

Smackdown – July 4, 2002 (2016 Redo): America is the Land of Stolen Finishes

Smackdown

Date: July 4, 2002

Location: FleetCenter, Boston, Massachusetts

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We've got a huge holiday show here with Kurt Angle challenging the Undertaker for the World Title a few days after Undertaker defended against Jeff Hardy in a ladder match. Other than that Smackdown has become the breeding ground for the new generation so it should be interesting to see where John Cena, Randy Orton and Batista go from here. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Chris Jericho injuring Edge a few weeks back and hurting the shoulder even worse. Then a few weeks later Edge came back and saved Hulk Hogan from the same fate so now we have a new Can-Am Connection.

Opening sequence.

Based on that one interaction, Hogan and Edge get a Tag Team Title shot. Somehow I'm not annoyed by this development.

Lillian Garcia (looking absolutely stunning) does her usual amazing rendition of America the Beautiful...until Lance Storm, Christian and Test interrupt to some awesome heel heat. Christian thinks the fans don't even know why they're celebrating other than Will Smith defeating a bunch of aliens. Storm brings up Americans going to war over the years and says America lost in Vietnam. All three together: "AMERICA SUCKS!"

Rikishi vs. Lance Storm

Storm gets sent outside to start and Rikishi knocks him out of the air upon reentry. Rikishi sits on the chest but has to deal with Test and

Christian, meaning the Banzai Drop doesn't work. Test boots him in the head and Storm gets the cheap pin. Nothing to see here but the Canadians interrupting the song was great.

We recap John Cena's debut. He really did come off as a star upon debut and people noticed. The fact that he gave Angle a run for his money was important too as he wasn't fighting some joke in a squash that didn't mean anything. It's a great debut and really one of the best in a good while.

Stacy Keibler brings Cena to see Vince and, as she does with everyone, likes what she sees in the rookie.

Reverend D-Von/Batista vs. Randy Orton/Big Valbowski

Veniz hammers on the monster to start until Batista blasts him with the kind of clothesline you expect to see from someone like Batista. D-Von comes in and runs into a raised boot, allowing the tag off to Orton. Randy is quickly neckbreakered so it's back to Val for the Blue Thunder Bomb. Everything breaks down and Batista goes shoulder first into the post. It doesn't really matter though as a spinebuster plants Orton for the pin.

Rating: C. This was fine and that's the kind of thing Smackdown needs a lot more of. The story of Orton needing the right partner to take these two down is a good enough idea and gives us a reason to care about Orton while being impressed by Batista. They're developing these guys and that's the best thing that can be done at the moment.

Jericho is ranting to Vince about Edge so the match is made for Vengeance. Cena comes in and Vince actually praises him for last week. Jericho isn't impressed and asks where the ruthless aggression is. Cena slaps the taste out of his mouth (sounded great) and leaves. Again: Cena is coming off like a star and has the backbone to make it stick.

During the break, Vince made Cena vs. Jericho for tonight.

Angle blames a nasty case of the flu for his performance against Cena last week but he's ready for the Undertaker. We see an Angle narrated

video about how hot he's been lately, including making Hogan tap. Angle talks about how awesome he is and actually quotes Kid Rock to say he's ready.

Billy and Chuck are a bit sore (too much walking you see) but they split hot dogs. Rico comes in and yells at them for not taking their title defense seriously.

Clip of Rock from earlier this year making fun of a cameraman who said he was going to win the Royal Rumble. Rock is back next week.

Tag Team Titles: Edge/Hulk Hogan vs. Billy and Chuck

Edge and Hogan are challenging if that somehow wasn't clear. Hogan, with the red, white and blue boa, gets an extended entrance and Edge holds the American flag. Hogan shoves Chuck around to start and punches him in the face for daring to mock the poses. Billy comes in to face Hogan for a weird generational clash.

It's off to Edge who gets beaten down in the corner (always stick with American) with Chuck slowly slamming him down. The fans want Hogan (duh) but settle for Rico kicking Billy by mistake. It's not that bad though as Billy is back up with a bulldog to send Edge into the steps for two.

