

Monday Night Raw – April 29, 2002: It's Nitro

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 29, 2002

Location: HSBC Arena, Buffalo, New York

Attendance: 8,500

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

The question at this point is how bad can things get. The wrestling has been horrible but the stories have been some of the worst of all time with uninspired main eventers who look like they're about to collapse from old age. Maybe things can start to pick up soon because it can't get much worse. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Tonight: Hulk Hogan vs. William Regal. That's one of those matches you never expect to see as Hogan almost never worked against anyone other than a main eventer.

Intercontinental Title: Eddie Guerrero vs. Jeff Hardy

Eddie is defending and we hear about Lita breaking her neck in three places on the set of Dark Angel, which would keep her out of the ring for over a year. They start fast with Jeff grabbing an armdrag and his swinging sleeper drop for two. A quick trip to the floor lets the champ get his head together and it's time to chop away in the corner. Eddie's belly to back suplex looks to set up the slingshot hilo but Jeff is too annoyed at losing his bandana and rolls away.

Jeff scores with a superplex and starts hammering away in the corner. It's too early for the Swanton though and Jeff gets crotched. JR: "That can't feel good unless you're wearing a couple of cups." I think he means it makes it hurt less but JR often gets lost in his own talking. The Whisper in the Wind takes the referee down by mistake, allowing Eddie to get in a belt shot. The Frog Splash retains the title.

Rating: C+. Pretty good here but you could see that Jeff's head wasn't in it at this point. He was just doing his normal stuff and going through the motions while Eddie was doing whatever he could to keep the match together. The early days of his singles run weren't great but when Jeff's head was on straight, you can't deny that the talent was there.

Recap of Austin vs. Flair and Big Show joining the NWO.

Austin arrives and asks where that lying no good SOB is. Production worker: "Mr. McMahon isn't here tonight." Austin: "I don't mean that one!"

Here's Austin in the ring to call out Flair. Austin starts drinking immediately and says he has a story for us. After some Beverly Hillbillies discussion to start the WHAT chants, Austin goes through the same stuff we just saw a video on a few minutes earlier. The WHAT chants keep going until Austin says he wants Big Show but calls Flair out right now.

Flair comes to the stage and says he had nothing to do with what happened last week (which gets a mini recap because we need to fill in time). Ric apologizes and says Big Show is in India tonight so we'll get Austin/Bradshaw vs. Scott Hall/X-Pac with Flair as guest referee. The fans get where this is going immediately and seem interested, which is understandable as the promo was good but this is still leading to Austin/Bradshaw vs. the NWO. Austin promises violence if Flair tries anything.

That's where this whole story falls apart: for reasons that aren't clear, Austin is teaming up with Bradshaw to fight a bunch of washed up guys who are basically only there because WWE doesn't want to admit that they were stupid hires. Of all the people on the roster, they picked Austin to fill this role? The company is DYING for star power right now and they're using the biggest star of all time in this role? Is it any wonder why Austin was miserable around this time? It doesn't fit and I don't think anyone bought it in any form.

Booker T. is getting ready for his match when Goldust comes in. They won't be teaming together tonight and Goldust feels like the loneliest

person since Macaulay Culkin in Home Alone. Goldust puts the blonde wig on Booker for luck. Booker: "If Big Bird and Spider-Man ever got busy, you would be the illegitimate lesbian." I have no idea what that means but the delivery was more than funny enough to make it work.

Booker T. vs. Rob Van Dam

Booker starts with some chops to the chest but gets kicked down for two. A quick powerbomb puts Rob in more trouble and it's off to a chinlock. Van Dam fights up and hits Rolling Thunder but here's Goldust to watch. Goldust gets on the apron for no reason other than to get us to the finish, meaning a collision with Booker. The Five Star gives Rob the easy pin.

Rating: C. This was as good as you would expect Booker T. vs. Rob Van Dam to be in about three minutes. See, that's the thing: maybe they should let these two perfectly talented wrestlers go like, seven or eight minutes? Have we gotten a reason that can't happen yet? Or maybe let one of them fight with/against Austin to make the main event a bit more interesting? Nah, let's let them do three minute matches which do nothing for anyone.

Bradshaw says Big Show attacked him last week. Well duh.

Jazz is doing push-ups when Molly Holly comes up to ask if she's crazy. Apparently Jazz is challenging Bubba Ray Dudley for the Hardcore Title. Jazz just walks away.

Planet Stasiak is ready for Brock Lesnar. His axis is a bit out of whack and Brock has a tattoo on his back but it pales in comparison to Planet Stasiak.

Brock Lesnar vs. Shawn Stasiak

Stasiak goes right after him to start and is promptly splattered with a spinebuster. Brock posts him a few times and an overhead belly to belly makes it even worse. The F5 and helicopter bomb put Shawn away in a hurry.

Flair asks Debra to put in the good word with Austin, earning himself a

slap. I forgot how worthless Debra was around this time.

Undertaker interrupts Sgt. Slaughter's phone call and wants him to deliver a message to Hulk Hogan: a call out is imminent. Didn't we just do this SAME EXACT THING about forty five minutes ago?

