

Monday Night Raw – July 8, 2002 (2016 Redo): Breaking Point

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 8, 2002

Location: First Union Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

Raw is actually picking up a bit at the moment as they're making some efforts to push the younger talent. Brock Lesnar is moving up the card and it's clear that Eddie Guerrero and Chris Benoit are becoming the top heels. Unfortunately that leaves the NWO, who are promising that HHH will be joining tonight. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Undertaker vs. Kurt Angle from Smackdown with the double finish.

Vince announces Undertaker vs. Rock vs. Angle for Vengeance. Undertaker is off tonight though and the fans are NOT pleased.

Opening sequence.

Here's Booker T. for an opening chat. He's used to fighting the NWO and wants X-Pac in particular because X-Pac looks like a rat. Booker quotes his dad, who apparently spoke to him in promos about challenging people to wrestling matches. Instead of X-Pac, here's Eddie Guerrero to answer. Eddie wants to fight someone so here we go.

Booker T. vs. Eddie Guerrero

Please give them some time. Eddie stomps him down in the corner to start and puts his feet on the ropes for two. A belly to back suplex sets up a running seated Blockbuster for two but Booker grabs his spinning sunset flip out of the corner for the pin. For some reason the bell doesn't ring and Booker's music takes a second to come on so there isn't much of a reaction.

Rating: D+. So much for giving them time. I'm sure these two are capable of having a good match if you give them more than three minutes but then we wouldn't have time for all of the NWO promos tonight. At least Booker didn't have to do another unnecessary job here though and that's a good thing.

Post match Benoit comes in for the beatdown but Goldust makes the save. The Dudleyz come in and clean house with chairs.

Rey Mysterio video.

Goldust grabs Booker's hand for a celebratory dance. Booker isn't happy with that because the NWO is coming for them. This turns into a discussion of Jon Bon Jovi until Booker superkicks a pretzel vendor who looks like X-Pac. That probably does deserve a beating.

Jackie Gayda isn't happy about Trish Stratus interfering last week. Apparently Trish is jealous of the attention Jackie has been getting and can't handle it. Christopher Nowinski comes in to rip on Trish for wearing a cowboy hat and looking like Yosemite Sam. The result is a mixed tag with Bradshaw as Trish's partner. Of note here, Jackie had some of the worst acting skills I've ever seen here. She has almost no presence and is just reading her lines. Trish isn't great but at least she sounds natural.

Video of Rock asking if Lillian would like some strudel. Lillian: "More than anything in the world Rock."

Bubba Ray Dudley vs. Chris Benoit

Before the match, Goldust, dressed as Ben Franklin and talking like Santa Claus, suggests a partnership with the Dudleyz to fight the NWO. This turns into a discussion of wanting to punch Thomas Jefferson in the gonads. Benoit takes him down to start but gets suplexed. Eddie offers a distraction though and the middle rope backsplash misses. That's enough for Benoit to snap off a German suplex but Bubba grabs one of his own. Eddie goes after Spike as the Bubba Bomb gets two. The Spike factor allows Benoit to grab the Crossface for the submission.

Rating: C. This is a good role for Bubba but I'm not clear on why Benoit and Guerrero aren't higher up the card. I mean, save for Undertaker STILL being champion for reasons that aren't clear. The match wasn't much to see but at least Benoit won, albeit after making sure Bubba stayed strong.

Guerrero and Benoit beat on the Dudleyz until Booker and Goldust make the save.

Video on Nowinski at Harvard. Ok then.

Recap of last week's ladder match.

Ric Flair praised Jeff Hardy's performance last week when, I kid you not, STEVEN RICHARDS interrupted and set up a match with Flair for later tonight. You bring Flair back to the ring, turn him face, and then give him a match with Richards? I mean, if Richards goes over (which he won't) it's one thing but a quick Flair win doesn't help anyone.

Jackie Gayda/Christopher Nowinski vs. Trish Stratus/Bradshaw

This is an infamous one. The guys start things off and Chris wants a little football, only to tag in Jackie when Bradshaw gets down in the three point stance. Trish gets two off a dropkick and shoulder, which pretty much ends the competent part of the match. Stratus charges at Jackie in what I think was supposed to be a toss over the top but Jackie completely misses her so Trish just bounced chest first off the ropes.

I think Trish calls for a drop toehold or maybe a small package but Jackie kind of lays on her instead. I've seen over 50,000 wrestling matches in my life and I honestly do not know what they were trying to do there. That's not good, nor is it acceptable. Jackie chokes on the mat and then the ropes before thankfully bringing Nowinski back in for some missed elbows.

Trish tags out, which brings up another issue. JR keeps talking about how the women have to face the women and the men have to face the men, so why did Trish have to tag? Shouldn't Bradshaw be allowed to come in without the tag taking place to satisfy the match rules? A fall away slam sends

Nowinski over for another tag and the men leave, because that's clearly the best idea.

Trish tries what looks to be Stratusfaction but Jackie goes to the mat, leaving Trish to force her over with a snapmare. Some chops in the corner allow Trish to desperately call spots as JR tries to say Jackie just needs ring time. Trish shoves her off the middle rope, waits for Jackie to turn around like she's supposed to, kicks her back into the middle of the ring, and hits something like a middle rope fist to the back of the head (supposed to be a bulldog and didn't make contact anyway).

The fist comes close to Jackie's head, Trish lands and turns around, and THEN Jackie goes down, allowing Trish to get the pin after the longest three minutes and fifteen seconds that I've ever seen in wrestling. Ignore Jackie kicking out at two and a half as the referee count anyway because they can't let this keep going.

Rating: U. For unacceptable. This is a perfect example of what happens when someone has no reason to be in the ring but is out there because they won some competition. Nowinski was nothing great at this point but he could wrestle an acceptable match. Jackie looked like she was in her first week or two of training, let alone being ready for a live match.

