt-a-whirl side slam and a seated dropkick gets two. Rey counters what looked like a BK Bomb into a faceplant (he's Kidman's partner after all) before a split legged moonsault eliminates Leroux.

Shannon Moore is in at #9 with something like a springboard Rough Ryder for an early two. A Whisper in the Wind misses but Shannon lands on his feet, only to have Rey trip him down into a bridging pin to get us down to the final two. Kaz Hayashi is in at #10 and kicks the winded Rey, because a gauntlet match causes you to be winded after four minutes in the ring. A helicopter bomb gets two for Kaz but Rey sends him shoulder first into the post. Rey takes it up top for a super sitout bulldog and the pin, giving him the title shot against Chavo.

Rating: B-. These matches are hit and miss for me as they're a lot of fun but at the same time I take issue with these clean falls taking place in about a minute each. If you can pin someone that fast here, why can't you do it that quickly in a regular match? That being said, the match was fast paced and entertaining, which is SO much more fun than the main events that I have to watch at double speed to stay awake.

Jeff Jarrett laughs at Hugh Morrus for losing on Monday and gets punched out. Laughing ensues.

Glacier video, followed by Norman Smiley actually meeting his hero. Glacier says he has Norman's back tonight.

Here are the Cat and Miss Jones with something to say. He announces the same three matches we already knew about for the pay per view before making Jarrett vs. Morrus and Scott Steiner/Animal vs. Kronik for tonight. That means it's time to dance.

Ric Flair has a master plan. Can we ever have a villain with just a plan? Why does everything have to be a master plan?

Shane Douglas tells Bam Bam Bigelow that he can be in Flair's group if he beats Rick Steiner tonight.

Norman Smiley vs. Mike Awesome

I could go for more of Major Gunns in black with the red maple leaves. No Glacier in sight and Norman looks a bit nervous. They run the ropes to start but stop. WIGGLE TIME! Awesome slowly pounds him down as the announcers discuss the improvement Awesome has undergone. Norman gets in a clothesline and loads up the Big Wiggle (Tenay: "Is he looking for Glacier?"), only to be run over again. Tony has to cut off Tenay from talking about the main event but a neck crank from Awesome pulls Tony into the 1997 style of commentary all over again.

Cue Glacier, with Tony acting like this is some huge deal. Glacier takes his sweet time (you might say he's moving like a gl...yeah that's bad even for me) and stops to wave at the fans, allowing Awesome to suplex a distracted Norman. A slingshot splash gets two for Awesome, followed by a powerslam for the same. Glacier's music is still playing as he walks around the ring. Tony: "The match is still going on. Of course it is." The Awesome Bomb finally puts Smiley away.

Rating: D. I'm amazed but somehow this superhero worship is actually a step up over the hardcore stuff. Glacier is just a comedy guy here and that's all he needed to be, especially given how much of a joke his first run really was. Smiley vs. Glacier could be an amusing angle but somehow Glacier would probably wind up going over.

Post match Glacier gets in the ring and tells Awesome to bring it as Mike leaves. Glacier does the post match karate demonstration and shoves Norman away.

Post match Gene Okerlund rips on Glacier, who is oblivious to everything wrong with what he just did. Norman collapses and Glacier says he's here to clean up the evils of WCW. This was actually kind of funny.

Here are Kwee Wee and Paisley with something to say. Kwee Wee, calm again here, issues another open challenge and we're already on a fan before he can even get the words out of his mouth. Kwee Wee drags him over the barricade and gives the plant a piledriver until security drags Kwee Wee away. If they were actually serious about pushing him, WCW would let him be Alan Funk (or any other name that doesn't bring back Terry) and take away the pink and the glitter, but I'm sure the lack of getting over is his fault at this point.

Kronik says Animal and Steiner are going to get smoked tonight.

Jeff Jarrett vs. Hugh Morrus

Before the match, Jarrett goes on about how he's beaten Page before and he can do it again at SuperBrawl. Morrus charges the ring and hammers away with the smile on his face. The announcers ignore the match in the first minute to talk about the main event as Morrus gets two off a powerslam.

They head outside with Jeff already resorting to cheating with a chair to the ribs. Jeff starts in on the knee but does that always stupid looking jump off the top with the sole intention of landing on a raised boot. Morrus gets in a top rope elbow but cue the Wall to try a chokeslam. That's broken up but Jeff goes for the guitar, allowing Wall to get in the chokeslam on the second try. A Stroke gives Jeff the pin.

