

Monday Night Raw – May 20, 2002: So Steve Austin Walks Into A Bar

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 20, 2002

Location: Pyramid, Memphis, Tennessee

Attendance: 8,000

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

It's the first night of the Undertaker regime and that means we're getting closer to King of the Ring. In addition to that, I'm sure there's a good chance that we're going to get more of Austin vs. the NWO, which is now adding names for Austin to beat up from week to week. As long as it's not Austin vs. Big Show, I think we're good. Let's get to it.

We open with a rest in peace video for the British Bulldog. There's a lot more effort here than in most of these, though the fact that he was only 39 makes it even harder to accept. That's just too young for anyone.

Opening sequence.

Rob Van Dam comes to the ring because the scripts calls for him to be there, only to have Undertaker come out and beat the tar out of him. A whip into the steps busts open Van Dam's eye and Undertaker hits him with the steps for good measure. Undertaker is mad that he didn't get to open the show and had to beat up Van Dam for trying to steal his spotlight. When he feels like he has something to say, he's going to come down here and say it no matter who is in the ring.

The number one rule around here is respect the Undertaker and you can ask Hulk Hogan what happens when you disobey. Last night, he killed Hulkamania and it's over for good. In fact, Hogan is going to announce his retirement on Smackdown. As Undertaker keeps talking, the referees are STILL checking on Van Dam, which means we're just waiting on him to get up and do something else. We keep hearing about respect as Van Dam

crawls into the ring. Undertaker thinks Van Dam is thick between the ears and the fight is on with Rob kicking him down and hitting a Five Star.

Undertaker demands a match with Van Dam tonight so Ric Flair makes it a title match. Makes sense given their history but doesn't make a ton of sense given Flair as a smart heel who would want to stay on Undertaker's good side.

Hardy Boyz vs. NWO

X-Pac and Big Show here. Jeff starts with a headscissors on X-Pac as the announcers don't have much to say about the Hardys getting destroyed by Lesnar last night. Matt comes in with a Side Effect but Show realizes that he's Big and runs Matt over from the apron. Show gets in his big beatdown segment but it's back to X-Pac who misses a charge in the corner. I can't picture this pair of screwups being the best idea for a team.

The brothers get smart and try to double team X-Pac, only to get thrown around by Show. Booker T. kicks Big Show by mistake because this team is rapidly turning into a big joke that just won't go away. With things going horribly for the NWO, here's Goldust as Elvis for an accidental distraction, allowing Jeff to grab a rollup for the pin.

Rating: D+. This is where the NWO belongs: as a tag team who can probably beat some lower level pairings but aren't quite good enough to go after the Tag Team Titles, mainly because they don't exist on Raw at this point. It's amazing what happens when you get rid of Hall and let X-Pac do most of the wrestling. The matches aren't good but they're a lot less horrible.

Paul Heyman talks to Trish about her lingerie and sex is suggested. Denied, but it's suggested.

The NWO argues over who should be the leader. Maybe Flair should have joined. Somehow this gets us to Goldust/Booker T. vs. the Hardys later tonight. Did anyone ask Matt and Jeff if they're cool with this?

Women's Title: Trish Stratus vs. Jacqueline

Trish is defending. Jackie slaps her in the chest to start, giving Lawler his favorite spot in years. A headlock doesn't get Jackie anywhere but an armdrag into an armbar works a bit better. Trish fights up with forearms and a suplex for two. Lawler: "I'd like to be her thigh master." Jackie misses a charge in the corner and the bulldog retains the title. This was actually pretty good while it lasted but the time hurt it, as is always the case.

Heyman and Lesnar come out and threaten Trish with violence if she doesn't go out with Paul. Cue Bubba Ray Dudley for the save to give Brock his first singles feud.

Video on last night's big matches. Isn't that how you should open the show?

Tommy Dreamer is still gross and one person continues to laugh. This time he eats hair as he gets it cut and washes it down with something called Barbicide, which is apparently a disinfectant. What do you even say to something like this?

Rob Van Dam isn't going to listen to the doctor who tells him not to wrestle tonight.

GET THE F OUT!

European Title: William Regal vs. Bubba Ray Dudley

Bubba is challenging and starts fast with a slam and those big elbows. You really can see the Dusty Rhodes influence in there and that's not the worst thing in the world. Molly Holly, in Regal's corner here, trips Bubba to let Regal take over but the guys slam heads for a double knockdown. The Flip Flop and Fly have Regal in trouble and it's table time for no logical reason. Cue Lesnar for the DQ.

After an F5, Molly slips Regal the knuckles to knock Bubba out again.

