

Monday Night Raw – May 27, 2002: That Looked Like It Hurt

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 27, 2002

Location: Skyreach Centre, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Attendance: 9,500

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

Things are getting a bit more interesting around here but there's a lot of bad still going on as well. Possibly above all else though, it seems that people like Eddie Guerrero and Rob Van Dam are moving up towards the top of the card, which is the most important thing that could happen at the moment. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

We open with a big deal as Chris Benoit makes his first appearance in nearly a year after neck surgery. JR: "To these fans, Chris Benoit is bigger than Wayne Gretzky in Edmonton." I'm only a casual hockey fan but I'm pretty sure that's WAY off. Benoit says he was drafted to Smackdown but there was no way he was missing being here in his hometown. Before Benoit can give his reason for being here, Eddie Guerrero cuts him off.

Eddie says he's the only one with charisma and Latino Heat but he's glad to see Benoit again. Since Chris has been gone, Eddie has won the Intercontinental Title and took out Steve Austin, which Benoit has never done. Benoit isn't impressed with Eddie hitting Austin and then running but here's Ric Flair to cut off a fight.

Flair accuses Benoit of causing this because he's a typical Canadian. That's the kind of basic heel insult that is always going to work no matter what. Flair asks if the fans want to see Benoit vs. Guerrero or Austin walking down the aisle tonight. Well too bad because Austin's wife had a family emergency and can't be here. Benoit isn't wrestling either

because he's a Smackdown guy. Unless he's got a ticket, get out of Ric's ring. So a ticket lets you get in the ring. Good to know. Security takes Benoit away.

European Title/Women's Title: William Regal/Molly Holly vs. Spike Dudley/Trish Stratus

They loved this double title match gimmick. Regal and Trish are defending and only one title can change hands. Spike goes right after Regal to start and mostly botches a top rope seated senton, which looked more like a Rough Ryder. A headscissors sends Regal over to the corner and it's off to the women. That means some Canadian fire as Trish hammers away to keep the crowd fired up. It's clear that WWE knows how to give the fans something special like having Benoit and Trish in the first two segments but they so rarely do it. Molly gets in some forearms of her own in the corner but a quick backslide retains Trish's titles.

Rating: D. Well that happened. They did the right thing by not changing the titles here but sweet goodness the European Title is about as worthless of a belt as I can remember seeing. If Regal vs. Spike in a series of matches that peak at three minutes is the best they can do, the title can't last much longer.

Molly hits Trish with Regal's knuckles.

Steven Richards says Jazz is out with a knee injury but she's recovering nicely. Jacqueline comes in to laugh at Steven for calling Jazz cute and cuddly. Steven thinks Jacqueline has a crush on her so she DDTs him on the floor for two. Shawn Stasiak and the Big Boss Man come in and brawl, leaving interviewer Terri to become champion. The reign lasts all of ten seconds as Steven rolls her up to get it back. You would think doing the same joke night after night would have gotten old over a year ago but you would be wrong.

The NWO is getting warmed up when Kevin Nash comes in. If Booker and X-Pac lose their match tonight, they're off the team. Booker wants his old theme music back. Goldust is shown eavesdropping from a tub.

X-Pac/Booker T. vs. Hardy Boyz

If the NWO team loses, they're out of the group, which would leave Big Show and Kevin Nash as the whole lineup. X-Pac kicks Matt in the face a few times to start but the middle rope legdrop gives Matt two. It's off to Jeff vs. Booker with the latter taking the Whisper in the Wind. Matt clotheslines the NWO and everything breaks down with Jeff cleaning house. Booker gets in an ax kick but X-Pac makes the blind tag and hits the X Factor for the pin. For some reason Booker is annoyed, even though he was the one not paying attention.

Rating: D. This is a match that did in fact happen. Really there's just nothing else that can be said about so many of these matches on Raw as there's no time to go anywhere and we're in and out in a few minutes. Booker being in the NWO is fine but the big deal is when he goes against them and turns into one heck of a face. He's certainly got the in ring ability to back it up.

Paul Heyman tries to go into the trainer's room to see Trish but runs into Bubba Ray. Bubba beats Heyman up and talks about wanting to do this for years.

Tommy Dreamer is in the ring and I hope this goes quick. He tries to get a bite of a fan's hot dog but spills it on the floor. Dreamer eats it anyway because he's gross and this is a really dumb story. Cue Undertaker to force Dreamer to drink tobacco juice (he likes it) and crushes his throat with a chair. For some reason, this takes over ten minutes.

Heyman gives Brock Lesnar a pep talk.

Bubba Ray Dudley vs. Brock Lesnar

Bubba tries a new strategy with Brock by hitting him right in the face just after the opening bell. Amazingly enough it doesn't break Brock's jaw and he sends Bubba flying, much to Heyman's delight. After a quick trip to the floor, Bubba scores with the elbow to the head and a neckbreaker for two.

Bubba has to fight out of a bearhug (with Lesnar lifting him off the ground like he's the Hurricane) but gets caught in an overhead belly to belly. A flapjack has Lesnar in trouble but the side slam only gets two.

