

Smackdown – June 27, 2002: And Now, Wrestling History

Smackdown

Date: June 27, 2002

Location: Allstate Arena, Chicago, Illinois

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're in the big city tonight and it's time for a new challenger to face Undertaker. I know Jeff Hardy is getting a title shot on Raw next week but it's fairly clear that we're getting some combination of Rock/HHH/Undertaker for the title at Vengeance. Why Smackdown is getting back to back pay per view title shots isn't immediately clear. Let's get to it.

Vince is in the ring and brings out Kurt Angle before leaving. Thanks for showing up boss. At least it was short though. Angle says he might as well be the poster boy for ruthless aggression and goes into his big victory speech for making Hogan tap. The wig is finally removed for good and Angle issues an open challenge to anyone he's never faced before.

And now, wrestling history. Cole: "Tazz I know this kid. That's John Cena." Angle asks why Cena thinks he can come out here and face him like this. Cena says ruthless aggression and slaps the taste out of Angle's match to start things off in a hurry. You can feel the intensity in him though of course no one knew how big he was based off those ten seconds.

Kurt Angle vs. John Cena

Cena takes him outside and keeps hammering away before a running splash gets two. Kurt picks the ankle and snaps off the first German suplex to put both guys down. A rollup gets two for Cena but Angle blasts him down with a clothesline. They're certainly going hard out there and it's working so far.

Cena throws him off to break a front facelock and gets two off a good looking spinebuster. The Angle Slam is countered into a DDT for some near

falls (Taz: "RUTHLESS AGGRESSION! THERE IT IS!" Is that what it is? Multiple pinfall attempts?) and a powerslam gets the same. Kurt finally has enough and grabs a double chickenwing rollup for the pin.

Rating: B. For a rookie making his debut against a top star, this was a heck of a match as, save for that front facelock, they were going at top speed for the entire match. You can see something in Cena but it takes more than a five minute match to make a career. The presence is there though and that's something you either have or you don't.

Cena offers a handshake but Angle walks away. Kurt teases coming back for more but decides it's not worth it. One important point here: Angle gives a big sigh of relief when he knows Cena can't see him anymore. Little things like that sell moments like this so much more.

Kidman, Faarooq and Rikishi are congratulating Cena when Undertaker comes up. The champ asks his name and extends his hand for a good job. I know I said they need to make new stars but Angle and Undertaker in less than half an hour? That's a rub that you don't see very often, if ever.

Tag Team Titles: Hardcore Holly/Big Valbowski vs. Billy and Chuck

Hard Val is challenging, apparently after wanting to team up for years. Why they didn't do so isn't explained, nor is the fact that they're making their debut and are apparently the second best tag team on Smackdown on arrival. Chuck charges into a right hand to start but Val does the same, suggesting that he isn't the best student in the world.

Holly gets beaten down in the corner as Cole praises Billy and Chuck for being surprisingly good. They're two time Tag Team Champions at this point and you're still surprised that they're a good team? That's slow even for Cole. A belly to back suplex is enough for the hot tag to Val but Rico offers a distraction, setting up the Fameasser to retain.

Rating: C-. Here's the thing: Venis and Holly are fine for a veteran team and could be perfectly fine as eventual challengers if you give them some promos and a few wins over jobbers. However, since there's no tag division to speak of, they're thrown out there against the champs and already lose. Where are they supposed to go from here? Take the time and

build a division as you have a bunch of people sitting around (Kidman, Faarooq and Rikishi come to mind) doing nothing. Make something up and give them a reason to team. The rest can take care of itself.

Here's Torrie Wilson to preview the Divas Undressed special. She takes off her robe, walks around in lingerie and that's it. No angle, no talking, nothing at all. At least it was short.

Tajiri likes looking at Nidia so Jamie Noble offers her to him if they win their tag match later.

HHH has been fighting through an elbow injury and is all tough but had to have it fixed in the operating room. After this deadly operation he'll be out.....FOR TWO TO THREE WEEKS!!! Taz teases he'll be back next week actually. This got way too much time for something like that, especially when you could just say he was banged up after the pay per view or something.

Mark Henry vs. Lance Storm

Storm is here to prove how unfair American referees really are. We're not ready yet though as we need to look at Mark Henry lifting some 100+ year old 172lb dumbbell. Henry throws him around to start but a rake of the eyes breaks up a press slam. Storm gets tossed outside and then thrown back in because Henry is really strong. Another eye rake gets Storm out of a bearhug and Henry misses a Vader Bomb, setting up the superkick to give Lance the pin. Again: Henry is STRONG. We get it already.

Here's Undertaker for a chat. He recaps the pay per view main event and takes credit for HHH undergoing elbow surgery. Cole: "HHH is actually OUT of the hospital now!" Undertaker wants to know where Rock thinks he fits into that match and here's a clip of Sunday's fighting. Rock will be back here on July 11 (the FULL TIME Rock of course because he doesn't do this part time nonsense) and Undertaker will make him pay for King of the Ring.