Back in and that half nelson faceplant gets Edge out of trouble and there's the hot tag to Hogan. Chuck superkicks Hulk down to break up the legdrop but Edge comes off the top with a double clothesline to drop the champs. Billy gets speared and it's a double boot followed by a double legdrop to Chuck for the pin and the titles.

Rating: C-. I really can't get mad at this as it's not like Billy and Chuck are some unstoppable team. They had just won the titles back from the dynamic duo of Rikishi and Rico a few weeks back so this is hardly some tragedy. Hogan is going to be much better suited giving someone like Edge a rub than being in the main event. Leaving him in the ring for all of two minutes is a good way to run a tag match and this perfectly acceptable.

Chris Jericho vs. John Cena

Jericho goes right after him at the bell and ties up the slap score early on. The Walls are broken up with a catapult into the corner, followed by a spinebuster to send Jericho outside. Back in and Jericho gets dropkicked out of the corner as we hear about Cena's pre-WWE athletic career for the first time. The Walls are countered again, this time with a small package for two. Cena rolls away from the Lionsault and gets two more off a rollup, only to have the Flashback (sleeper drop) give Jericho the pin. The feet on the ropes helped too.

Rating: B-. Not quite as hot as last week's match against Angle but it's very clear that Cena is a star in the making. He's got that fire in his eyes and there's no way to fake something like that. Good match here again as Cena continues to look like a better prospect than Lesnar at this point, at least once the bell rings.

You know Rey Mysterio? He'll be here soon.

Rock once shoved Vince's face in Rikishi's thong.

We look at Shawn Michaels announcing HHH will be joining the NWO.

We go back to Divas Undressed which resulted in a catfight because that's how women act in WWE.

GET THE F OUT!

Earlier today in the trailer park, Jamie Noble showed Nidia their new trailer. Redneck humor really isn't my thing, but Nidia is no Rhyno eating cheese and crackers.

Torrie Wilson vs. Stacy Keibler

Bra and panties. This has all the old standards: cartwheels, rollups, the referee getting rolled over, Torrie wins in a clean sweep. There's just nothing to say about these things and there's no secret to what they're doing.

Torrie strips to reveal stars and stripes underwear.

Video on Undertaker vs. Jeff Hardy including Undertaker teasing a face

turn after the match.

Undertaker is ready to fight anyone.

HHH has a DVD.

WWE Undisputed Title: Kurt Angle vs. Undertaker

Undertaker is defending of course and Angle is shoved into the corner to start. Angle's headlock doesn't get him very far as another shove has him in trouble. Back in and Undertaker starts picking up the pace (I'm shocked too) with a clothesline, followed by Snake Eyes into the big boot.

The first German suplex breaks the champ's momentum though and it's time to trade big shots in the corner. A DDT gives Undertaker two but the Tombstone is countered into the ankle lock. In a rare good job by commentary, Cole brings up Angle recently doing the seemingly impossible by making Hogan tap so the hold doesn't feel like a waste of time.

The hold stays on for a good while until Undertaker flips him away and grabs a chokeslam for two. Back up and Undertaker loads up the Last Ride but gets pulled down into a triangle choke. Undertaker stacks him up for a cover and taps at the same time the referee counts three for an infamous (and stolen from the UFC) finish, meaning it's a draw.

Rating: C+. Good but not great match though the ending is still solid. This actually felt interesting as Angle had been one of the best in the company for a long time now so putting him back into the title picture had to be done, if nothing else for some fresh blood. The rest of the match was good enough but the ending brings it up a lot.

Controversy reigns (with the fans being VERY unhappy) and the match is ruled a draw, meaning Undertaker is still champion. Angle attacks Undertaker to end the show with Tazz of all people summing it up perfectly: the Undisputed Title is in dispute.

Overall Rating: C+. You can see pieces moving around here and above all else, it seems like there's an idea behind a lot of what's going on here. The young talent is getting pushed and there's something new in the main

event scene. In other words, there's some hope around here, which is the kind of thing that WWE had needed for so long.

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