Here are Flair and Arn Anderson for the 10pm chat. Flair admits that he's made some mistakes over the years but there are too few to mention. See, last night, Austin pinned the illegal man so it's time for a new plan. This brings out Austin to hear said plan face to face. Or face to heels

actually. Anderson threatens him with violence and Austin doesn't seem impressed. Anyway, Flair says he owns Austin and is going to take him out of the ring. Stunning and beer drinking ensues.

Hardy Boyz vs. Goldust/Booker T.

Raven of all people comes out for commentary and rips on Lawler for his lame job calling matches. Lawler won't be too interested in this match because Lita and her puppies aren't here. JR asks about Goldust and Booker's relationship. Raven: "You don't know much about relationships Lawler. That's why your wife left you." Some forearms put Matt down to start and Booker dances around a bit before tagging Goldust in. The Side Effect puts Goldust down but here's the NWO to kick Goldust in the back of the head. Matt grabs a small package for the pin.

Austin and Debra are at a karaoke bar. I don't see this being funny.

Back in the ring, Goldust is still down with the NWO around him. Booker isn't cool with X-Pac and Big Show interfering because it cost him a match. They yell at each other over their actions last night with Booker saying X-Pac can't get laid. Show points out that they never invited Booker to join the team, which makes you wonder WHY HE'S STILL THERE. Can the boss just assign people to stables? Anyway Kevin Nash comes out to take charge of the group and rips into them like a bunch of losers. Booker is officially on the team and seems very happy about it because Nash is just so darn inspirational.

Eddie Guerrero is at the bar as well and sends Debra a teddy bear. Does the bar just happen to sell teddy bears? Austin isn't pleased.

After the announcers plug the upcoming Australia show, Raven asks if Lawler knows anything about wrestling anymore. Raven gets on a regular mic and yells at Lawler for only talking about puppies. A challenge is issued for later tonight.

Debra asks Austin to sing but Eddie takes the mic and sings....I have no idea actually. It's booted off the stage as expected.

Raven vs. Jerry Lawler

Raven starts with some basic stuff and Lawler gets a bit more height than I was expecting off a backdrop. They head outside so Raven can yell at JR but Lawler gets all fired up and takes the strap down. A bunch of right hands and rams into the buckle have the crowd all entertained and knock Raven loopy. Raven bails before the fist drop can hit.

Rating: D-. They can't even have Raven do a job for Lawler in Memphis? I'm fine with Jerry doing this once or twice a year to give the fans a quick thrill because nothing the company is going to put out there is going to fire them up like a quick Lawler match. That being said, I really don't get the idea of having Raven walking out instead of just taking the pin. Then again, the insults he got in on Lawler were pure gold and more than make up for the loss.

Austin sings Margaritaville but Eddie doesn't like it. Since this is 2002 Austin, he turns his back on Eddie and gets a beer bottle broken over his head. Aside from this taking WAY too long to finally get to the point, the idea of Austin vs. Guerrero is a huge improvement over the NWO nonsense. It's going to suck for the Intercontinental Title but at least they're elevating someone.

Undisputed Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Undertaker

Van Dam is challenging and his eye probably isn't healed up yet. A big dive takes Undertaker out before the bell, which probably isn't the best idea in the world. Undertaker crotches himself with a missed big boot and some kicks get some two counts. A clothesline puts Undertaker on the floor and Van Dam is right back out there with some kicks to the back. Undertaker gets back inside but can't hit the Last Ride.

Instead he ribs off a buckle pad but opts to elbow Rob in the face instead. The chokeslam is broken up and Undertaker goes into the exposed buckle. Rolling Thunder connects for the pin with Undertaker's foot on the ropes and Memphis is way too smart for that. Cue Flair to say the foot was on the ropes so the match is continuing. The Last Ride retains the title.

Rating: C. Undertaker gave Rob a lot here and it was a lot more entertaining than I was expecting. Van Dam moving higher up on the card

is a good thing and it's always cool to see someone younger in the main event scene. I remember watching this live but I had missed the foot being on the rope. It's amazing how much fun you can have when you get surprised by something like this and buy that they did something like that.

Flair is pleased to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. There's a lot of bad stuff on here and it's certainly not a good show but WHAT AN IMPROVEMENT this was over recent weeks.

Guerrero and Van Dam are moving up the card, the NWO has an actual leader (though they lost both of their matches), Undertaker, though still bad, is a huge upgrade over Hogan as champion and Brock vs. Bubba could give us some good fights.

That being said, there's a lot of bad around here too. There was way too much time spent on the bar segments and Undertaker's opening segment, which could have been done in half the time. The short matches still don't do the show any favors and it's not a good sign that the Hardys have to work twice. They have so many people running around on the show with nothing to do but we need to see Matt and Jeff twice in an hour and a half? It's still not a good show but this was miles ahead of everything they've been doing in the last month.

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