

Monday Night Raw – April 22, 2002 (2016 Redo): Shades of WCW

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 22, 2002

Location: Savvis Center, St. Louis, Missouri

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

It's the night after Backlash and due to reasons of pure nostalgia, Hulk Hogan is the Undisputed WWF World Champion. That means he's gearing up for a title defense against Undertaker at the next pay per view, which leaves Steve Austin to feud with Ric Flair because Austin feuds with authority figures. Let's get to it.

Recap of Hogan winning the title.

Opening sequence.

Matt Hardy vs. Brock Lesnar

Fallout from last week with Paul Heyman stealing Lita's underwear. Matt is smart enough to run through the crowd to go after Brock but gets pulled into an early spinebuster. The backbreakers have Matt's bad ribs in even more trouble and it's off to a bearhug like a rag doll. Lesnar misses a charge into the post though and a Ricochet has Brock in some trouble. A guillotine legdrop looks to set up the Twist of Fate but Matt gets muscled into the F5. The helicopter bomb finishes Matt for good. Well good for Brock, bad for Matt.

Rating: D. There's not much you can say about a squash but at least Brock is smashing people like he's supposed to do. I can see one more match against the Hardys with Brock going over to really make the point clear but then it's time for him to move on to something else. Brock is a real monster though and probably the best newcomer in a very long time.

The production guys won't talk to Flair because production guys care about in ring results. Undertaker comes up to thank Ric and says he did the right thing.

Here's Undertaker in the ring for the first big chat of the week.

Undertaker compliments Flair on a job well done but make no mistake about it: the referee didn't matter last night. He's all over this Hogan nostalgia run and knows that at Judgment Day, he'll be judge, jury and executioner (Hogan used that line a lot back in the Saturday Night's Main Event days, saying that same thing at least three times on that same series.). We cut to HHH in the back despite him being exclusive to Smackdown. Naturally his music is tuned up and the fight is on with HHH tackling him down and taking the fight over the announcers' table.

A bunch of monitor shots to the head have Undertaker rocked until the dreaded referees come out for the save. Undertaker gets up and tries to leave but HHH punches the referees down and goes after Undertaker again. They fight to the back with HHH getting his sledgehammer out of his car (Presumably his car at least. Either that or he should be arrested.) but security comes up to handcuff him. This went on too long and basically only existed to make HHH look awesome. In other words, it's something you'll get used to. However, having it come after a match actually helped a lot. Do that instead.

Flair meets William Regal at catering. Regal approves of last night's refereeing job but Flair keeps proclaiming his innocence.

And now, Booker T. and Goldust review the Scorpion King. Goldust brings up Fellini but Booker says just roll the footage. Booker gives it two thumbs up but thinks he would be better as the star because Rock can't act (to be fair, he was fairly horrible in that movie). We get another clip with Booker in the same role (in wrestling gear). Booker: "Not only am I the Scorpion King but I'm the five time WCW Champion AND I GOT A SWORD TOO!" Goldust does the same and Booker says that would make it the Scorpion Queen. This is edited out of the Network version for obvious reasons.

Mr. Perfect vs. Rob Van Dam

Eddie Guerrero is on commentary. Van Dam yells at Eddie on the floor and gets jumped from behind as the fans chant for Rob. A kick to the face sends Perfect to the floor but he comes back in with the necksnap. Van Dam comes back with the usual and Rolling Thunder gets two, followed by the Five Star for the pin.

Rating: C. As is so often the case, there's only so much that can be done in a match this short. It was watchable enough and Van Dam

going got the point across but what are they supposed to do in three minutes? This would also be Perfect's last match on Raw and that's really noteworthy. He was really just there for months and someone older fans would remember. That doesn't mean he's interesting and his wrestling was only average in the limited time he was given.

Post match Eddie attacks but misses the frog splash.

Trish Stratus/Jacqueline vs. Molly Holly/Jazz

Jackie armdrags Molly to start and it's off to Trish vs. Jazz. Trish avoids a splash and Jackie comes back in already as there's no flow to this at all. Everything breaks down and Jazz sends Trish into the steps. Jazz gets in a belt shot on Jackie, setting up a clothesline to give Molly the pin. This was nothing.

Trish fights the winners off.

Flair is still upset but Arn Anderson tells him to go make it right in the ring. Dang it Arn this show was going along just fine (ok not really) until that BRILLIANT idea.

Here's Flair in the arena to say he screwed up again in case you haven't gotten the point yet. Flair thinks the crowd in a city like St. Louis would take him at his word but he shows us the footage from last night again, including an alternate angle that shows Undertaker blocking Flair's view. We get a big official apology but here's Austin to interrupt.

