

Monday Night Raw – April 15, 2002 (2016 Redo): One Step Is Better Than None

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 15, 2002

Location: Reed Arena, College Station, Texas

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

It's the final show before Backlash and the big Raw main event is the fresh matchup of Undertaker vs. Steve Austin for a title shot at the next pay per view. Raw has been dying in its first few shows and I don't see that getting any better for a long time. They really need to figure out something with this Brand Split in a hurry because it's getting bad quickly. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's a slightly disheveled Ric Flair for the weekly chat to open things up. There's a lot of great talent backstage and he doesn't want to waste any time in getting them out here. I'm sure that's going to be the case of course. First though, Flair wants to talk about Steve Austin being anti-authority. The difference between Flair and Vince McMahon is that he has no interest in going to war with Austin. Flair likes Austin and made sure to put Austin in the #1 contenders match at Backlash.

We see the ending of last week's show with Flair running out to help out Austin against the NWO, only to get Stunned for his efforts. If he's such a big Austin fan, he really should have seen that coming. Cue Austin but Flair cuts him off on his way to the second rope. Oh jeez he's in trouble. Flair isn't going to suspend him for what happened last week but he's going to fine Austin \$5000. Austin does the WHAT treatment to ask who he was supposed to face last week because he thought it was Scott Hall but saw Ric Flair out there instead. He didn't cry for help, send a smoke signal or FedEx Flair because Flair isn't Lassie or Superman.

Austin promises to win at Backlash but here's Undertaker to interrupt. Undertaker very slowly says he'll win and talks about how

important it is to win because the Brand Split is making it harder to get title shots. He's ready to outwrestle, outfight or outcheat Austin but he knows Austin needs Flair's help. Both guys threaten to beat Flair up if he interferes so Flair makes himself special referee. Somehow we're STILL not done though as here's the NWO (just Hall and X-Pac these days) with something to say.

Hall runs down Texas and Bradshaw in particular so Austin is willing to fight him tonight. Flair says no so here's Bradshaw and the fight is on. The good guys clear the ring but Flair is knocked down, likely setting up a six man later. Somehow it took twenty minutes to establish that Austin doesn't like authority and that Flair is guest referee on Sunday. It doesn't help that Austin and Undertaker are on pure fumes and neither are interesting save for nostalgia for about two years ago.

Post break a livid Flair makes Austin/Bradshaw vs. the NWO/Undertaker in an anything goes match.

Hardcore Title: Bubba Ray Dudley vs. Raven

Dudley is defending and throws out a bunch of Raven's weapons. They trade metal shots with Raven taking over as the announcers talk about how wild the weekend was for the title. By that they mean three straight shows with four title changes each. I can actually buy that for a house show as they're probably fun for the crowd but seeing it every single week gets tiresome. Bubba takes over with a flapjack and tells himself to get the table, only to have Raven grab the DDT for two but the referee says it's a pin anyway.

Tommy Dreamer comes out and wins the title. Then Steven Richards comes out to win the title. Then Bubba wins it back. Those four title changes took place over the course of 46 seconds.

Shawn Stasiak is back on Raw and has volunteered to face Big Show. He's not a maniac because his psychiatrist is a quack who wanted him on some Prozac so sit back and enjoy the attack. That was more energy than I've ever seen him show.

Big Show vs. Shawn Stasiak

Shawn works on the leg for a bit but gets clotheslined and chokeslammed for the pin in less than a minute and a half. Eh every show needs jobbers.

We recap Eddie Guerrero returning and going after Rob Van Dam.

Eddie says he's mad at Van Dam for stealing the frog splash. I've heard far worse motivations. There's a tag match with the midcard champions against their challengers for an old but good idea.

Booker T. is ticked off at Goldust for costing him the Hardcore Title last week but tonight Flair has teamed them up. Goldust thinks they could be a bright star but Booker wants the freak to get away from him. Together they could make more money than Lethal Weapon. You know it's serious when they invoke Steve Blackman. Booker: "I'm getting too old for this stuff."

Debra is getting coffee when Undertaker startles her, sending the coffee onto Undertaker. Seething ensues.

Crash vs. Jacqueline

Rematch from last night on Heat where Crash cheated to win but Jackie is FROM TEXAS and won't stand for that. A missile dropkick and a sunset flip finish Crash in thirty seconds. Yeah yeah she's tough and she's from Texas. I care so much.

Now we look back at Spike Dudley beating William Regal for the European Title in about three seconds. I really wouldn't highlight the fact that there have been a match last week and another from this week combined to go 35 seconds.

Regal yells at Coach for bringing up Mr. McMahon's club and promises to break open Coach's skull for mentioning the title loss. I can always go for psycho Regal.

Rob Van Dam/Spike Dudley vs. William Regal/Eddie Guerrero

Regal jumps Spike to start but gets Van Dam to really get things going instead. It's quickly off to Spike as Lawler jokes about Spike's weight. A nasty looking half nelson suplex stuns Spike and the bad guys take turns stomping on him. I'm not as big on Spike as most people but he looks like he's dying out there most of the time. A crossbody looks to set up the Dudley Dog on Regal but Eddie makes a save.

That's fine with Spike who takes Eddie down with a hurricanrana, allowing the hot tag off to Van Dam. Rob starts cleaning house with the usual until Eddie gets in a neckbreaker. Everything breaks down and Eddie hits a brainbuster on Spike, followed by the frog splash for the pin.

