

Smackdown – July 11, 2002: Right Down the Middle

Smackdown

Date: July 11, 2002

Location: Boardwalk Hall, Atlantic City, New Jersey

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

It's the week after a big show and the top story is the return of the Rock. It's not clear what he's going to be doing here but odds are it's something rather simple that is going to be considered amazing because it's the Rock. If nothing else he needs to start the build towards Vengeance when he challenges for the World Title. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's World Title match which ended in a draw.

Opening sequence.

John Cena is in the main event tag. That's a big, big step forward in a hurry.

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

Billy and Chuck are challenging. Edge spinwheel kicks Chuck in the face to start but Billy snaps off a tilt-a-whirl slam to take over. As the beating ensues, it's hard to ignore Hogan playing cheerleader. That's one thing I always love about Hogan in tag matches: he almost never stops moving on the apron. It might be slapping the turnbuckle or pacing back and forth but he's rarely just standing there watching. There's a lot that can be done from that spot and it's something not enough people do.

The double and triple teaming has Edge in trouble before we hit the chinlock to slow things down even more. Billy walks into the half nelson faceplant and it's off to Hogan for the usual. The big boot hits Chuck's chest/shoulder area and the one to Billy is even less accurate. Rico offers a distraction so the Fameasser can get two on Hulk. Another big

boot sets up the legdrop to retain.

Rating: D+. The important thing here: the match ran 6:16 and Hogan was in the ring for about a fourth of that. Hogan wrestling less than two minutes a match but getting to do all of his signature stuff is the best thing he can do right now. Good enough match and it ends the threat of Billy and Chuck getting another shot.

Cena comes up to Undertaker (his partner tonight) to thank him for the chance tonight. Undertaker doesn't seem to care because he's worried about the Rock.

Torrie Wilson was doing a beach photo shoot earlier today when Molly Holly interrupted. She thinks wrestling is what matters and offers Torrie a title shot tonight. Torrie: "Ok, I'll do it."

The agents try to get Undertaker out of the parking lot but he'll have none of that. A limo arrives but it's Chris Jericho/Kurt Angle, Undertaker and Cena's opponents tonight. Insults are exchanged and a brawl breaks out. Vince comes in for the save and some yelling.

Post break, Undertaker wants to know where Cena was. Cena says Undertaker threw him out but Undertaker yells about Cena not having his back. Undertaker thinks Cena won't last long if he doesn't get it together. So I guess he got it together.

Women's Title: Torrie Wilson vs. Molly Holly

Holly is defending. Torrie gets in a slap and that's about it for her early offense. Molly chokes on the ropes for a bit until Torrie catapults her into the corner. Some right hands in the corner have little effect as Torrie gets powerbombed out of the corner, setting up a leglock for a pin (kind of odd) to retain Molly's title.

Rock is here.

Mark Henry/Randy Orton vs. Reverend D-Von/Batista

D-Von cheap shots Orton to start and the early beating sends Randy outside. That means it's time for Batista to show off the power for a

bit. Orton avoids a knee drop though and Henry comes in to clean house with his own power. Everything breaks down and Henry clotheslines both of them down at the same time, only to have Batista hit a Regal Roll of all things. The spinebuster ends Henry in a hurry.

Rating: D. Nothing to see here, including Orton who disappeared halfway through the match. They need to go somewhere with this idea before Orton loses what little steam he has. At least Batista and D-Von are getting somewhere with this though and that's a big accomplishment in WWE at this point.

Hogan and Edge are going gambling. Rock comes in and Hogan takes credit for the Wrestlemania match. Rock: "You been forgetting to take your vitamins lately?" He'll even join them at the casino after some business is taken care of. Rock mocks Hogan a bit behind his back and Edge says Mr. Nanny smoked the Scorpion King. Edge and Rock is an odd visual as their generations mostly never crossed.