After way too many WHAT'S, Austin doesn't accept the apology. It turns into an argument over how many titles Flair has won and that's too far for Ric. The boss says he's not Vince but Austin wishes he was so he could just stab Austin in the back already. Austin flips him off (because they're in the Show Me state and he's showing Flair something) but Flair makes it better by putting Austin in a match: with Bradshaw against the NWO. Sweet goodness end this stupid feud already. It wasn't even this heavy handed when Vince said they were going to do Austin vs. McMahon II.

Goldust/Booker T. vs. Bubba Ray Dudley/Spike Dudley

Bubba throws Spike onto the two of them to start fast before chopping Goldust in the chest over and over. It's off to Spike for a headbutt to the ribs but Goldust sends him outside as the crowd isn't exactly thrilled with this one. Booker comes in and hammers away, including the flapjack with Spike selling it as only he can.

There's something about him just crashing down in a heap like that. Goldust grabs a sleeper for a bit before the hot tag brings in Bubba for all his trash talking and punching. Everything breaks down and Spike gets two off a top rope seated senton. Spike tells Bubba to get the tables but Goldust jumps Bubba from behind. Booker gets in a quick ax kick for the pin on Spike.

Rating: D. They were trying and it's very nice to see some new teams forming but this was boring. Spike can bump like few others but they would have been much better off just leaving Bubba and D-Von together. I know he's the more talented (certainly more charismatic) but Bubba isn't doing nearly as much for me on his own as D-Von right now. At least the preacher gimmick is something fresh and new for them while Bubba is just....Bubba.

Steven Richards tries to win the Hardcore Title and gets powerbombed through a table. That's better than they usually do.

Earlier today, Planet Stasiak was interrupted by Tommy Dreamer and his Slurpee. Rhyming ensues (the voices in his head affect his choices) but Regal comes in and asks if Stasiak has lost it. Regal: "Have you gone crackers lad?" Stasiak: "Don't get silly Willy." A match is made for later.

William Regal vs. Shawn Stasiak

Stasiak charges into the ring, gets hit with the Power of the Punch and gets pinned before the opening bell. I know it's stupid but the referee not even caring made me chuckle for some reason.

Bradshaw has been attacked. Flair: "I think I know who did it!" Lawler: "I think I know who did it too!" Since this is wrestling, they don't bother to actually SAY A NAME as we go to a break.

Back with Flair accusing the NWO, who are rather worried. Flair promises that Austin will have a replacement partner. Kevin Nash comes in after Flair leaves but he catches Nash anyway. Flair gives Austin the Big Show as his partner.

Here's Hogan (after a string of Hogan Flashbacks to various title wins all night) for his big victory speech. First things first: his man, HHH, deserves a rematch. Dang it I was hoping he meant his main man the Butcher. Hulkamania was reborn last night because he became the Undisputed Champion again. He laughs at Vince for the boss' comments on Smackdown because the reality is that he's got the title

one more time. Hogan thanks the fans and asks Undertaker what he's going to do to wrap up this filler interview.

Steve Austin/Big Show vs. NWO

Just put the shirt on Big Show already and save us the time. Show tosses X-Pac to start so it's off to Hall for the toothpick toss. That earns him a trip to the mat with JR saying Hall was thrown down like a cheeseburger. I don't even want to know what that means. Austin comes in before Show does much (not a good sign) and cleans a few rooms of the house with spinebusters. The NWO is sent into the corner for a double mudhole stomping because the NWO is so worthless that Austin is barely breaking a sweat on them.

X-Pac finally gets in a clothesline for a breather and the bad double teaming begins. The worst looking Thesz press I've ever seen Austin use takes Hall down but it's not enough for the tag. An abdominal stretch keeps Austin in trouble despite the lack of stretching of the abdominals. Hall's sleeper is broken up with a jawbreaker and there's the hot tag to Big Show, who does what anyone who watched WCW knew what he would do for the no contest to end the show.

Rating: D-. Do I even need to explain the NWO problems anymore? They needed a third man (there might be something to that) so the company picked the worst idea they could go with this side of....I don't know, Booker T maybe? The NWO is a disaster and they need to pull the plug but that might admit being wrong and we can't have that.

Overall Rating: D-. This show is reaching WCW levels of the main event dragging everything down. At the moment, the three top stories are Hulk Hogan vs. Undertaker in a rematch from 1991 when Hogan already looked old, the NWO vs. reality and Steve Austin vs. Ric Flair in a feud that they haven't even bothered to warm over. Those feuds are probably eating up half of any given show and Raw gets worse and worse every single week. The rest of the show isn't much better but anything is an upgrade over this stuff. Get rid of Austin, Hogan and the NWO and let anyone replace them already because this is awful.

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