There's a difference between not being able to do much (see someone like Maven in his Raw debut) but being able to do that little amount at a watchable level. This was the polar opposite as Jackie couldn't even do basic stuff right and you could see Trish getting mad out there. Completely unacceptable here and one of the worst matches in history.

Benoit and Eddie are annoyed when the NWO comes in to say there's strength in numbers.

Montage of Rock impersonating various people.

Here's the NWO for a chat. We see the NWO offering their assistance to HHH at King of the Ring, which apparently means HHH is joining the team. Shawn recaps the Kliq and then runs down HHH for sucking up to the fans too much. Just like the NWO, the Kliq is for life. That's why HHH has until Vengeance to make the biggest decision of his life. Nash has his

own bombshell because he's coming off the injured list tonight. His idea for tonight: a ten man tag with Booker T./Goldust/Dudleyz/??? vs. the NWO/Benoit/Guerrero.

Ric Flair vs. Steven Richards

So is this really just taking place so a Philadelphia guy can wrestle? Flair stomps him down in the corner, followed by the standard chops and punches. A toss sends Steven outside, followed by a belly to back into the Figure Four for the submission.

Rating: D. What the heck was the point of that? This was an NWA style squash with Flair giving up nothing, hitting his usual stuff, and winning the match with his finisher. If this is the best they can do with Flair at this point, they'd be better off making him the boss again or just leaving him as a heel because this was a waste of time.

Here are Paul Heyman and Brock Lesnar for a chat. Lesnar vs. Rob Van Dam is now for the Intercontinental Title (Wasn't it already?) but Heyman would rather talk about making and exploiting everyone in ECW. Now Heyman wants to feed one of those people to the most dominant wrestler for the next ten years.

Tommy Dreamer comes out and threatens to innovate some violence and actually knocks Lesnar outside with a kendo stick. He makes the mistake of going after Heyman though and gets hit with the F5 on the floor. With Lesnar busy looking at Dreamer, Van Dam comes in and kicks Brock down. A Van Terminator knocks Paul silly. This was ALL for the live crowd, which is almost never a good idea for a TV show.

European Title: Jeff Hardy vs. William Regal

Regal is defending and gets punched in the face to start. The Whisper in the Wind barely makes contact but gets two anyway. A few knees to the face put Jeff down and the Regal Cutter gets two for the champ. Something like a Tazmission has Jeff in more trouble but Regal goes to unhook a turnbuckle pad. This villainy goes badly for him though as Jeff dropkicks him into the corner and hits the Swanton for the pin and the title.

Rating: D. Well that happened. Regal was similar to British Bulldog as he only held the title because he was from Europe, meaning Jeff isn't likely the saving grace that the title needs. Hardy is basically getting the title as a consolation prize after last week, which doesn't mean anything because the title hasn't meant anything in years.

Video of This Is Your Life Rock.

Regal breaks down in tears over losing. Nowinski has to come in and help him up.

Bubba gives a rousing speech to get Van Dam to be the mystery partner.

Dudley Boyz/Rob Van Dam/Goldust/Booker T. vs. NWO/Chris Benoit/Eddie Guerrero

Remember earlier tonight when the Dudleyz didn't want to team with Goldust and Booker T? Well forget about that because Nash has decided they're partners here. There was no mention of Vince saying deal with it and team together and no scene of them agreeing to put issues aside and deal with a common enemy. Either of those things would have been fine and taken all of thirty seconds to do but instead we get neither, leaving it as a plot hole.

X-Pac and Van Dam start things off with Shawn shouting something from ringside. After the kicking exchange, it's off to Goldust for an atomic drop and a tag to Bubba. Even Spike gets to snap off a headscissors but Benoit comes in to turn things around. The beating doesn't last long as Van Dam is back in to monkey flip Eddie but the Canadian is back in to take over on Rob.

A superkick puts X-Pac down as the fans are trying so hard to care here. Unfortunately it's all for naught though as the NWO is just sucking the life out of this show. The hot tag brings in Bubba to clean house but Van Dam goes after Shawn and walks into the F5 onto the stage from an invading Lesnar.

Back in and Benoit keeps working over Bubba as this keeps going. The tag brings in Nash to give Booker the big boot but he goes over to the other

corner and OW MY QUAD! That would be a torn muscle and Nash wouldn't wrestle again until April. Everything breaks down with Bubba checking on Nash and Shawn superkicking Booker. Show adds the chokeslam to put Booker away. JR: "IT'S AN NWO VICTORY!" Well to be fair, Benoit and Guerrero were just there anyway so it's truer than it sounds.

Rating: D+. I've seen worse but you can feel the tape and paperclips coming off in a hurry. Nash getting injured is one of those things that only happens when nothing else can go wrong, but to suggest that he was going to save the whole show was ridiculous in the first place. Oh and well done by having Booker take the fall and not, I don't know, SPIKE FREAKING DUDLEY. That's so great.

Shawn says that's what HHH is in for if he doesn't join the team.

Overall Rating: F. This is a show where the wrestling was bad but the bigger problem is how it felt like the final straw. Yes the angles are horrible and yes the matches are hit or miss at best but tonight we had one of the worst matches of all time and one of the big stars coming back into the ring and then being put on the shelf for several more months, meaning the NWO continues to be worthless. Raw just does not have the credibility to survive something like this and it's clear that they're in need of a major shakeup.

On top of that, this was half Raw and half ECW reunion show with people like Dreamer and Richards being put on the card for the sake of appealing to the live crowd. Like I said, that's fine for a show that has a lot of momentum but Raw had two decent shows in a row and that's about it. Something needs to be fixed around here and it needs to happen in a hurry.

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