Here's Rock in the arena for the first time in a long time. Before he can get to the point though, he brings in rapper Busta Rhymes to plug an album and movie. This goes nowhere so they sing Under the Boardwalk and of course all of this is edited off the Network. After the singing ends, Rock calls out Undertaker but gets Angle instead.

Kurt thinks he's the one Rock needs to be worried about because he can make Rock tap just like he did to Hogan. Oh and if Puff Daddy wants a shot, Kurt can make him tap too. Kurt: "I speak that jive!" After taking a bit to figure it out, Rock starts making Dr. Evil jokes. Apparently Angle isn't a Mike Myers fan (smart man) and wants Rock next week. Rock agrees and puts Angle in the ankle lock until Undertaker comes out to clean house. This was a bit long but Rock vs. Angle should be great.

We recap the Un-Americans interrupting America the Beautiful last week.

Test vs. Rikishi

Rikishi sends him into the steps before the match as his way of standing up for America. The bell rings and Test turns him inside out with the clothesline. For some reason Storm has to hit a superkick, setting up a

nearly botched pumphandle slam for two. Rikishi loads up the Banzai Drop for two but it's too early for a Stinkface. Not that it matters as the Samoan drop ends Test in a hurry. Short match but they did a lot here, including having part of the new heel stable lose despite interference.

Post match the trio goes after Rikishi until Edge and Hogan make the save.

Stacy and Vince are about to remove clothing when Jericho comes in to ask nothing in particular. Vince asks that he give up his match against Edge so we can have a Tag Team Title match at the pay per view. Jericho is offered a reward to be named later.

Jamie Noble, Nidia and Tajiri are rather disgusting at a restaurant. Noble talks about how he's never had anything but the title means he's not poor anymore. That's not something I'm naturally going to boo.

We look at the NWO's actions on Raw. Nash will be out for a long time.

Tajiri/Jamie Noble vs. Hurricane/Billy Kidman

Jamie and Billy run the ropes to start until Hurricane sneaks in with a hot tag to take the champ down. Tajiri comes in and starts snapping off the kicks for a bit until a miss allows the tag off to Kidman. Everything breaks down and some heel miscommunication sets up a Hurricane flip dive. Back in and a super sitout powerbomb ends Noble, likely giving Kidman a future title shot.

Rating: B-. They didn't stop moving in the time they had but they only had a little over three minutes. Kidman as the next challenger is fine, especially when you consider the winner is just holding the title until Rey Mysterio gets here. Fun match though as the wrestling actually worked for once tonight.

Rock isn't sure how Coach Shunk and turned to become Marc Lloyd. He went gambling today and the big Vengeance slot machine came up with three Brahma Bulls. Rock will be waiting here to see the end of the show, which sounds like a threat.

Rey Mysterio is coming in two weeks.

John Cena/Undertaker vs. Kurt Angle/Chris Jericho

Undertaker and Jericho get things going with Chris actually winning the early fist fight. Cena comes in and gets beaten down, only to have Angle go shoulder first into the post. The rookie doesn't know how to follow up though and Angle snaps him over with a belly to belly.

Some Canadian stomping keeps Cena in trouble until he powerslams Angle for a breather. Undertaker comes in as everything breaks down, including a ref bump. The Angle Slam gets a delayed two on Undertaker and it's back to Cena. Undertaker saves his new little buddy from the Lionsault and an Oklahoma roll puts Jericho away.

Rating: C+. Cena getting the pin here is important but not as important as him being treated as someone on this level. He might have gotten beaten up a little bit but he hung in there well enough and wasn't destroyed. You can pencil in Jericho vs. Cena for Vengeance and that should be another good night for Cena.

The brawl continues post match with Undertaker putting Angle in a dragon sleeper. Cue Rock to lay out both guys with Rock Bottoms to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. Even with the star power and rookies being pushed, Smackdown continues to be the most middle of the road show ever. The wrestling and storytelling are fine but there's still very little to actually get excited about. The show certainly isn't bad but it's not the most exciting. Changing a few things up can make this a great show though and it's much better than the horrible Raw shows.

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