

Smackdown – January 29, 2004: Viva La Smackdown

Smackdown

Date: January 29, 2004

Location: MCI Center, Washington D.C.

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

This is another request that I got so long ago that I can't remember why someone wanted to see it. I'd assume it's due to the big battle royal for the #1 contendership to the Smackdown World Title with the winner getting to face Brock Lesnar at No Way Out 2004. This was a fun time for Smackdown so let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Smackdown GM Paul Heyman is in the ring to start but he's quickly interrupted by Vince. The big boss wants to know why the Royal Rumble winner (Chris Benoit) isn't on Smackdown anymore after jumping to Raw. Vince blames Heyman for getting rid of Benoit so Heyman goes on a rant about how the old Vince would just march on past it like he did when Hall, Nash, Hogan or even BRET HART left the company.

That's why Heyman has an idea: tonight we'll have another Royal Rumble RIGHT HERE TONIGHT. We'll have a fifteen man version with the injured Matt Morgan being replaced by Hardcore Holly and Chris Benoit's spot being taken by Eddie Guerrero. The winner gets the shot at Lesnar at No Way Out...because they can't just have the shot at Wrestlemania for some reason. Vince says it's on.

Smackdown Tag Team Titles: Basham Brothers vs. Paul London/Billy Kidman

The Bashams (Doug and Danny, a pair of very similar looking brawlers) are defending and have the useless Shaniqua in their corner. Doug (I think, though it's like trying to remember which Uso is which) starts with Kidman, who takes him down with a headscissors. Danny low bridges London to the floor though as Cole is already forgetting which Basham is which.

A spinning belly to back gets two for London and it's time to work on the spine. We hit the double arm crank for a bit until London dropkicks his way to a hot tag. Kidman's enziguri gets two on Doug with Kidman getting off the cover to dropkick Danny. Shaniqua offers a distraction and we get some twin magic, setting up a super DDT to retain the titles.

Rating: D. The Bashams were yet another lame team in a big list of them around this time. There was no reason to have two Tag Team Titles and I think everyone knew it but there was no way WWE would ever admit that. London and Kendrick would get the titles in July with three other title changes in between.

Kurt Angle is incensed that he has to pull his own number and jets off when he sees it.

Chavo Guerrero is all bruised but promises his dad that he'll get revenge on Uncle Eddie.

Speaking of Eddie, he comes in to pick his number and seems very pleased. Cruiserweight Champion Rey Mysterio comes in with his friend boxer Jorge Paez and nothing happens.

John Cena hits on Dawn Marie (attending the ball hopper) and draws his number. Rhyno comes in and suggests he'll end Cena's career by going after his bad knee.

Cruiserweight Title: Rey Mysterio vs. Jamie Noble

Noble is challenging, gets no entrance and has his blind girlfriend Nidia in his corner. This is a rematch from the Rumble where Nidia accidentally tripped Noble and cost him the match. Jamie takes him down with a hammerlock but an ankle scissors gets him out of trouble. Something like a torture rack has Rey in trouble so he armdrags Noble down and into 619 position. It's way too early for that of course but Nidia accidentally trips Jamie again to little disaster.

Noble stays on the back and puts on a seated abdominal stretch. Back up and Noble sends him into the corner and bends Rey's back around the post. A superplex puts both guys down as Noble can't follow up. My what

convenient timing. Mysterio comes right back with a middle rope bulldog and the 619 but he tweaks his knee on the West Coast Pop. Jamie sends him outside right in front of Nidia, who gets in the way of Jamie's attempted dive. For reasons that aren't clear, Jamie throws her inside but apparently she can see just fine, allowing Rey to hit a springboard seated senton to retain.

Rating: B-. Really good TV match and an improvement over the pay per view match but there's this misconception that people cared about Nidia enough to make this story interesting. Noble got what he had coming here and it's a simple story but Nidia doing a face turn isn't going to get anyone anywhere.

The new correspondent tells us that Playboy is looking for two women for the next spread. Ignore the fact that Torrie Wilson and Sable had already been announced for the issue. This sets up a quick history of the WWE/Playboy relationship, which has basically been buried in the archives ever since.

Dawn has to pick Big Show's number and "chicks dig it big" jokes are made.

Brock Lesnar isn't worried about Goldberg saying he's next because Goldberg is clearly a Lesnar wannabe instead of the other way around. Tonight he's issuing an open challenge to anyone on the Smackdown roster for a non-title match. This might be the longest I've ever heard Brock talk and I've certainly heard worse.

Charlie Haas and Shelton Benjamin are about to pick their numbers when someone comes in to tell Heyman that Eddie has been attacked. Everyone runs to Eddie while the Chavos deny having anything to do with this. Rey comes in and goes after Jr. but gets pulled back.

Eddie is put in an ambulance.

