

Smackdown – March 28, 2002: It's Important!

Smackdown

Date: March 28, 2002

Location: First Union Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 13,600

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

With the Draft out of the way, this is the final regular episode of Smackdown with the full roster before things split up next week. That means it's also the last chance for the wrestlers to make one last good impression against their interpromotional rivals. In other words it's a lame duck show that they're trying to pass off as something important. Let's get to it.

Booker T. vs. Diamond Dallas Page

Of course this show starts with two guys from WCW. Fallout from Monday's tag match. Booker stomps him into the corner to start so Page chops away. The Draft picks start running along the bottom as Page hits a helicopter bomb for two. Not that it matters as Brock Lesnar comes in to take out Page for the DQ.

Here's Kurt Angle with something to say but we have to wait on the YOU SUCK WHAT chants because that's how wrestling fans like their comedy. Angle thinks the people are pathetic, but not as pathetic as what happened to Stephanie on Raw. Kurt would like a special moment of silence and you can imagine his reaction when he's booed out of the building. This brings out Vince to insult the fans and talk about HHH being the kind of model citizen that seduced and then humiliated his daughter. Then on Monday he beat her up!

Vince promises to take care of HHH and here's the champ so Vince can make threats to his face. HHH promises to make Vince's life miserable if Vince screws with him but decides Kurt is right: we should honor Stephanie, perhaps by looking at the end of Raw. That's enough to make Kurt want a

match against HHH tonight but Vince has a better idea: the two of them against HHH. This brings out Ric Flair to make it a tag match.

D-Von gives Bubba some exposition about the team splitting up if they don't win the titles tonight.

Tag Team Titles: Dudley Boyz vs. Billy and Chuck

Billy and Chuck are defending and if the Dudleys lose they're split up. On the other hand, if Billy and Chuck lose then they stay together, in theory at least. The questions I'll never have answered. Bubba and Chuck start things off with Chuck being sent into the corner for some loud chops to the chest. D-Von comes in for some shoulders to Billy and it's back to Bubba for some house cleaning. The Bubba Bomb gets two on Chuck and Rico offers a quick distraction, only to have the Doomsday Device plant Chuck. Rico's second distraction works though and leaves Bubba to hit a Fameasser to retain the titles.

Rating: D+. So that's it for the Dudleys in one of the most questionable moves I've seen in a long time. I get the idea of splitting up Edge and Christian and maybe the Hardys but who thought Bubba and D-Von could survive on their own? For the life of me I still don't get the thinking behind that one and it's yet another casualty of the Draft.

Bubba and D-Von destroy the champs with all the usual stuff one more time. There has to be a joke about Billy taking What's Up. I don't know if he had it coming in but Bubba's eye (as in the eyeball itself) is full of blood. That's quite the scary look.

The APA is splitting up and aren't happy about it. Since it's their last night together, they're going to have a farewell bash. Tajiri is in charge of telling everyone and Torrie Wilson is in charge of playing strip poker.

Matt and Lita (interviewed by Lillian Garcia, who actually looked much better in her 40s) are so happy that they're on the same show. Chris Jericho comes up and says no one should be happy since he can't be champion again. Matt calls him a has been and gets jumped, likely setting up something for later tonight.

The Rock and Hogan call each other brother before talking about whether or not they can trust Kane in their six man tag tonight. Rock imitates King Kong Bundy and Kamala in a way to say yes. Dang it I was hoping for some more of those as there are multiple other Hogan monsters he could have done.

Anyway, Kane comes in and says it doesn't matter if Rock is ready. In the most bizarre thing I've ever seen from Kane (and that's covering A LOT), he does an amazing Hogan-style promo, saying it doesn't matter if it's 20,000 Hulkamaniacs, 20,000 of the millions or 20,000 screaming Kaneannites (Rock: "Kaneannites?") because the three of them are going to run wild on the NWO. He even does the posing and the hand to his ear with the fans absolutely losing their minds over this. This was HILARIOUS with Rock looking somewhere between amazed, terrified and stunned.

Hulk Hogan/The Rock/Kane vs. NWO

Apparently Flair drafted the NWO so he could "keep an eye on the poison." Wouldn't it be smarter to get rid of the poison? Rock and X-Pac get things going with X-Pac in early trouble before it's off to Hall. The bad guys (as in the team with the Bad Guy) take over with Nash hitting the knees in the corner but Rock shrugs them off and tags in Hogan. I know he's considered lazy but he can do a hot tag like almost no one ever.

