

Smackdown – May 23, 2002: Hogan, Hogan, Hogan, Hog... Never Mind

Smackdown

Date: May 23, 2002

Location: BankcorpSouth Center, Tupelo, Mississippi

Attendance: 7,450

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We might be in for a major announcement this week as new WWE World Champion the Undertaker has suggested that Hulk Hogan will be retiring tonight. I know 2002 was a different time but does anyone believe that Hogan's retirement is coming on a regular Smackdown in Mississippi? Let's get to it.

We open with the same recap of the big pay per view matches from Raw.

Opening sequence.

Cole immediately tells us that Hogan will be retiring tonight and says this will be the resting place of Hulkamania.

HHH vs. Lance Storm

Cole thinks Vince, you know, the boss and lone authority figure on this show, had something to do with this match being made. In addition to that, the entrances are dedicated to talking about what Hogan has been telling his friends and family about tonight. Storm does his normal schtick and takes the running knee to the face for his efforts, which only hurts HHH's bad leg. A good looking dropkick puts HHH down and Storm does that weird hopping stomp of his. HHH's cut is opened up again and Storm gets two off a top rope clothesline.

Cole and Tazz get into their fifth discussion of Hogan's retirement (not an exaggeration and we're only ten minutes in) as HHH makes his comeback with right hands and a spinebuster. Storm's superkick (looks awesome as

always) sets up the half crab on the bad leg for the logical submission attempt. A rope is grabbed so Storm heads up, only to have HHH shove the referee into the ropes for the crotching, followed by a Pedigree for the pin.

Rating: B-. For a five minute match to open a Smackdown, this was actually very good stuff. Storm looked like a threat to HHH (as big of a threat as he could have been at least) and the half crab made perfect sense. HHH sold well too and made Storm seem like a bigger deal, which was exactly the point of this match.

Notice the difference between Raw and Smackdown: Raw has been using pretty much the same cast of characters since the Brand Split. Smackdown has at least turned guys like Storm and Val Venis into perfectly competent jobbers to the stars who also keep things feeling fresh. It's a small difference but very helpful.

Christian is talking to Kurt Angle (head not seen) about how Kurt is going to go out there and expose his bald head. For reasons of general stupidity, Christian starts a YOU'RE BALD chant.

Stacy Keibler comes up to Test and tells him Vince has given him Randy Orton tonight. Apparently Vince is mad that Stacy thinks Orton is good looking and wants Test to take him out. Test says ok and kisses Stacy, who doesn't seem to disapprove.

Here's Angle, now with a curly brown wig and amateur wrestling headgear. Angle: "It's amazing what hair supplements can do!" We get the required reference to Hogan's retirement but here's Maven to interrupt. Maven makes bald jokes and says Mississippi wants to see the real Angle. Kurt: "Do you work here or something?" The fight starts and Angle beats Maven up because one of them is Kurt Angle and the other is Maven. Cue Edge for the save but Christian comes out before the wig can be pulled off.

Test vs. Randy Orton

Before Test comes out, Stacy is on the table in a short skirt for her weekly dance. In addition to that, you can see her challenge for the Women's Title in a bra and panties match on the debut of Velocity. The

current Superstars debuted with Undertaker vs. Matt Hardy and Main Event debuted with CM Punk vs. Sheamus (World Champion vs. World Champion). I'd say that's a point in the future's favor.

Test starts fast and hammers in the corner with the big power offense. The pumphandle powerslam gets two on Orton as it's not clear who Stacy wants to win. Test misses the big boot though and crotches himself on the ropes. Again, Stacy seems to like both guys in a nice shade of gray. A few rollups get two for Orton but the Test Drive (pick whatever name you like for the rolling cutter) gives Test the win.

Rating: C. For a four minute match, this actually had a story. Test, the powerful veteran, manhandled the rookie, who could only hit and run while looking for a quick win. I liked this way more than I was expecting and when you throw in several shots of a smiling Stacy, this was one of the best things on the show.

Undertaker doesn't think anyone is ready to face him and he shrugs off a package of his match with Rob Van Dam. Interviewer Mark Lloyd says some people say he lost the title due to getting pinned with his foot on the ropes. That's like saying he got pinned despite kicking out, mainly because Lloyd isn't that bright. Anyway, Undertaker wants to see Hogan retire because that's all that matters tonight.

Rico is admiring his Tag Team Title when Billy and Chuck come in. Apparently the title doesn't matter because it doesn't go with his clothes. That's what the Tag Team Titles now mean people.

Chris Jericho isn't in a good mood when he runs into Faarooq. Jericho: "Just the man I wanted to see." Faarooq: "Are you high? Or drunk?" Jericho wants to get out of his match but Faarooq turns down the offer of money because Jericho is facing Mark Henry.

Edge/Maven vs. Kurt Angle/Christian

Angle jumps Edge during his entrance (Canadians never pay attention.) but Edge gets in a quick sitout Edgecution. It's too early to get the wig off though and you can hear Angle's medals clanging together as he runs away. Was there ever a reason given for Angle having more than one medal when

he only won one? It's a very simple heel idea to say he deserved more than one but you would think that would have been a joke once or twice.