Brock Lesnar vs. Orlando Jordan

Oh yeah Jordan is a person that exists. I always forget. He's still a rookie at this point so this shouldn't take long. Brock actually gets

knocked outside to start as the fans remind Lesnar that he tapped out recently. Jordan can't even get one off a sunset flip so Brock easily drives him into the corner for some shoulders to the ribs. We hit a modified rear naked choke for a bit before Jordan comes back with a dropkick and jumping elbow. A clothesline cuts that off though and the Brock Lock ends Jordan with ease.

Rating: D-. I'm so glad they let Jordan get in some offense on the champ like this before he was destroyed. It really enhanced his career and made me care about him. Jordan continues to rank very high on the list of worthless wrestlers as he just stayed around for years despite showing absolutely no reason to keep a spot on the roster.

Some wrestlers went to Walter Reed Hospital to see some wounded soldiers.

We see clips of Kane being tormented by the spirit of the Undertaker.

Vince says forget about Undertaker because he's buried. Uh, right. There is something to be said about Vince refusing to accept the idea that someone who comes back almost annually is coming back again.

Angle accuses Heyman of having Eddie injured. Apparently Eddie is already conscious again but Angle says that's not enough. Heyman says if Eddie is here when his number is up, he can be in the Rumble.

Royal Rumble

There are fifteen entries and we have 90 second intervals. Kurt Angle, who has dedicated this to the US Armed Forces, is in at #1 and Rhyno is in at #2. They slug it out to start and Rhyno hits a quick Gore in the first minute. Angle gets in a quick Angle Slam though and Charlie Haas is in at #3. Charlie mocks Angle for reasons of general stupidity, allowing Rhyno to jump him from behind. For some reason Angle doesn't help Rhyno get rid of Haas and goes after horned one.

Shelton Benjamin is in at #4 and the partners double team Rhyno but Angle makes another save with a German suplex. Nothing of note happens until it's Bradshaw in at #5 and it's time for the Clotheslines. We take a break and come back with Tajiri coming in at #7 but stopping to go after

the Cat (who came in at #6 and was eliminated during the break) and his manager Lamont.

Billy Gunn is in at #8 and nothing happens so it's Big Show in at #9 to start clearing out some room. Everyone gets ready for him but he shoves all seven of them off like they're villagers. Tajiri is easily put out and Bradshaw follows him via a low bridge. John Cena is in at #10 despite sporting a bad knee. Cena puts Show on the apron and we come back from a break with A-Train and Nunzio having entered at #11/#12 but Nunzio is already out.

Eddie Guerrero is in at #13 and apparently Rhyno was eliminated during the break. Guerrero actually backdrops A-Train out and it's Rikishi in at #14. Gunn is superkicked to the apron and Show gets the Stinkface. Shelton and Billy get the same thing and it's Hardcore Holly in at #15 to complete the field with Angle, Haas, Benjamin, Gunn, Show, Cena, Eddie, Rikishi and Holly.

Show chokes Cena to the apron and then the floor for an elimination that would stop the match dead in its tracks today. A big group of people almost have Show out and Cena pulls him down to the floor as we're down to seven. Since nothing else is going on, let's look at every elimination in the match so far! You know, because this couldn't be shown on a split screen for some reason.

Eddie gets rid of Haas and Shelton is sent out a few seconds later. A frog splash hits Rikishi before Angle gets rid of Holly (basically ending his "main event run" in the process). Eddie gets Gunn out and we're down to Guerrero, Angle and Gunn. Rikishi starts cleaning house until he misses a Banzai Drop. That's enough for Angle and Eddie to put him out and now we're down to the real showdown where either story would be awesome. Angle easily takes him to the mat and starts with the rolling Germans. Eddie stays on the apron and grabs an ankle lock on Kurt, only to be reversed into one from Angle (because of course).

Another elimination attempt doesn't work and it's the Three Amigos to put Kurt in trouble. The frog splash is broken up with some crotching and both guys are down near the corner. Kurt grabs a sleeper/chinlock but

Eddie sends him out to the apron for another slugout. They fight over a suplex with Eddie shaking his legs to save himself and suplexes Kurt to the floor for the title shot in a big surprise.

Rating: A-. This started slowly as battle royals tend to do but then it took off and turned into a great match when you knew it was going to be Angle vs. Guerrero at the end. This was the start of Eddie's rocket push and you could tell the fans were on board with the idea as Guerrero had earned this after a lot of years trying to get off the ground. It also needs to be emphasized that making this a Royal Rumble instead of a battle royal made it work so much better.

Overall Rating: B. This was one heck of a show with a good Cruiserweight Title match and the last third of the show being dedicated to one of the better battle royals you'll ever see. They're still in the era of having having big time shows because the Brand Split was still working at this point, meaning you would get stuff like this instead of EVERYTHING being about the pay per view. I had a good time with this show and it flew by, mainly on the strength of good wrestling, though having Eddie's injuries mean a bit more would have helped.

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