The Bubba Bomb should have the pin so Heyman offers a distraction. Lesnar splashes Heyman by mistake but the F5 finishes a few seconds later.

Rating: C-. It's a good idea to have someone get in some offense on Lesnar but that's too much selling for a monster who has only been around for a few months. Bubba is a good challenge for Lesnar but Brock needs to move up the ladder a little bit faster. That Hardys feud went on too long and this needs to go a lot faster. Entertaining little match though.

Raven of all people says Steve Austin is in pain and his reflection is always looking at him in a mirror. Austin's reflection is that of a troubled, tormented soul but this is his destiny. That's quite the odd cameo.

Bradshaw vs. Big Show

In theory, Show is out of the NWO if he loses here. JR says this won't be pretty and I can't say I disagree so hopefully it's pretty short. Bradshaw goes smart by taking out Show's legs and pounding away. The forearms to the back don't have much effect as Show runs Bradshaw over without much effort. They slug it out and the Clothesline only puts Show on the ropes. A chokeslam ends Bradshaw in less than two minutes. I mean, I know Raw is dying for stars and everything and they had put some effort into Bradshaw but the right move has to be to have Big Show nearly squash him clean.

Booker doesn't like X-Pac stealing his pin earlier. Goldust, in NWO paint, comes in to applaud. X-Pac accuses him of disrespecting the colors but Booker says it makes him look like a freaky Oreo cookie. Booker thinks it's funny but X-Pac runs off to tell Nash what's going on. They couldn't make this team any more lame if their lives depended on it.

Al Snow and the Tough Enough finalists are at the World in New York and we have arm wrestling. Jake and Jackie win if you remember their names for some reason.

Rob Van Dam congratulates Terri for winning the Hardcore Title. He'll win the Intercontinental Title later tonight because no one gets as high as RVD.

Howard Finkel arrives late and disappoints Coach by not being Steve Austin.

Crash Holly vs. Goldust

Crash gets two off a dropkick and cradle but the Curtain Call finishes him in a hurry.

Post match Nash comes out to go after Goldust but beats up Crash instead.

Flair tells Eddie to not worry about Austin interfering.

Intercontinental Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Eddie Guerrero

Eddie is defending and this is a ladder match. Van Dam goes straight to the kicks to start, including the spinning version from the apron. The pace changes as Eddie sends him face first into the ladder which doesn't even fall over. JR thinks Van Dam isn't the same after going into a ladder. I might wait more than ten seconds to make such a bold statement Jim. Eddie wraps the leg around the post (smart move) and cracks it with a chair (smarter move).

Van Dam, despite having a crushed knee, does his rolling monkey flip out of the corner. That earns Rob a hard powerbomb but he's still able to dropkick a second ladder into Eddie's face. Cue Benoit down the stands and of course he's got a ticket. How he has one despite the show being announced as sold out isn't clear but this is an old standard so we'll just go with it.

Back from a break with Van Dam dropkicking the ladder out from under Eddie for a big crash. Rolling Thunder onto the ladder isn't enough for Van Dam to get the belt as Eddie climbs up for a big sunset bomb to put both guys down in a heap. Eddie goes up so here's a fan to shove the ladder over like an idiot.

Van Dam gets knocked down again, allowing Eddie to hit a hilo off the ladder for the latest in a string of big spots. For some reason Eddie puts a chair in the corner, allowing Rob to send him into the steel instead (as per wrestling rule #3). The split legged moonsault onto the ladder onto Eddie and it's Van Dam's turn to be exhausted.

A suplex into the standing ladder knocks Rob down again but he monkey flips Eddie into the ladder in the corner. They're beating the heck out of each other here and every spot is awesome. Rolling Thunder onto the ladder onto Eddie sets up the Van Daminator....but Rob's Five Star off the ladder doesn't work as the ladder slips out from underneath him. For once Rob plays it smart by kicking Eddie to the floor and climbing up to get the belt.

Rating: A-. Well that worked. These guys beat each on each other with everything they could find and it never stopped being entertaining. This was about carnage and people doing things to hurt each other with two very talented people knocking it out of the park. Van Dam getting the title back is a good call and he can hold it until another big time heel takes it away. Like Brock perhaps.

Eddie goes after Rob again but here's Austin for the big beatdown. Flair and Arn Anderson come in and get stomped down, only to have Benoit jump the railing and deck Austin. Eddie adds a frog splash to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. This was a show in two parts and we'll look at the good first. Austin/Van Dam vs. Guerrero/Benoit is as strong of a main event scene as you're going to get on Raw at this point and there's little to complain about there. Above all else, it's not the NWO and that's an upgrade for everyone.

That pretty much ends the good stuff (with Lesnar vs. Dudley being somewhere in the middle) as the rest was mostly dull, though not horrible. The NWO and lower card title stuff comes off like the writers just meeting requirements instead of doing anything worth their time, though to be fair those titles are both so worthless that it's probably not worth getting annoyed over. This was the best show they've done in months and hopefully the start of an upward trend for them.

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