

Smackdown – January 9, 2003: The One With The Dead Guy

Smackdown

Date: January 9, 2003

Location: Tuscon Convention Center, Tuscon, Arizona

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're getting closer to the Royal Rumble and tonight we'll be finding out the fifteen Smackdown names in the match. Other than that though, we're still building to Chris Benoit vs. Kurt Angle for Angle's Smackdown World Title. It's hard to say how they'll build to that but given the show we're on, I have a feeling tag matches are in store. Let's get to it.

The opening recap looks at Paul Heyman challenging Brock Lesnar for a Royal Rumble match against Big Show. This resulted in Matt Hardy and Shannon Moore being massacred.

Opening sequence.

Big Show vs. Rikishi

Show towers over Rikishi, which Cole seems to think is impressive. I don't remember anyone ever accusing Rikishi of being overly tall so as usual, Cole seems to be babbling about nothing important. Rikishi actually knocks Show down to his knee but makes the mistake of trying a slam. A big boot gives Show two and we hit a very long abdominal stretch until Show gets caught holding the ropes. Show hits a clothesline and the chokeslam is good for the pin.

Rating: D. They actually did something right with the booking here as while they did spend weeks having Rikishi go over John Cena and Bull Buchanan, Cena did get the pin last week and now Show gets to pin him. I'm not sure I would have had Rikishi beat Cena and Buchanan down after every match but he's losing when he needs to be losing, which is what matters most.

Heyman promises to teach Lesnar a lesson by the end of the night.

John Cena vs. Chavo Guerrero Jr.

Cena raps about how he doesn't like Chavo for various Mexican stereotypes, including getting mild sauce at Taco Bell and illegal immigration. That would warrant an official public apology today. Or given how Vince likes Trump, a major push. Chavo grabs a headscissors to start and Cena gets knocked out to the floor in a heap.

Back in and a belly to back suplex makes things even worse so Cena blasts him with the hard clothesline. Buchanan gets in a shot to the head so Eddie goes after him and fights off Cena for good measure. That means a dive from Chavo onto both guys and here are the referees to eject Eddie. Back in and Cena heads up top, only to get superplexed for two. Chavo tries a sunset flip but Cena drops down and grabs the rope for the pin.

Rating: C-. This was ALL about Chavo here as Cena was only doing a few spots here and there in between all the shenanigans on the floor. At the end of the day though, Cena won the match and that's where the future seems to be going. That being said, Los Guerreros have been turned face (at least in this match) and there was a lot more steam in their heel run. At least it was great while it lasted.

We recap last week's wedding with Al Wilson missing most of his clothes.

And now, to the honeymoon suite with Dawn in lingerie, saying she's exhausted. Al is an animal you see.

Raw Retro: Austin and the beer truck.

Matt Hardy vs. Billy Kidman

Matt, who has a heated toilet seat and likes pulp in his orange juice, isn't getting a title shot because he's over the cruiserweight limit. Well that and Kidman NEVER DEFENDS THE CRUISERWEIGHT TITLE. A headscissors and dropkick have Matt in trouble to start and suggests that Kidman was watching the previous match. Matt bends his neck across the rope and Shannon's interference lets the Ricochet (suplex into a side slam) get two.

We hit a sleeper exchange until Kidman grabs a Bodog for a breather. Matt is sent outside next to Shannon so Kidman hits a shooting star onto both of them with his head slamming into Shannon's. Back in and Matt grabs a Side Effect for two but the middle rope legdrop misses. Matt gets rammed into the little MF'er and Kidman's rollup is good for the pin.

Rating: C+. That shooting star to the floor looked great and it's nice to see Kidman getting a win. The cruiserweight division is such a disaster at this point that there's no much that can be done for it without bringing in some fresh talent. Would it really hurt them to try having Shannon in there? Have him win the title and see Matt freak out because Moore has a title and he doesn't?

Post match Matt says that was an accident and asks for a round of applause for Shannon.

Lesnar is here.

Edge was in Seattle to get ready for the start of Wrestlemania ticket sales.

Torrie Wilson calls last week's wedding disgusting and tasteless. Dawn vs. Torrie is confirmed for the first ever Stepmother vs. Stepdaughter match. Josh describes this as a Cinderella story. Torrie says that if there was a glass slipper....."Well, where I plan to put it, it won't fit!". I would pay so much to see the pitches about keeping this story going. Other than Vince laughing at it, how could it possibly continue?

Tajiri vs. Jamie Noble

Thankfully it's not a headscissors into a dropkick this time as Jamie forearms him in the back instead. The Tarantula is broken up and Noble drops him onto the barricade instead. Back in and Noble starts in on the arm instead of Tajiri's bad ankle. Tajiri fights out of a top wristlock and kicks at the ribs before rolling Noble all the way around into a sunset flip for two.

A great looking German suplex gives Tajiri two and the handspring elbow is good for the same. Jamie is right back up with the Trailer Hitch (a

complicated leglock that looked great) but a rope is quickly grabbed. The leg is fine enough for the Tarantula, followed by a superkick to knock Noble out of the air. The Buzzsaw Kick puts Noble away.

Rating: B. They were WORKING here and continue to show why they should both be near the Cruiserweight Title instead of having a meaningless (yet awesome) match here. That's quite the five minute performance and Tajiri's kicks look as good as ever. Noble had something with that Trailer Hitch but he almost never used it. Either of these two against Kidman would be fine.

Angle fires up his team.

Nathan Jones is coming soon. He'd be leaving just as fast, though the video made him look interesting.

