

Smackdown – September 12, 2002: Billy and Chuck and Eric and Stephanie

Smackdown

Date: September 12, 2002

Location: Target Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

TIME FOR A WEDDING! Er, a commitment ceremony! So this time around, WWE has decided to try and run a gay wedding for the sake of publicity, which is exactly what they got from it. Billy and Chuck are becoming “tag team partners for life” here and I’ll give you three guesses how legitimate this is. Let’s get to it.

We open with a wedding invitation because of course we do. Oh and this is the season premiere. So last week’s average show was a season finale? They need to work on this stuff.

Video on Brock Lesnar vs. Undertaker’s confrontation last week.

Opening sequence.

Brock Lesnar vs. Hardcore Holly

Non-title. They slug it out to start with Holly hanging in there until it’s an overhead belly to belly suplex to make things right with the world. A front facelock only seems to annoy Holly and he takes Lesnar outside to turn it into another brawl. Raw power gets Lesnar out of trouble again though as he sends Holly back first into the post and grabs another suplex. The LESNAR chants start up with the announcers mentioning his connections to the state. That’s a simple little save but very helpful to keeping Lesnar looking like a heel.

A delayed vertical suplex sets up a bearhug but Brock charges into some boots in the corner. That earns him a completely botched powerbomb with Holly hanging on his head, putting him out of action for over a year. Holly somehow gets in a dropkick and the kick to the ribs, only to eat the F5 for the pin.

Rating: D. Really dull stuff here and that’s not the most surprising

thing in the world. What is surprising is seeing Holly popping up and finishing the match despite his neck being destroyed like that. I know he might not be the most popular guy in the world but he's certainly one of the toughest, which means a lot on its own.

Undertaker and his wife arrive. Uh, didn't that go badly for Undertaker last time?

Eddie Guerrero/Chavo Guerrero vs. John Cena/Edge

Cena is in Minnesota Vikings colors and it's a brawl to start with the cousins jumping the makeshift team to start. That earns Eddie a pull of the mullet before Cena spins out of a double top wristlock. Eddie and Chavo beat him down on the floor though and Chavo gets in a very hard clothesline.

Back to back gorilla press slams have Eddie in trouble so he calmly dropkicks the knee out because Cena isn't ready to take Eddie on yet. The tag brings in Edge to clean house until Chavo crotches him against the post. Eddie runs up the corner for a hurricanrana but the half nelson faceplant is enough for the hot tag to Cena (Fan's sign: "HOT TAG!". Eh better than "the guy behind me can't see".). Everything breaks down and Edge goes shoulder first into the post. Cena is left all alone to take the brainbuster and frog splash for the pin.

Rating: C+. This worked like you would expect it to but I continue to be confused by Cena. He came in white hot and hit the ground running but then he was losing to D-Von and getting pinned clean in tag matches. As is so often the case, you need more than just a wrestling match to get someone over and the lack of any development is really hurting Cena.

Post match Eddie loads up a Stinkface with Chavo playing Rikishi but Edge breaks it up and puts Eddie's face in there instead.

As expected, Eddie goes nuts on Chavo post break.

Undertaker says Sara is here because she has family in Minneapolis. Matt Hardy comes in and says he'll have a kid one day with all his Mattributes. That earns Matt a shove into a wall, earning Undertaker the promise of a Mattitude Adjustment.

Rico can't get the right figures on top of a cake but needs to talk to Stephanie. She can't go because she has bad luck at weddings (ok I chuckled at that) but Rico gets close to having a meltdown and

talks her into it.

Kurt Angle vs. Rey Mysterio

Kurt thinks it's funny that we're in "Mini" and he's facing Mysterio again. Angle: "You know, mini? He's short. Oh come on that's funny." Angle doesn't want to hear Chris Benoit laughing at him anymore either but jumps back to Mysterio, who is a boy in a man's world. Kurt: "And I'm a man who loves to play with boys. Wait! I meant to say you're a boy and I'm a man and tonight I'm going to manhandle you!" If that's not enough comedy for you, the announcers spend Mysterio's entrance talking about how the wedding isn't for ratings and Bischoff used HLA to catch up with Smackdown's quality.

Some early suplexes have Rey in trouble so he speeds things up (makes sense) with a headscissors. Angle goes shoulder first into the post and a springboard moonsault gets two. A frustrated Kurt flips Rey upside down with a release German suplex and things get more into Kurt's pace.

We hit the bodyscissors to keep Rey down, followed by some rolling German suplexes to make things even worse. Rey fights right back with a moonsault press and a crossbody to put Angle on the floor. The 619 looks to set up the West Coast Pop but Kurt has to settle for a regular hurricanrana for a close two. Rey takes a bit too long going up though and the corner running Angle Slam puts him away.

Rating: B+. For a TV match, this was absolutely great stuff. These two always have chemistry together, but to be fair that's the case with almost anyone Angle faces. He's the kind of guy who can have a good match against anyone and it made for an entertaining match here. Really strong match and that shouldn't be a surprise in the slightest.

Someone from the wedding party arrives in a long black limousine.

Chris Benoit vs. Rikishi

Rikishi slugs away to start and grabs a sitout spinebuster for no cover. Instead Rikishi gets kicked low and chopped down but the Crossface can't go on full. Rikishi fights up and tries the Rump Shaker, only to get caught in a rather impressive electric chair drop. The Swan Dive is loaded up but here's Angle to shove Benoit off the top for the DQ.

