

Smackdown – August 29, 2002: The Stephanie Factor

Smackdown

Date: August 29, 2002

Location: Mohegan Sun Hotel and Casino, Uncasville, Connecticut

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're past Summerslam and Smackdown now has their own World Champion as Stephanie (cue the chorus) has signed Brock Lesnar to an exclusive deal. How exactly she can do this isn't clear but my guess is SHE'S STEPHANIE MCMAHON AND SPOKE IN A LOUD VOICE because that renders everyone powerless. Let's get to it.

We open with a quick look at Lesnar winning the title.

Opening sequence.

Here's Stephanie to open us up (of course) and she's already bragging about how awesome Smackdown is because of Lesnar. Since Eric Bischoff's #1 contenders match means nothing, we're going to have a series of single elimination matches to crown a new #1 contender. She brings out Edge (Stephanie: "WOO! I'll scream if I want it.") and Eddie Guerrero but doesn't make it clear if this is a tournament or gauntlet or something else.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Edge

Eddie fires off right hands but walks into a flapjack, followed by the half nelson facebuster. Edge charges into an elbow in the corner and Eddie starts back in on the arm. Careful Eddie: you might make him spear you with no consequences again. With nothing else working, Edge suplexes him over the top for a good looking crash, followed by a slightly less good looking dive.

Back in and Eddie grabs a superplex as Cole says the winner of this series of matches gets the title shot. Again: more details on what that means would be nice but we're not likely to get them are we? Edge comes back with a powerbomb of all things and both guys are down. The Edge-0-Matic gets two but Eddie slips out of the Edgecution and grabs a couple of chairs. Ever the schnook, the referee takes one of them out, allowing Eddie to block a spear with the other one. The frog splash puts Edge away and advances Eddie

to...whatever the next step of this thing is.

Rating: B-. You know these two are going to have good matches together and this being kept shorter made for a tighter match. Edge is benefiting greatly from having matches against guys like Eddie and Benoit as he's getting much sharper in the ring. That's the kind of thing that is always going to benefit young wrestlers and can't be overstated.

Matt Hardy asks Stephanie if he's next to face Eddie but she announces Rikishi as Eddie's next opponent. So it's a gauntlet?

John Cena vs. Reverend D-Von

No Batista this week. D-Von throws his coat at Cena to start and hammers away before grabbing a neckbreaker for no cover. A suplex and powerslam give D-Von two and he cuts off Cena's comeback with the spinning elbow to the jaw. The flying headbutt misses but D-Von grabs the inverted reverse DDT for the completely clean pin.

Rating: D. What in the world was the point of that? D-Von can't even cheat to beat someone with Cena's potential? This was cutting Cena's leg off and leaving him with little to do for the sake of giving D-Von a clean pin. That's one of the more confusing booking decisions I've seen in a long time and I really don't get it.

Batista comes in and lays D-Von out with a Batista Bomb (which Cole calls a gutwrench powerbomb). Soooooo.....that's why Cena lost? To set up Batista vs. D-Von? Really?

Rey Mysterio vs. Rico

Mysterio starts fast and sends Rico outside, followed by a dive onto Billy and Chuck. The innocent bystanders are sent to the back for no apparent reason, leaving Rico to start firing off kicks. A sitout powerslam of all things plants Rey as Rico is getting to show off for the first time in WWE. Two Amigos into a Falcon Arrow (a type of powerbomb according to Tazz) gets two more and there's another powerslam. Rico misses a VERY long moonsault and Rey starts his comeback with the usual. A double springboard moonsault gives Rey two and it's the 619 into the West Coast Pop for the pin.

Rating: B-. I'm one of the bigger Rico fans you'll ever meet and this is more proof that they wasted a lot of potential with him. I watched him in OVW and was far more impressed by him than Cena as Rico just got it so much faster. He had the look, the in ring work

and the work ethic but he got stuck with this horrible gimmick and that's all he's remembered for doing.

Hardcore Holly is turned down for a spot in the #1 contender series in favor of Stephanie answering a phone call.

Video on Chris Benoit.

Here's the Smackdown Your Vote video from Raw.

Stephanie is trying to get someone to jump to Raw when Matt comes in to ask for a spot in the series again, eventually cutting off her call to get an answer. He gets Brock Lesnar instead. I do love the fact that the story of the show is "let's all beg Stephanie for favors".

Rikishi wants a rematch with Lesnar and tries to get "piece of the Kish" over as a catchphrase. Eddie comes in to laugh at him and suggests the thong is on too tight.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Rikishi

Rikishi starts fast but can't get the Stinkface. Eddie goes after the knee and kicks it into the steps before kicking at it even more back inside. We hit the leglock for a bit with Eddie very slowly cranking away. Rikishi fights up, crushes Eddie in the corner, and finishes him with a superkick (with the bad leg).

Rating: D. Nothing to see here as Rikishi's odd push WAY above his level of importance continues. For the life of me I don't get why he's getting pushed like this but I guess they don't have anyone else to go with here. It's not like Matt Hardy or anyone is right there for the same spot.

Chris Benoit runs in to help with a beatdown on Rikishi but Edge makes the save.

