

Monday Night Raw – July 22, 2002 (2016 Redo): The People's Mullet

Monday Night Raw

Date: July 22, 2002

Location: Van Andel Arena, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

We're just over a month away from Summerslam but more importantly, HHH is now officially on Raw. I know it's not the best sounding thing in the world but at this point, Raw is absolutely dying for star power and HHH gives them a top name. Booker T., Rob Van Dam and Ric Flair are big names but they're not top level stars at this point, making HHH a necessary evil. Let's get to it.

The intro sequence now ends with a closeup of Eric Bischoff's face. There's my nightmare fuel for the week.

Opening sequence.

Speaking of nightmares, here's Bischoff to open things up, which likely means a very long speech. Bischoff actually gets right to the point by announcing the Rock for tonight. In what Eric seems to feel is a bigger announcement, here's HHH to loud music that might be hiding a fairly uninterested pop.

Thankfully (I think?) HHH takes the mic away and introduces Shawn for the big, official reunion. We get a very audible DX chant as Bischoff officially names Shawn as HHH's manager. Eric makes it very clear that Shawn is a step beneath HHH and that doesn't seem cool with Michaels. He isn't one to take ultimatums so he's taking the highway out of here.

Bischoff says HHH needs to go talk some sense into his buddy because he doesn't have many other options. HHH looks very annoyed as he goes after Shawn. We're still not done though as Eric says right

here tonight, we're unifying the Intercontinental and European Titles in a ladder match. It's about time that belt was taken behind the barn and shot.

In the back, Shawn is storming out when HHH catches up with him. Shawn has been here for fifteen years and he doesn't like being told what to do. HHH basically begs him to drop the whole pride thing and not be like Steve Austin. Worry not of course, because HHH has an idea.

Intercontinental Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Jeff Hardy

Ladder match and technically the titles are already unified so Jeff is challenging coming in. They hit the mat to start with Van Dam scoring off a dropkick and going for a cover out of instinct. Jeff gets knocked out to the floor for a moonsault off the apron, allowing him to bring in the first ladder.

Both guys go up and both guys are knocked right back down, meaning they both need a ladder for a duel. The champ gets the better of it and hits the cartwheel moonsault onto Jeff onto the ladder.

Something like a Russian legsweep off the ladder brings Van Dam back down, though I'm not sure why Jeff isn't down as well.

A Swanton onto the ladder onto the champ keeps Hardy down a bit longer but he climbs up in another hurry. Van Dam runs the rungs as well though and hits a huge sunset powerbomb for a big crash (and a matching pop). It's another climb on their own ladders with Rob kicking Jeff down and dropping a huge splash for a bonus. Van Dam easily pulls the belt down to retain with the ladder falling on Jeff's head.

Rating: C+. This was as good of a ladder match as you were going to have with less than seven minutes for a ladder match. Above all else though, it's a really good idea to get rid of the European Title. It hasn't meant a thing in months (if not years) and it was just taking up space while devaluing the other titles. It was nice for a very short time but it was WAY past its expiration date.

Here's Christopher Nowinski for a chat. After calling himself a

Harvard graduate over and over, Nowinski is shut up by Undertaker. That means a huge beatdown from the former champion, who is officially a face it seems.

Eric Bischoff gives Rhyno a sales pitch and things seem intriguing. D'Lo Brown and Shawn Stasiak come up to ask for a match. Bischoff has a three minute hole in the show and he wants to be entertained. If they don't do it, Bischoff will take care of the entertainment himself.

Trish Stratus/Bubba Ray Dudley vs. Molly Holly/William Regal

The genders don't have to match here. Bubba is really banged up after his match last night but starts with Regal anyway. Molly comes in and shoves Bubba, who changes his mind about tagging Trish. That means the test of strength dance and a quick spank, followed by the tag off to Stratus. It's off to Regal for some gentlemanly British violence until he tries to go after Bubba. That's enough for the hot tag to Dudley and everything breaks down. Trish plays D-Von on What's Up but Bubba won't slap her chest for GET THE TABLES. While Bubba is on the floor, Regal puts Trish in the STF for the win.

Rating: D. Are they planning on going anywhere with this Bubba/Trish stuff? They've been teasing it for a good while now but it's probably better that nothing actually comes of it. Regal and Molly are a bit better fit as their characters fit, especially with the natural heel chemistry they seem to have.

Bischoff tells someone that after three minutes (of Stasiak vs. Brown), they're on. He turns the corner and runs into Chris Benoit, who will face Booker T. tonight. The winner gets Van Dam for the Intercontinental Title next week.

Here's the Rock for his first address as champion. After thanking Undertaker and Angle for the match last night, Rock talks about telling Bischoff he would be here tonight with this title. Cue Eddie Guerrero of all people to interrupt and this should be good. Eddie isn't cool with what Rock has been doing lately. See, the other night, Eddie was going to tuck his kids in and saw ROCK posters on their wall next to pictures of their dad. That earned them a lesson,

so Eddie RIPPED THE POSTER UP AND BURNED IT!