Rating: C. Spike losing actually makes sense here as he cheated to

win the title and was beaten down for most of the match (as in less than three minutes) so the loss isn't exactly shocking. Van Dam vs. Guerrero is the best feud on the show at the moment and thankfully the match will be one of the better ones on Sunday so it balances out well enough. I'm always a fan of putting two feuds into one match for a fast build so this worked well.

Trish is ready to beat Molly up tonight and then take the Women's Title on Sunday. Molly comes in and offers two pictures: one of Trish on the cover of the Divas swimsuit magazine (bikini) and one of herself in a one piece swimsuit with angel's wings. Molly assumes that most students at the university have her picture on their dorm room wall. Trish says tonight she'll leave Molly in a position she's not familiar with: flat on her back.

How in the world is Trish not the heel here? If you're going to go with this angle, Molly should be in the kind of attire Ivory wore in the Right to Censor. The picture is of a good looking woman in a swimsuit and for some reason it's supposed to be something almost no one would be interested in looking at. Trish's line at the end made it even worse as, again, she implies that men wouldn't be interested in Molly for whatever reason they have to hate her this week. I know Molly is the heel and should be based on the initial attack on Trish but ever since then she's been completely realistic and hasn't done a thing wrong.

Lawler freaks out at Molly saying she was wholesome, meaning she's a virgin. Again, that's considered something horrible because WWF is run by a bunch of 14 year olds.

Molly Holly vs. Trish Stratus

Molly takes her down to start and works on the arm as the idiot fans chant SHE'S A VIRGIN. Trish comes back so Molly bails outside (Lawler: "Don't come so close to me Molly. I might convert you." Did Lawler just imply he would rape Molly if she came closer to him?), only to beat Trish down again back inside. A backbreaker gets two on Trish but the Molly Go Round misses. There's a high kick from Trish and she rolls Molly up with a handful of tights for the pin. Your hero!

Rating: C-. The match was fine but this story is nauseating. They're actively making fun of Molly for a personal choice that a lot of people make and is no one else's business. I heard the same insult a

lot growing up and then I turned about 14 so my friends grew up a little bit. Somehow that's not the case here and it's really pathetic. I'm sure parents had a blast explaining this one to their kids and were thrilled that the WWF was presenting this as a bad thing.

Bradshaw talks about Hall's testicular fortitude and sucks up to the Texas fans.

The NWO is going to focus on Bradshaw tonight.

Paul Heyman steals a pair of Lita's underwear (she had at least a dozen in her bag) and offers to give Matt Hardy some leniency against Brock Lesnar on Sunday in exchange for sex. The ensuing slap would make Stephanie proud.

Hardy Boyz vs. Booker T./Goldust

Goldust and Booker jump them to start and the brothers are in early trouble. Matt gets in a clothesline and makes the hot tag (about a minute in) so Jeff can clean house. Poetry in Motion hits Goldust but here's Heyman with Lita's underwear to distract Lita. Matt gives chase and Booker kicks Jeff down so Goldust can get the easy pin.

Heyman has Lita's bag of underwear and throws them around. Matt goes after him but runs into Brock. Figure the rest out for yourself.

JR brings out HHH for a chat about his match with Hogan, which has nothing to do with this show. Both he and Hogan have made a lot of mistakes in this rivalry (What rivalry? You had a match announced less than two weeks ago and you've punched each other a few times.) but Hogan made it worse by dropping the big leg. JR asks about what another big leg on Sunday would mean because Hulkamania is running wild. The question is whatcha gonna do. Well HHH isn't going to make any mistakes and he's going to retain the title. He doesn't care if he faces Austin or Undertaker next either. More filler on a show full of it.

Steve Austin/Bradshaw vs. NWO/Undertaker

X-Pac has Kane's mask. It's a brawl to start (duh) until we settle down to Undertaker vs. Austin. An early Thesz press looks to set up a slightly less early Stunner but Undertaker bails. That earns him a double middle finger so it's off to X-Pac instead. Some spinebusters put the NWO down and it's off to Bradshaw for more Texas brawling. Bradshaw gets two off some suplexes and it's back to Austin as this

is one sided so far.

Finally realizing that the NWO is worthless, Undertaker hits Austin in the back of the head to take over. The NWO takes turns slowly beating on Austin, who comes back with the worst punches I've ever seen him throw. The double clothesline drops Austin and Hall so JR mentions kissing your sister. Bradshaw comes in to clean house with the Clothesline, including a big one for the pin on X-Pac.

Rating: D. Bradshaw was the best thing about this match as he was the only one who seemed like he was excited to be out there. Undertaker and Austin are sleepwalking through every match and the NWO is making the Corre look like the Horsemen. This main event scene is dying for a freshening up and we're less than a month into the new era. That can't be a good sign.

A big brawl and a chair to Austin's head end the show.

Overall Rating: D. Somehow that's an upgrade over last week's mess. I don't know how many times I've said it already but the main event scene is such a mess with two guys who wrestle like they're about 476 years old and are fighting over who might get to fight Hulk Hogan next month. At this point even Hogan vs. Austin doesn't sound like the most interesting thing in the world.

Other than that though, let's look at some of the stuff we had here. Big Show beats Stasiak in about a minute. His match on Sunday? A two minute squash of Stevie Richards on Heat. You remember Richards. He's one of the guys who won the Hardcore Title tonight. On the same show you have VIRGINS ARE BAD and Jackie proving that Texas is amazing before the main event that also proved that Texas is amazing. The only good stuff here is Brock smashing anything in his path and a match over who uses a splash better. Smackdown is nothing great at the moment but you can see an idea over there and it makes a world of difference.

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