Charlie Haas vs. Edge

I like the fact that they're having Haas and Benjamin wrestle singles matches instead of just teaming together. Making them feel like threats on their own can make them all the better as a team. The bell rings and here's Chris Benoit to cancel out Angle and Benjamin. Charlie takes him down to start and easily throws Edge off for trying a hold of his own. A drop toehold into an armbar works a bit better for Edge and the half nelson facebuster is good for two.

Back up and Haas grabs a belly to belly for two before grabbing a double arm crank. A German suplex gives Charlie two more as Angle is playing a great cheerleader on the floor. Unfortunately he's too busy cheering to tell Charlie about Edge grabbing a belly to belly of his own to put both guys down.

The Edge-o-Matic is good for two and the flapjack makes things even worse. Benoit goes after Angle for some reason so Shelton superkicks him down. The spear drops Charlie but Angle makes the save at two. Kurt isn't done as he hits Edge in the back with a crutch, setting up an exploder suplex (without much explosion) to give Haas the pin.

Rating: C+. Even if Haas doesn't get another win for a good while, now

he's got this one which is all he needs to do to get over in the early going. Haas and Benjamin are going to be fine when they start doing regular tag matches and there's nothing wrong with that. It helps that Charlie has been in developmental for so long because he's already solid in the ring. Imagine that: developmental getting you ready for the main roster.

Benoit grabs the mic and says time is running out on Angle because he's tapping at the Royal Rumble. Since Kurt is still injured, send Benjamin down here RIGHT NOW.

Chris Benoit vs. Shelton Benjamin

Everyone else has been sent to the back. This was scheduled for later but the challenge was still good. They hit the mat to start and Benoit grabs an armdrag, which seems to fluster Benjamin. A very early Crossface attempt sends Benjamin to the ropes and it's back to another standoff. They head outside with Shelton sending him back first into the barricade for two.

We hit the reverse chinlock for a bit, followed a northern lights suplex for two more. The comeback starts in a hurry with a clothesline into the rolling German suplexes to knock Shelton silly. The Swan Dive sets up the Crossface but here's Angle with the other crutch for the DQ.

Rating: C. That's the best option they had here as you don't want the #1 contender losing but you also don't want Shelton to lose his singles debut. It's almost like they've started thinking this booking through instead of having everyone pin everyone until it doesn't matter anymore.

Angle gets Crossfaced until the Haas and Edge come out. The bad guys clean house and Benoit gets his ankle locked.

So we've just had two good, mat based technical matches that helped set up a major World Title match. Now here are Dawn and Al in the shower with Al looking exhausted.

Shannon Moore vs. Bill DeMott

Matt sits in on commentary and says this was all Shannon's idea. A hard

headlock into a front facelock keeps Shannon down as Matt tells Cole about the virtues of Mattitude. Shannon fights back with a middle rope leg lariat but gets clotheslined out of the air. DeMott hits a gutwrench powerbomb for the pin because he can't pick a finisher already.

Matt yells at Shannon for the loss and beats him up.

Undertaker video, this time set to the Ministry theme.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Bull Buchanan

Los Guerreros jump Cena before more racial insensitivity can break out. Eddie hammers on Bull to start and the fans eat up his chest slap. Bull eventually clotheslines him down and stomps away in the corner as an EDDIE chant starts up. Oh yeah they're full on faces. Something like a belly to back suplex drop sets up Buchanan's top rope clothesline, which he seems to leave VERY short and is only saved by a timely camera cut.

A Chavo distraction lets Eddie chop away until a backdrop cuts him off again. Cena tries to interfere as well but Chavo hits him in the face with a title, leaving Eddie to show Bull how to properly do a belly to back suplex. The frog splash is good enough to put Buchanan away, drawing quite the positive reaction in the process.

Rating: C-. Buchanan's near botches aside, this was a perfectly watchable match. The problem here is Buchanan really could be almost any given muscular big man and that's going to catch up with him in a hurry. Eddie is more than capable of carrying almost anyone to a fine match and that's what he did here, but Bull isn't going to be in there with Guerrero all the time.

Dawn, in new lingerie, crawls over to Al and asks if he wants to play some more. Unfortunately, Al isn't exactly responsive.

We run down the pay per view card without the promised fifteen names for the Rumble itself.

A-Train tells Big Show and Heyman to leave Lesnar alone tonight because he wants to solidify his reputation at Brock's expense. This is a good example of why A-Train isn't allowed to talk.

Another Nathan Jones video.

A-Train vs. Brock Lesnar

Brock shoves him into the corner for the shoulders to the ribs, only to have the chokebomb take him down without much effort. A good looking powerslam drops A-Train again though and it's time for the first overhead belly to belly. We'll make it three in a row until a headbutt cuts Brock off. Not that it matters as the F5 is enough to wrap A-Train up without much effort.

Rating: D+. They kept this very, very short here and that's the right call. A-Train got in his big power moves and then ate the suplexes and F5 for the pin. There's no need to do anything other than that and they had Lesnar look good by beating up a monster. Again, the smart booking here has carried the night and that's a good thing.

Lesnar calls out Heyman and Big Show for his lesson. We see them heading to the ring but SURPRISE! The lesson is Brock can't beat Big Show so they're leaving.

Oh and Al, again in his briefs, is dead to end the show. You don't see a character actually killed off in WWE but that's about all this story deserves.

Overall Rating: B. Now that's how you do a Smackdown. They kept things moving here and that made the show fly by. The Al Wilson stuff is stupid but it's kind of hard to complain with Dawn there like she was. They advanced a bunch of stories here and, without actually announcing more than a few names for the Rumble, they've helped set up their side of the pay per view. The booking was good, the action was solid and the pacing was quick. What else can you ask for from a show?

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