Rock is aghast and thinks he's no movie star. Eddie is though, but Rock isn't sure if Eddie is Cheech or Chong. This sends Eddie into a rant about his haircut, which should be called the People's Mullet. Rock: "You look like Billy Ray Cyrus had sex with a dumb hyena." This sets up a match for later tonight and if Eddie wins, he gets a title shot. Rock accepts in song form and still wants to know if it's Cheech or Chong. Outstanding stuff here with Eddie hanging with Rock step for step. As Rock is leaving, Brock Lesnar comes out for his match and it's a Summerslam preview. Brock keeps walking and doesn't even give Rock a glance.

Brock Lesnar vs. Tommy Dreamer

Singapore Cane match. Brock isn't in a mood to play tonight as he suplexes Dreamer on the floor to start and whips him into the steps. They head inside for the first time with Brock hitting the triple backbreakers but getting kicked low, which shouldn't be legal here. A DDT gives Tommy two but the cane is knocked away and the F5 finishes Tommy in a hurry. Total squash with Lesnar never using the cane.

Undertaker comes out and knocks Lesnar around with the cane.

Big Show tells Shawn that there's no NWO to back him up anymore. You can hear a match going on in the background in a rare production error.

Shawn Stasiak vs. D'Lo Brown

Three minute time limit with Bischoff watching from the stage. Brown goes for some early near falls but walks into a powerslam as Bischoff says thirty seconds. Bischoff finally gets bored and counts down the clock after about a minute and a half. Cue two unnamed Samoans to maul both guys for the no contest. That would of course be Jamal and Rosey, soon to be known as 3 Minute Warning.

So to recap, this match had nothing to do with competition and was all about entertaining Bischoff. Well done indeed.

HHH gives Shawn a bag containing something to wear. Shawn seems

intrigued.

Goldust congratulates Booker for beating Big Show last night and gives him a Don King wig for being King of the Giant Killers. Booker actually gets into the impression to talk about his match with Benoit.

Booker T. vs. Chris Benoit

Winner gets a match with Van Dam next week and Booker has bad ribs coming in. Benoit works on the arm to start and gets knocked into the corner for his efforts. Some chops and a backbreaker have Booker in trouble and Benoit whips him hard into the buckle. Now that's the kind of intelligence you expect from Chris.

Booker's sleeper is quickly broken up with a belly to back suplex and Benoit unhooks a middle turnbuckle pad. A spinebuster plants the Canadian and a missile dropkick gets two as they're certainly moving out there. Benoit has had enough of this and starts rolling the German suplexes to damage Booker's ribs even more. Booker is finally sent into the buckle (which Nick Patrick can see) and the Crossface sends Benoit to the title match.

Rating: B. Bad refereeing at the end aside, this was a heck of a match with Benoit taking Booker apart thanks to the injury and destroying him like only Chris can. Booker looked fine in defeat as he came in injured and Benoit cheated to win on top of that. If nothing else, this makes up for Benoit jobbing to the Dudleyz last night. Well done all around.

Big Show vs. Spike Dudley

Bischoff is on commentary now. Chokeslam wraps Spike up in about a minute.

Show loads up a table and puts the invading Bubba through it along with his brother. Bischoff is very pleased with these results.

And now, D-Generation X. Shawn talks about being rebels before being a rebel was cool and HHH loads up the ARE YOU READY. As soon as he's about to tell us to suck it though, HHH Pedigrees Shawn to turn full heel, which would be the case for several years to come.

After a break, HHH drives away. As he leaves, Stephanie arrives to continue this stupid "steal the talent" story.

The Rock vs. Eddie Guerrero

Non-title. Rock snaps off some armdrags to start and grabs an armbar but gets suplexed down to give Eddie a breather. A one footed dropkick keeps Rock in trouble and it's off to a chinlock. Eddie switches it up to a figure four headscissors with a handful of ropes for extra leverage. How that gives him more leverage has never been clear to me but it's standard heel action so I'll just go with it.

Rock fights up with those open handed punches of his and the DDT gets two. The Rock Bottom is actually countered out of the air into a rollup for two (leave it to Eddie to pull that one off) but the Frog Splash misses. Back up and it's the spinebuster into the People's Elbow for the pin.

Rating: C+. Part of that is for that counter to the Rock Bottom alone. My first reaction is why not just make this a successful title defense but Eddie hasn't exactly been lighting it up in recent weeks. He was Intercontinental Champion back in May but I'm not sure if that's enough to warrant a title shot. It actually makes sense and while I doubt it's intentional, it's good booking.

Post match Brock comes down and grabs the belt, which he throws at Rock's feet. No violence but Lesnar still seems WAY over his head here.

Bischoff goes out to see a very smug looking Stephanie. She gets out of the car and smiles as Brock and Paul Heyman gets into the car. Stephanie asks how it feels to be kicked in the testicles, which she says about four times in a minute. Apparently Brock has been signed to Smackdown. Good to know.

Overall Rating: C. This show was all over the place with big angles and some good matches but a lot of bad stuff like bringing 3 Minute Warning to the show where there are no Tag Team Titles. You have like two teams to go after the belts so you put a fresh team on Raw? The Shawn vs. HHH thing should be fun and will be a much bigger deal

as we keep going. I know the idea here is shaking up a lot of things up but they seem to be doing that almost every few weeks. It's a good show but they're walking a rather thin line at this point.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's Complete Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume V at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MQKDV50>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>