

Smackdown – April 25, 2002: Help Is On The Way

Smackdown

Date: April 25, 2002

Location: Peoria Civic Center, Peoria, Illinois

Attendance: 8,350

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're in a new era now as HHH is a full time Smackdown wrestler, which I'm sure will last for at least a few weeks. After all you can't expect the biggest star in the company to be on the B show for very long. Other than that we're going to get more of the Hulk Hogan nostalgia tour, which wasn't the most interesting thing in the world earlier this week. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Hogan for his big talk, but only after a long ovation. I guess the nostalgic stuff does indeed play in Peoria. Hogan isn't sure if he could have beaten HHH without Undertaker interfering so maybe tonight HHH should get his rematch. Cole: "What a first class champion!" Here's HHH and Cole also names him a first class champion. Is that their buzzword of the week?

HHH talks about Hogan earning his respect and a handshake at Backlash (Cole: "What a moment that was." No Cole, it wasn't.) but tonight he's earned it again by offering that rematch. The fans chant for Hogan and HHH FINALLY gets to the point: when he wins that title that he loves, will Hogan be man enough to shake his hand? Instead here's Vince to cut them both off (thank goodness) and say that he's the co-owner of the WWE so he makes the matches.

Vince polls the fans on Hogan vs. HHH but says no because HHH is a criminal who doesn't deserve a rematch. Fair enough and it's nice to see one of those arrests actually be brought up for once. Instead, Hogan can defend the title next week against the winner of tonight's main event:

HHH vs. Chris Jericho. Makes sense: you want to torture HHH so put him in a #1 contenders match against the guy he always beats. Oh and if the bosses can make #1 contenders matches all the time, what was the point in having Undertaker vs. Austin at Backlash? I'm over thinking this one aren't I?

Rico critiques Chuck's massage technique when Tajiri comes in. Japanese stereotypes ensue and Rico doesn't think much of Torrie's look. The solution is a bandana but Tajiri steals it instead. This screams "stuff that only makes Vince laugh".

Maven/Al Snow/Billy Kidman vs. Billy and Chuck/Tajiri

For the sake of clarity, I'll only refer to Billy Gunn as Billy. Kidman and Chuck start things off with a belly to belly sending Kidman flying. It's off to Maven, who eats a hard clothesline from Billy but Snow comes in to save his student. Tajiri stops to yell at Torrie, leaving Kidman to tornado DDT Billy for no cover. To throw away whatever we had going here, Maven and Snow rip off Billy and Chuck's trunks, sending them running up the aisle. Torrie pulls Rico's down, leaving Kidman to counter Tajiri's powerbomb. The shooting star press puts Tajiri away.

Rating: D. I was starting to dig this one and then it went flying out the window with more "comedy". Are we really still on Maven/Snow vs. Billy and Chuck after they lost their nothing pay per view title match? Torrie finally turning on Tajiri will be fun enough and it's going to make her even more popular than she already was. Tajiri on the other hand has already gotten pinned four days after winning the title back to set the Brand Split record.

Kurt Angle calls a security guard fat and brags about his new t-shirt reveal later tonight. The shirt is going to list all of his accomplishments so the smallest size available is XXL. If the security guard plays his cards right, he might get one at half price. I could watch this Angle for days.

Stacy Keibler massages Vince's temples until he's interrupted by some newcomer. Vince: "Oh that's right. You're uh, you're Randy Orton." The boss leaves and Stacy likes the black sweatshirt and basketball shorts

look. After admiring his hands (I don't get it either), she offers to critique his holds by putting his hands on her hips. Vince comes back in and she claims he stripped for no reason. That earns him a match with Hardcore Holly.

This week's power challenge: Mark Henry bending a frying pan. That goes fine so Test pulls out a steel rod. Why does he have a steel rod you ask? Well doesn't every Canadian carry a steel rod? That's bent as well so Christian, the guy who introduced the frying pan, jumps Henry like a moron.