NWO vs. Steve Austin/Bradshaw

Flair is guest referee. Bradshaw gets chopped in the corner to start so he comes right back with chops of his own. It's off to Austin vs. Hall for the WHAT stomps and a clothesline for two. A hard whip sends X-Pac into the corner and it's back to Bradshaw as this match is already dying just a few minutes in. X-Pac dropkicks the knee out and it's time to start in on the leg.

Something like a powerbomb makes Bradshaw remember to sell the knee as the announcers debate how hard it is to be a referee. Austin gets the hot tag and the pop is so weak that I don't even notice him coming in. That was STEVE AUSTIN getting such a weak pop. Everything breaks down and there's the Stunner to X-Pac for the pin. X-Pac's foot was on the ropes and Flair missed it again.

Rating: D-. This was sad. Like, actually sad. Somehow this feud has made the fans uninterested in seeing Steve Austin come into a match and clean house. If there is a single reason to have Austin wasted in this feud and not facing, I don't know, HULK HOGAN FOR THE TITLE IN AN ACTUAL DREAM MATCH, I've yet to hear it. Yeah I know about both of them wanting to protect their legacies but either could be bought for a big enough check.

The NWO complains to Flair, who didn't see the foot on the ropes again.

Here's Undertaker to call Hogan out. He remembers Hogan's first run (Wasn't that the one with Showdown At Shea?) and the fans cheering for him over and over. None of that matters though because he beat Hogan back in the day. Now, if you listen to Hogan on the Self Destruction of the Ultimate Warrior DVD, that's the biggest sin in wrestling. You know, because you're supposed to think Hogan won or something.

Undertaker takes credit for Hogan leaving the first time because Hogan

was scared. Now he's so scared that Undertaker will beat him again and it's probably going to cost him the title to Chris Jericho on Smackdown. The crowd is just dying for this stuff and it's getting worse with every word. Hogan comes out and doesn't say anything as Undertaker keeps talking. Probably as bored as all of us are, Hogan punches Undertaker out to the floor to end this.

Hardcore Title: Jazz vs. Bubba Ray Dudley

Bubba is defending and, in case you actually need this made clear, only his title is on the line. Before the match, Bubba basically says "yeah I'll beat her up because that's what I do to women." Jazz is the heel in this if that wasn't clear. Bubba puts her on the top rope and blows her a kiss. Then it's time for dancing together, followed by Bubba dancing alone.

Jazz gets caught up in the fake test of strength so she kicks him low. Some weapon shots to the head have Bubba in trouble so he bites her below the belt. Bubba puts a trashcan over her head and does the Flip Flop and Fly, complete with the crotch thrusts. It's table time but here's Steven Richards with a guitar to knock Bubba out and steal the title.

Rating: F. So to recap: we had a bunch of dancing, a low blow, more dancing and then Steven Richards. So now we're supposed to be all impressed with Jazz because we don't need to actually give her a personality when we can have her kick men low. This was one of the dumbest things I've seen in a long time (or maybe since two segments ago) and you have to imagine these things are going to keep happening over and over.

Richards and Jazz run off together. JR can't believe this could happen because he doesn't remember it happening five times this month alone. After a break, Jazz and Richards escape in a car.

Regal is watching Hulk Hogan Rock N Wrestling (I knew I liked him) and is surrounded by a bunch of Hogan merchandise. He really doesn't understand this because it makes everyone look like a pillock. People should be praising him because he's someone with class. He's someone who speaks the Queen's English. He's someone who doesn't end every sentence with the

word BROTHER. "Gets on my bloody nerves." Regal promises to use the power of the punch tonight.

Bradshaw and Austin are drinking beer when Flair comes in. The Texans still aren't convinced Flair is honest so next week it's the NWO vs. the three of them. WHY DOES THIS HAVE TO KEEP GOING???

European Title: Goldust vs. Spike Dudley

Spike is defending. Goldust beats the champ into the corner to start and loads up Shattered Dreams. It's fairly clear that he's waiting around on something but nothing happens, so instead it's time for more right hands. Another attempt at Shattered Dreams brings out Booker T. to attack, allowing the Dudley Dog to retain the title. Again: let this match go five minutes and maybe we can cut off some of the horrible stuff earlier in the show.

Hulk Hogan vs. William Regal

Non-title. Actually hang on because Regal would like to offer Hogan some tea. Hogan has a sip and spits it into Regal's face to start the beating. Cue Undertaker as the match is thrown out before it starts.

Undertaker very slowly beats on Hogan who just lays around. Hogan is busted open as this just keeps going because Hogan couldn't beat Regal up for a few minutes to cut down on some of this time. A chokeslam finally wraps this up to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. Bring HHH back....please. He might be a longer winded talker than most of the people here but at least you might be able to get an entertaining match out of him every now and then. I still can't wrap my head around the fact that Austin is stuck in this AWFUL NWO story with freaking Bradshaw of all people because they need someone to put in there. I guess Booker T., Rob Van Dam, Eddie Guerrero, Rob Van Dam, Bubba Ray Dudley, Spike Dudley and William Regal are busy.

The first hour was much better with one of the longest matches on the show (less than seven minutes) between Hardy and Guerrero and Booker vs. Van Dam for all of three minutes but the focus shifted to the veterans

and their stories to cripple the show for good. There are watchable elements on the show but they're completely bogged down by the old guys who won't go away. In other words, it's Nitro.

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