As this is still waiting to get going, Torrie and Trish are shown watching in the back. Torrie is dating Maven and Trish is watching because.....I have no idea. WWE really had a thing for blondes around this point. Christian chops Maven in the corner but an Edge distraction lets the rookie get in a low blow. The hot tag brings in Edge to clean house and everything breaks down. The Angle Slam plants Edge but Maven gets in a missile dropkick for two on Christian. Angle and Edge fight to the floor and the Unprettier is countered into a rollup to give Maven the big upset pin.

Rating: D+. This wasn't much but again, they give someone a win for the sake of a rub. Christian giving up a fluke pin in a tag match isn't going to hurt him long term but it could do a lot of good for Maven. It's a case of throwing something against the wall and seeing if it sticks and there's nothing wrong with that.

Rikishi vs. D-Von

D-Von now has the awesome "He's Called My Name" gospel theme. Rikishi doesn't think much of D-Von saying the thong is sinful but it's too early to sit on D-Von's chest. Cue Rico (with his title belt) as Rikishi gets in a belly to belly on D-Von. Now it's Billy and Chuck coming out to see Batista trip Rikishi to give D-Von a breather.

A DDT has no effect on the Samoan (I love stereotypes shining through) as Tazz uses this match to talk about Hogan, who feuded with Rikishi's cousin Yokozuna. That's the kind of stuff they've been doing all night and it got old an hour ago. The Stinkface is loaded up but a Batista distraction lets Rico hit Rikishi with the belt to give D-Von the pin.

Rating: D. This match ran 3:08 and had Batista, Rico, Billy and Chuck interfering, plus a belt shot and a Hogan vs. Yokozuna reference. Oh and the Tag Team Champions hate each other the same week they won the belts and somehow the division is already pining for the days of Al Snow/Maven vs. Billy and Chuck.

Chavo Guerrero is watching Eddie Guerrero attack Steve Austin on Raw when Gregory Helms comes in. Gregory wants to know if Chavo knows anything about someone stalking Hurricane. Chavo says he's going to take the Cruiserweight Title tonight and leaves. Before Helms leaves, he finds another clue: a bag of beef jerky. So wait: whoever is doing this is leaving notes and clues in someone else's locker room on the off chance that Hurricane's alter ego comes in and interviews them about who is leaving the notes?

HHH says there are no winners in the Cell but just survivors like him. Storm comes up to talk trash when Test jumps HHH from behind.

Cruiserweight Title: Hurricane vs. Chavo Guerrero Jr.

Hurricane is defending and catches Chavo with an early powerslam. With this match already going nowhere, it's time to talk about HULK HOGAN MOVIES. A dropkick knocks Hurricane off the top for two and it's off to a discussion of great Hogan feuds, including King Kong Bundy and Kamala. An Emerald Flowsion of all things gets two on the champ but the Overcast (Blockbuster) retains the title. This was just background noise while the announcers squeezed in whatever new Hogan topic they could think of.

Vince isn't concerned about Stacy kissing Test because tonight he's getting rid of Hogan. Jericho comes in to yell about facing Henry but Vince tells him it's an opportunity.

Chris Jericho vs. Mark Henry

Henry throws him around to start and Chris' wounds are already opened up again. A Vader Bomb misses and Jericho dropkicks him in the face. Mark gets back up for a five rep gorilla press so Jericho grabs a chair. Henry has his own chair taken away so Jericho gets in a shot to the back for the pin.

Rating: D. So HHH has a match with a story of a bad leg and a leg submission hold while making Storm look good. Jericho has a match where Henry gets to do power stuff and there's a screwy ending. We'll chalk this up to a combination of Mark Henry not being very good and Jericho only being able to work a few miracles. Henry is so one dimensional that

it's almost painful and even WWE seems to have given up on his push.

Here's Hogan for the big segment that they've been building to ALL NIGHT LONG. After a long HOGAN chant, Hulk gives his life history, including talking about being born Terry Bollea in Augusta, Georgia. He's had the time of his life for the last twenty years and he's sad that his father isn't here to celebrate with the Hulkamaniacs.

One night he and his father were watching wrestling and his dad told him to go wrestle again and straighten out his career in the WWF. Hogan thanks his fans for having his back all these months (all three of them since he came back). However, Hogan has to know when it's time to leave (About nine years ago?) and wants the fans to live forever. Posing ensues (with Voodoo Child making a rare appearance on the Network version) but here's Vince to interrupt.

Vince finds it amusing that Hogan is retiring in a place like Tupelo (true) but Hulk isn't going to retire anytime soon (well duh) because Vince isn't letting 1993 happen all over again (he says ten years ago so 1993 is just an educated guess). If Hogan leaves, he'll get sued for everything he's got. Hogan isn't retiring until Vince has gotten every cent that he can out of him and that's that. Hulk punches him down but here's Undertaker, only to be dispatched in short order.

Overall Rating: D+. The wrestling was better for the most part tonight but that main event segment did this show no favors. At the end of the day, this was ALL about Hogan and after setting up something on Monday and building it up all night, Vince basically just comes out and says "eh not really" and it looks like we're setting up Undertaker vs. Hogan II. There's a little good stuff here but the bad outweighs it and that's not good. Get rid of Hogan and Vince (for the most part) and this show is much better in a hurry.

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