This brings out Kurt Angle of all people, who wants a title shot next week, assuming Undertaker gets by Jeff Hardy on Raw. Undertaker eventually agrees, even though Angle had trouble getting by a rookie

tonight. That's cool with Kurt, but he asks to touch the title. The champ actually lets him do it (moron) and is in the ankle lock almost immediately. You don't see Undertaker acting that stupid very often and, along with that handshake earlier, suggests a face/tweener turn.

Torrie models more lingerie. Yeah she looks amazing but this is the kind of thing that makes people criticize wrestling.

Test vs. Rikishi

They take turns beating on each other in the corner but the referee won't let Test throw a punch. Rikishi hits a superkick but gets slowed down by a low blow. The Test Drive is broken up and the ref is bumped, earning Test a DQ loss even though Rikishi shoved him into the ref. I don't know why wrestling can never learn that no one cares about referee stories.

Test gets a Stinkface before Christian and Storm can come out for the late save.

Vince calls Hogan into his office and the boss is really, really happy about Hogan tapping out on Sunday. Hogan implies that they'll fight one day and Vince is aghast.

Test rants about how much America sucks.

Billy Kidman/Hurricane vs. Tajiri/Jamie Noble

The bad guys take over to start and Noble has to bail from the threat of a chokeslam. That's fine with Hurricane as he tries a double chokeslam, only to shove them both down instead. Kidman hiptosses his partner onto Noble but walks into the Tajiri elbow. The Tarantula makes things even worse but a tornado DDT is countered into a sitout powerbomb. Now the chokeslam works for Hurricane and the shooting star puts Tajiri away.

Rating: C+. They're getting close to having something with this division as it's slowly building after being nothing interesting for weeks on end. Add a few more names to the thing, perhaps one being the King of Mystery, and they really could have something special. Imagine that: a division works when you have distinct characters instead of people who look, act and work the same.

Torrie and Stacy Keibler are catty to each other because that's what women in wrestling do. While wearing lingerie of course.

Torrie, now billed as appetizing, wears a third outfit. Stacy comes out in a schoolgirl outfit and gets a far bigger pop. We're not done yet as Dawn Marie comes out as well and the blondes get in a catfight. This is so beyond a waste of time.

Chris Jericho isn't sure what he'll use to beat Hogan tonight but he'd love to make him tap.

Rey Mysterio is coming.

Reverend D-Von/Deacon Batista vs. Faarooq/Randy Orton

This is Batista's in ring debut and the first time he's been seen without a shirt. Orton does his rookie offense on D-Von to start until a dropkick of all things puts Randy down. A superplex is broken up and Orton scores with a middle rope bulldog. Faarooq comes in to clean house but the Dominator is countered with a DDT. It's already back to Orton for a high crossbody, only to have Batista come in off the blind tag. That wicked clothesline blasts Orton and a spinebuster (with multiple camera cuts, suggesting a botch or an edit) finishes Randy in a hurry.

Rating: C-. They were smart to have Batista only come in at the end for the big power display, making this an effective debut. The thing is you have two teams right here plus the champs and Venis/Holly. These are three teams thrown together in the span of a few weeks and you're getting close to a division. Simple ideas (gimmick/enforcer, two veterans, veteran/rookie) are fine and can grow into something else until the next big team can be put together. Why is that so complicated?

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Hulk Hogan vs. Chris Jericho

The fans are WAY into Hogan here (hardly shocking in a town like Chicago) as Jericho is backdropped to start. It's too early for the big elbow though (always seems weird to be anything but a big leg or boot) and Jericho gets in a low blow to take over. The fans are all over Jericho so

he does the hand to the ear before going way old school with the abdominal stretch.

Just in case the words ABDOMINAL STRETCH aren't clear enough, Cole points out that it hurts your gut. Hogan's comeback is countered as Jericho slides under the big boot (that's what happens when you stop fighting giants) and hits the bulldog into the Lionsault for two. Jericho has had enough of the HULKING UP and hits Hogan with a chair for the DQ.

Rating: D+. Not the worst match in the world here with Jericho doing the work and letting Hogan do all of his spots. This isn't a case of Hogan showing anyone up and the match was actually fine, all things considered. There's value in Hogan giving people rubs like this, but he can only do it for so long before it stops mattering.

Jericho loads up a Conchair to the arm but his own countdown comes up. Cue the returning Edge (who Cole can't recognize from behind despite him having a pretty easy shape to recognize) for the save and beatdown. Posing ends the show.

Overall Rating: B-. The wrestling was up and down here but this was ALL about the new talent. That might not always mean new people but it did a lot of good for setting things up for the future. There are skeletons of tag and cruiserweight divisions though that's not what matters the most.

Tonight we saw a focus on John Cena, Batista and Randy Orton with Rey Mysterio debuting soon. While none of them are stars yet, those four are fresh ideas who could mean something to the company, which isn't what you get around here. They're actually setting something up and that's what matters more than anything else. I liked the show a lot and there's stuff I want to see instead of all the nonsense that keeps going on around here for so long. Good show here (with the least Vince in a LONG time) and a lot of hope for the future.

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