Here's a video mocking Major League Baseball's strike.

Stephanie rips into Benoit for attacking Rikishi and punishes him by...giving him a match with the injured Rikishi. So she's loud, basically a heel, and really stupid too.

Tajiri vs. Shannon Moore

Jamie Noble, Nidia and Hurricane are at ringside as well. They start fast with Shannon grabbing a quick rollup for two, earning himself a hard kick to the back. A chinlock doesn't go anywhere so Tajiri puts him in a reverse Tree of Woe for a baseball slide to the back of the

head. It's off to a cobra clutch for a bit until Moore fights up and gets two off a running neckbreaker. One heck of a German suplex gives Tajiri two and it's time for the seconds to get in a fight. Moore grabs a rollup for the upset.

Rating: C-. Not much of a match but well done at building up a challenger for Noble. The division is hardly the best in the world but they're putting a few things together, which is better than you would expect. At least Moore is a fresh name and that's a good sign. I mean, none of it matters as soon as Mysterio goes after the title but I like it better than just having Noble sit on the belt for months.

Rikishi vs. Chris Benoit

Benoit stomps him down in the corner to start but a Samoan drop gets Rikishi out of trouble. It seems to hurt his shoulder though and there's the Crossface. A rope grab only sets up a second Crossface and Rikishi is done. Yeah Stephanie! You show Benoit by giving him a two and a half minute match against an injured opponent! Benoit is now going on to the final match in the series.

Kurt Angle apologizes to the other six dwarfs for beating Mysterio at Summerslam. He's going to be Benoit's opponent in the final match. The crowd sounds VERY interested at the idea of Angle vs. Lesnar.

Funaki wants to interview Brock Lesnar but Paul Heyman will have none of that. Matt Hardy comes up instead and says he'll take Lesnar out. From here on, it's WWE Mattitude.

Brock Lesnar vs. Matt Hardy

Non-title and Brock isn't wasting time here as he takes Hardy outside and sends him back first into the post. Back in and we hit the shoulders to the ribs, followed by the overhead belly to belly suplex. Matt makes a quick comeback and posts Lesnar, followed by a dropkick to send him into the corner. That's about it though as the Twist of Fate is countered into the F5 for the pin.

Rating: C. See, now this made him look like a force. This was the kind of squash that Lesnar hasn't had enough of in his brief run and it made him look like a monster. It's a pin over someone with some credibility who can sell the heck out of the F5. Good match here and Matt can bounce back with a few funny promos, especially after

getting beaten by someone he had no business beating.

Brock isn't done and powerbombs the heck out of Matt.

Whoever Stephanie was talking to has signed with Smackdown. They'll be debuting in the main event, which is now a triple threat. Did you know Stephanie was all powerful?

Chris Benoit vs. Kurt Angle vs. Undertaker

One more Stephanie cameo as she introduces Undertaker, which actually does make sense here as this is a major moment. It's seeing her all the other time that it's not necessary. Undertaker shrugs off some double teaming to start (duh) but misses a big boot and crotches himself on the ropes. A few kicks to the leg put Undertaker on the floor, leaving Benoit and Angle to do exactly what you would expect Benoit and Angle to do.

Kurt snaps off some German suplexes but Benoit comes right back with a few of his own. Benoit whips him into the corner and flips Angle over with a release German suplex, only to have Undertaker dive back in for the save at two. Angle is sent outside and it's time for more chairs, one of which goes square onto Undertaker's head. Not that it matters as he's back on his feet about thirty seconds later so Benoit grabs a German suplex. That's no sold as well as Undertaker gets in a chokeslam, only to have Angle make the save with the ankle lock.

Kurt gets sent to the floor so Benoit puts on the Crossface with Angle coming back in for an ankle lock at the same time. That's not enough for a tap so Benoit and Angle trade submissions, thankfully with Undertaker actually staying down for a good while off the double submission. Benoit kicks off the ankle lock to send Kurt into a botched rollup for no count. The Angle Slam drops Undertaker again but he's back to his feet ELEVEN SECONDS LATER for the Last Ride and pin on Benoit.

Rating: B. I criticized Edge's non-selling against Eddie at Summerslam but this was a good bit worse. You don't take a double submission from two former World Champions and then no sell another finisher by being up in about ten seconds. If you just have to give Undertaker the title shot (and who better to give it to than a guy who beat TEST on Sunday and then lost on Monday), there are better ways to do it. Like, have Undertaker sell some stuff.

The problem is this match was all backwards. Angle and Benoit wrestled like a pair of faces with all the effort and speed while Undertaker just snuck in and stole the pin. Undertaker did sell earlier in the match but then just turned it off and won the match like Benoit was nothing in the end. Then again, Stephanie is their boss so the whole face/heel dynamic is screwed up on Smackdown in general.

Overall Rating: C. This is a very hard to rate show as the wrestling was mostly fine but the Stephanie stuff is just excruciating. It really does feel like she's the main character of the show and we're just stuck sitting around waiting to see what HUGE move she makes next and how she's trying to screw Raw over next while yelling at any wrestler, often for doing what she says. She's really taking a lot of the fun away from what could be a great show and that's very bad.

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