Randy Orton vs. Hardcore Holly

It's so strange to see Orton only having about six tattoos. They hit the mat for some chain wrestling to start until Orton gets a quick near fall off something like a bulldog. Holly isn't about to get beaten up by a rookie though and gets in the kick to the very low abdomen. We get some shots to the chest in the vein of Sheamus' forearms until Orton comes back with a dropkick. Orton's high crossbody sets up an Oklahoma roll for the surprise pin. Nothing to the match, other than the debut of one of the biggest stars of all time.

Angle talks to a photographer about how big his shirt reveal is going to be but Edge is seen replacing it. For some reason the photographer is told to get the shirt in the ring.

Here's Angle for the reveal, though he has to wait on the YOU SUCK WHAT chants. After insulting the town a bit, Angle explains the concept of having his accomplishments listed on the back of his shirt. I'm hoping the fans in the arena didn't see that segment earlier or they're going to be bored and do something stupid like chant WHAT to everything Angle says.

Before we get the reveal, here's Edge to interrupt. Edge congratulates him on winning at Backlash and wants to see the new shirt. Every the knucklehead, Angle buys into it and the shirt is revealed. I'll give you one guess what two words are printed on it and Angle's reaction when he sees it.

Recap of HHH invading Raw and attacking Undertaker.

Mark Henry vs. Christian

Christian comes in and is thrown over the top with one arm. Back in and Henry runs him over, followed by a headbutt for two. A low blow gets Christian out of a claw hold but Henry grabs a bearhug for the win. This one note character stuff is why Henry never went anywhere for years and this run isn't changing anything.

Jericho is ready to win tonight because he wants to beat HHH once and for all. See, he only lost at Wrestlemania because of a high fever.

Rikishi/Edge vs. Kurt Angle/Albert

It's two feuds in one but my goodness those are two odd sounding teams. They pair off with Edge and Angle fighting in the ring to start. Angle throws him over with a belly to belly and brings in Albert for all of five seconds before it's back to Kurt. Rikishi gets to clean house off the hot tag because you pick RIKISHI for that spot over Edge. A running seated senton crushes Albert with Kurt making the save. An Angle Slam takes Rikishi down but Edge spears Angle before he can cover. The Baldo Bomb puts Rikishi away as Edge stomps on Angle outside.

Rating: D+. If you can find a way around the time issues, the better move here would have been to do two singles matches instead of a tag. We already did the double feud tag match earlier tonight and when you consider we already had two message segments, it doesn't exactly make Smackdown look like the most creative show in the world.

D-Von takes up another collection but someone steals the money. That earns him a horrible beating, which is supposed to make D-Von look evil but what would you do if some goon tried to steal your money? Especially if you're a wrestler and he's a plant.

Angle yells at the security guard, who is now wearing a YOU SUCK shirt.

Chris Jericho vs. HHH

Winner gets a title shot next week. Jericho bails to the floor to start

but the chase goes to HHH, who sends Jericho shoulder first into the post twice in a row. A spinwheel kick has HHH in trouble and but a sleeper is just boring. HHH comes back with a shot to the face and does the falling low blow headbutt. With both guys down we cut to the back to see Undertaker coming into Vince's office.

Back with Jericho hitting the Breakdown (Skull Crushing Finale) for two as Cole freaks out over Undertaker showing up. Then again, it would be more amazing for Cole not to freak out over something. A neckbreaker and spinebuster give HHH two but Jericho gets the same off a missile dropkick.

The Pedigree is countered into a backslide for two more and we get the usual Walls/rope grab combo. Jericho grabs a chair (because that's worked so well for him) and gets DDT'd for two. Cue Undertaker for a distraction though and Jericho grabs a rollup with trunks for the pin and the title shot.

Rating: B. It's so nice to have a long match that doesn't involve Austin and/or the NWO. On top of that, Jericho actually beat HHH in a match that means something. Just by setting that up you prevent these matches from feeling like a waste of time until you get to the only possible ending.

Undertaker and Jericho beat on HHH until Hogan makes the save and punches Undertaker into the crowd to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. The main event helped this show a lot but there was too much bad in the first hour and forty minutes for the main event to save it. They really need to elevate someone new to the main event already because HHH and Jericho are the best possible combination and that's going to get old quickly. The rest of the card is in trouble too but that's really more boring than bad, which can be even worse.

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