Rating: D. So you remember how I said Angle can work well with

anyone? Well that's not the case with Rikishi, who just has no place at this level and everyone knows it. I really have no idea why he's here, especially when there are a lot of people ready to be raised up to get a shot like this. Orton and Cena are reduced to jobbing roles but Rikishi can be pushed this hard?

Post match Angle holds Benoit in place for the Stinkface.

The wedding ceremony is being set up so Benoit spends the time getting a match with Angle at Unforgiven. Stephanie agrees as Matt comes in and gets a match with Undertaker tonight.

Here's Rico to complain about how the ceremony isn't what he ordered, including a very old Justice of the Peace. The singers belt out It's Raining Men to bring Billy and Chuck to the ring (edited off the Network of course, making for a very awkward transition) and the old man dances. With the Justice's hands shaking, Chuck talks about how he didn't know much about Billy when they met.

Billy might have captured a lot of tag team gold but now he's captured Chuck's heart. Billy: "That was corny! Even for you!" Rings are exchanged and Rico is all aglow. Rico presents a video called Our Love Story with various comedic/romantic moments between the two of them which is so cheesy it almost works in a way.

We get the speak now line and here's Godfather with the ladies. Godfather knows Billy has some pimp in him and Chuck was a great skirt chaser, especially with the heftier ladies. Rico will have none of this and dismisses the "Good Time Girls" so the ceremony can continue. Anyway, Billy says yes and Chuck does the same, albeit with some cold feet.

The Justice of the Peace almost pronounces them as married but Chuck says hang on because this was a publicity stunt that got WAY out of hand. Billy flat out says they're not gay but they have no problem with gay people. Rico loses it but the Justice of the Peace says this is the kind of love that can go on for fifty years, sixteen months....or three minutes.

The shaking stops and the voice changes with the old man ripping off the prosthetic makeup to reveal Eric Bischoff. I know you can tell it a lot better now with the voice but this COMPLETELY got me back in the day and was one of the best surprises I had ever seen. 3 Minute Warning comes in for the beatdown with Bischoff holding Stephanie back.

Stephanie takes a Samoan drop (BIG pop for that) and I'm sure that's going to warrant another year of her glorious presence on TV. Edge, Cena and Mysterio come in for the save. The rest of the locker room comes out as well because WE ALL LOVE STEPHANIE and Smackdown is awesome and such.

This one deserves a few notes. First of all, we come back from a break with a listen to the Unforgiven theme song: Adrenaline by Gavin Rossdale, featuring the line "Nobody said this stuff makes any sense." Well of course it doesn't. It's a wrestling angle mainly focusing on the bosses.

That's the next important note: the recap focuses almost ENTIRELY on Bischoff and Stephanie with the whole wedding, Billy and Chuck, Rico and 3 Minute Warning and anything else being forgotten because we need a long look at how stunned Stephanie was. I know it was shocking, but there were more people there than just Stephanie.

Third, this whole "WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER" stuff didn't work for WCW and it didn't work in the Invasion so it's not going to work here. We just watched Edge shove Eddie's face into a rather unpleasant area of Chavo's body but OH NO STEPHANIE IS IN TROUBLE so they'll band together to help save her? Get out of here with that nonsense. It's way too much to accept and it's all for the sake of pushing Raw vs. Smackdown which wasn't interesting in the first place and still isn't here.

Finally, I have to mention GLAAD (a gay rights group) completely buying into the story and actually sending a wedding present (it was a gravy boat). After it was revealed to be a ruse, GLAAD ripped WWE apart, all while people were laughing at them for somehow trusting a PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING ANGLE to be on the up and up. That always gave me a good chuckle and I really don't feel a bit sorry for them looking stupid. Think this stuff through.

Nidia vs. Torrie Wilson

It's a brawl on the floor to start with Torrie getting in a few chops to take over. The announcers talk about the wedding shenanigans and for once it's acceptable given how big (albeit stupid) that angle was. Nidia charge into the buckle and gets caught with a neckbreaker for the fast pin.

Undertaker tells Sara this won't take long.

Matt recruits Brock to be at ringside with him.

Undertaker vs. Matt Hardy

Lesnar and Heyman are at ringside too. Heyman immediately starts running around the ring and throws a chair in with Tazz blaming Stacker 2 (sponsor) for all the energy. Undertaker will have none of this and grabs a powerslam to plant Hardy. Heyman gets ejected and the distraction lets Hardy get in a low blow.

A quick clothesline from Brock puts Undertaker down again and that's a second ejection. As you probably guessed, Undertaker shrugs it off and beats the heck out of Matt but Heyman shows up in Sara's locker room. Undertaker runs off for the save (thankfully without an awkward stare at the screen) and the no contest.

Rating: D. This was an excuse to get to the ending and there's nothing wrong with that. They didn't exactly hide what they were going for with Sara being shown right before the match and that's how it should have gone. I'll even give them points for Hardy not losing, which really is kind of a surprise.

Undertaker charges to the back and chokes Heyman but takes a chair to the head from Lesnar. Brock puts his hand on Sara's pregnant stomach to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. The wedding sent this one flying off a cliff and there wasn't enough time to recover. That twenty minute segment sucked the life out of the place and that's not good considering how big of a deal this was supposed to be. I really don't know how much longer they can keep up this Stephanie vs. Eric stuff but knowing WWE, I'd put a low estimate at about six months minimum with the audience's level of interest having no impact whatsoever.

The rest of the show was up and down as well but that Angle vs. Mysterio match is worth checking out. I had a good time with some of it but so much of the show was built around one really bad idea that it's hard to give it the benefit of the doubt. Unforgiven is getting one of the worst builds to a pay per view I've seen in a long time and that's not good, especially after a classic like Summerslam.

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