Nash gets in a side slam (no hair flip yet) and Hogan gets beaten down. Wait so Kane is getting the house cleaning spot? That's an odd choice but I'm willing to go with it due to that pre-match promo alone. A belly to back suplex breaks up Hall's sleeper and the real hot tag brings in Kane. The Fake Diesel hits the real Diesel as everything breaks down. Well most of it does at least as Hogan is just standing on the apron while his partners fight 3-2. It turns out fine though as Kane chokeslams X-Pac for the pin.

Rating: C+. This would have been a good house show main event and there's nothing wrong with that. Hogan was looking energetic here (believe that one if you want to) and X-Pac was the only one with any kind of fire on his team. I know he gets a lot of flack for good reason but when X-Pac had his head on straight, he was one of the better workers on the roster.

Did the NWO ever actually win a major match? They debuted at No Way Out, won a few TV matches and then lost both Wrestlemania matches. What a great stable.

Matt Hardy vs. Chris Jericho

They start fast, likely due to a lack of time. Matt sends him into the corner to start but gets crotched on top to slow him down again. Cue Lita for a top rope hurricanrana, setting up the Twist of Fate for two. Lita gets knocked off the apron and a low blow sets up the Walls to make Matt tap. Nothing match.

Jericho puts Lita in the Walls on the floor.

The APA party is going on and Torrie takes off a belly chain for her stripping. Christian freaks out over losing and destroys stuff.

Intercontinental Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Test

Van Dam is defending and gets dropped throat first across the top rope to start. A full nelson slam gets two on Van Dam as Lawler tries to figure out which brand has better looking women. Test grabs the ropes to avoid a sunset flip but we get the referee kicking his arms spot to give Rob a near fall. That earns Earl Hebner a good talking to so he does a fast count on Van Dam's sunset flip to retain the title. Ok then.

Raven doesn't care who he's wrestling for because he's destroying the things he loves.

Hardcore Title: Raven vs. Maven

Maven is defending and I forgot how much I liked his theme. Raven starts fast with the alternating trashcan lid shots to the head. Maven loses his balance on the ropes but gets two off a missile dropkick anyway. Here's Tommy Dreamer to try to win the title but the distraction lets Raven grab the Raven Effect for the pin and the title, which now moves to Raw.

Angle tells Vince that he'll help get Austin to Smackdown.

We look over the Draft lottery results, almost none of which are worth

mentioning.

William Regal crashes the party to say the APA is out of business. A fight breaks out because it wouldn't be right otherwise. Bradshaw puts up the "sorry, we're closed" sign and they go their separate ways to what sounds like a standing ovation.

HHH/Ric Flair vs. Kurt Angle/Vince McMahon

Flair is in business pants. Vince and HHH start things off and I won't even bother explaining why Angle and Flair come in a few seconds later. Kurt takes him into the corner to start and gets a thumb in the eye before it's off to HHH. A quick belly to belly sends the champ flying but Flair comes back in with a sleeper. Kurt starts working on the knee and of course Vince is willing to get involved. Cole tries to explain the reason behind the Brand Split and it's really getting worse with every word he says.

A few wraps around the post have the leg in trouble but there's no way he's going to get Flair in a Figure Four. I mean, he's not Shawn or anything. Flair kicks Kurt low but the Figure Four is reversed into an ankle lock. Now Vince can get in the Figure Four, only to have Ric turn it over in a hurry. Angle is smart enough to make a very fast save before it's off to the guys under 50. A spinebuster gets two on Kurt, only to have Vince hit HHH in the face with a belt for two. Flair actually hits the top rope shot to Vince's head and goes for the real Figure Four but here's Undertaker to lay Ric out and give Vince the pin.

Rating: D. Much like almost anything else HHH did around this time, this was slow, not very good, and could have been done better in less time. Vince pinning Flair doesn't mean much and it's not like Undertaker is going after anyone other than Ric, so this was pretty much the definition of "well, here's a main event".

Overall Rating: D. Hulk Hogan just had the runaway match of the night in 2002. This was a big commercial for the Brand Split as none of this matters (including a new Hardcore Champion) heading into the new WWF. Since there are almost no storylines here, everything other than Kane vs. the NWO and everything in the main event was filler. That's not the way

to make an interesting show but at least a lot of the matches were short.

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