Rating: D+. This was better than it should have been and at least they're going forward towards a logical match like Wall vs. Morrus. I mean, no one is going to want to see it and it won't draw any money but at least it's logical, which is a step up for WCW. It's also good to see Jarrett back in the midcard where he belongs instead of teasing more World Title

runs.

Ron Harris vs. Crowbar

Of course, and to make matters worse, Daffney has a megaphone. Harris starts fast by pounding Crowbar in the corner and planting him with a side slam. A quick cross body gives Crowbar two and I'd assume that's it for his offense. Harris takes him outside for a whip into the barricade, allowing Don to get in some stomping. Back in and Ron grabs a sleeper followed by a clothesline but something like a Death Drop gives Crowbar a breather. He scores with a moonsault and it's time for TWIN MAGIC! The neck brace switches and Don ends Crowbar with something like a Rock Bottom.

Rating: F. This is the new WCW: a place where Crowbar and Kwee Wee, who have worked very hard to get over the genius characters of as close to gay as we can get without saying it and battling car wash guy who thinks it's 1974, are treated like morons and jobbers because RICK STEINER, LEX LUGER AND THE FREAKING HARRIS TWINS need pushes. In other words, take every single problem WCW has had with its booking over the years and do it again because we need to show how it's going to be different this time.

Rick Steiner is willing to beat up Bam Bam Bigelow to prove a message to Shane Douglas.

We go to a long video of Tenay meeting with an orthopedic surgeon to talk about Sid's leg injury. Basically he snapped it like a pencil and will be on crutches for up to three months and then in therapy for up to a year. Like Sid or not, that's one of the worst injuries you'll ever see.

Rick Steiner vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

If Bigelow wins, he's on Flair's team. They slug it out to start until Rick grabs a belly to belly, followed by a Steiner Line and another belly to belly. Good to see he's going versatile this week. Bigelow comes back with a quick slam and the flying headbutt hits way too early. Greetings From Asbury Park is countered with a DDT, followed by an elbow drop for two. Another DDT sets up the Steiner Bulldog for the pin, despite Bigelow

not really being touched as he went down.

Ric Flair knocks out the Cat with brass knuckles. We also see Nash and Page laid out.

Rick Steiner tells Kronik to go to the ring for the main event while he takes care of these three. So he's a repetitive wrestler and a trained medic? Shane comes in and hits Rick with his chain.

Kronik vs. Scott Steiner/Road Warrior Animal

Before the match, Steiner yells at Kronik for making a horrible decision. He's ready for Nash too because Nash is going to get the same treatment that Booker T. and Sting received. Animal and Clark get things going, preventing that LOD vs. Demolition reunion showdown that we were all looking forward to. Stereo shoulders give us a stalemate so Animal's clothesline and elbow drop get two.

Adams comes in and we get the REAL showdown, only to have Animal bring in Steiner to stomp on Adams in the corner. A quick full nelson slam puts Scott down and the heels bail outside where Clark takes them down with a flip dive off the apron. Back in and Scott plants him with a butterfly powerbomb, meaning it's time for the push-ups.

Steiner charges into a boot though and the hot tag (Tenay's words) brings in Clark to clean house. The Meltdown gets two on Animal but here's Totally Buff to break up High Times. Animal breaks up the full nelson slam as Buff chokes Cat on the floor. Now the High Times is good enough to pin Animal. Tenay pushes this as a major upset, despite Kronik being former multiple time Tag Team Champions and Steiner/Animal never teaming before.

Rating: D. I actually didn't hate this as there's a simple idea here and the younger (I think?) guys went over clean. It gets really tiring seeing an established team losing to two guys who happen to be good tag wrestlers with their regular partners but WCW actually went with the logical ending here. I'm as shocked as you are but this could have been a lot worse.

Steiner comes back in with the pipe to beat Kronik down and end the show.

Overall Rating: D. I know the running line about WCW is that everything goes down after the cruiserweights but this was one of the worst cases I've seen in a long time. This Elite story isn't even warmed over NWO at its best and the wrestling is getting weaker and weaker every single show. At the end of the day though, it's seeing people like the Harris Twins, Totally Buff and Rick Steiner getting so much TV time. These people just are not interesting and it's showing more and more with each passing show.

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