

Smackdown – January 16, 2003: Can We Lose The Grieving Widow?

Smackdown

Date: January 16, 2003

Location: Continental Airlines Arena, East Rutherford, New Jersey

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're at the go home show for the Royal Rumble and you wouldn't really know based on the TV they've been building towards it. The Rumble itself has taken a huge backseat to almost everything else, including tonight when a good chunk of the focus is likely to be focused on Al Wilson's death. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Dawn and Al's honeymoon with Al dying from exhaustion. Three days before the Rumble and this is what starts the show.

Dawn, in a rather low cut top, is all sad about Al dying. As I've said this whole time, what exactly was her plan here? She really just married him to annoy Torrie? That's getting to Vince levels to ruin Austin.

Opening sequence.

Tag Team Titles: Los Guerreros vs. John Cena/B2

Los Guerreros are defending and they're both in the Rumble too. Both promise they'll win to make Grandma happy. Cena raps about sending Los Guerreros back to their jobs at Home Depot or selling oranges at off ramps. Oh and he used to love Lucy and hate Ricky Ricardo. Eddie and Cena start things off with Eddie spinning all over the place to send Cena down, followed by a basement dropkick from Chavo. The slingshot hilo hits Cena as well as the champs are in full control to start.

Buchanan comes in and eats a belly to back suplex, followed by Eddie kicking at his legs. Cena offers a low bridge though and the champs are

finally in trouble. A Falcon Arrow gets two on Eddie and Cena grabs a front facelock until Chavo slaps Eddie's boot for the tag. That's fine with Cena who facelocks Chavo as well. A dropkick gets Chavo out of trouble and everything breaks down. Chavo dives onto Buchanan and Eddie does the same to Cena. Back in and Chavo dropkicks Buchanan again, setting up a frog splash to retain.

Rating: C-. This didn't have the time to go anywhere and I'm kind of glad they just got rid of Cena and Buchanan as challengers in a hurry. Eddie and Chavo have slid right into the face roles without even blinking an eye because they're talented enough to pull something like that off.

Post match Cena yells at Buchanan until someone (who Cena fist bumped before the match) comes out of the crowd and helps Cena beat him down, including wrecking Buchanan's shoulder.

We recap Chris Benoit vs. Kurt Angle, which includes the introduction of Team Angle and a series of beatdowns at Benoit's expense.

Benoit talks about how important the title match is and promises to get to Angle tonight. He's heard about ruthless aggression but he'd prefer toothless aggression.

Here's Stephanie McMahon for a chat. It turns out that the Royal Rumble is THIS SUNDAY but more importantly, tonight it's A-Train/Big Show vs. Brock Lesnar/???. This absolutely didn't need to be its own segment nor in front of the crowd.

Nathan Jones video.

Bill DeMott vs. Rikishi

Before the match, Rikishi talks about wanting to win the Rumble while DeMott is tired of hearing about being told to pick on someone their own size. Rikishi punches him down to start and a few slams drop him again. We hit the armbar until DeMott hits him in the ample gut to take over. That means an armbar on Rikishi for a change, followed by the shoulder going into the post. Unfortunately Bill didn't do anything to the leg so Rikishi superkicks him down for two. The Rump Shaker is loaded up but

DeMott powerbombs him down for the pin.

Rating: D-. Well that happened. I have no idea why they think DeMott is interesting but having him pin Rikishi clean doesn't make him any more interesting. He's still the same wrestler he's always been and having him win matches like this doesn't change a thing. Rikishi is still there and there's no reason to think anything of him either. Why in the world is this push still a thing?

Kidman imitates Shannon Moore (Horribly, though since Shannon almost never talks how can you tell?) until Matt Hardy and the real Shannon come up. Matt defends Shannon and punches Funaki as a bonus, triggering a brawl.

Tajiri vs. Nunzio

After saying (in Japanese) that he'll win the Rumble, Tajiri fires off the kicks but gets snapmared down for two. Nunzio spins into a Fujiwara armbar but Tajiri gets his foot in the ropes without too much effort. Tajiri kicks at the legs but something like an Unprettier brings him right back down. It's back to the arm with a cross armbreaker and a whip into the corner but Tajiri comes right back with the Tarantula. Nidia takes the mist to the face but a springboard tornado flying armbar gives Nunzio the pin.

Rating: C+. Fun match here but, again, the Cruiserweight Title is nowhere near this spot on the card because the champion has other people to feud with and can't be asked to defend his title. That's not on Kidman but again shows how worthless that title really is. Putting either of them over Kidman doesn't matter at this point as the title isn't going to mean anything no matter what they do at this point.

Long recap of the Raw Tenth Anniversary show.

Cena introduces his new buddy as Red Dogg and implies the eating of your Scooby Snacks.

Undertaker is back on Sunday.

It's off to the funeral home where Dawn is all emotional and cries. She

opens the casket so the announcers can do another "Look at Al!" "Look at Dawn!" bit. This goes on for WAY too long with Dawn being sad and talking about how she's going to carry on Al's name.

Stephanie is on the phone with Shane when Brock comes in to say that he doesn't need a partner. She says she needs to protect her investment, which is why Lesnar needs a partner. If Stephanie wanted to protect her investment before the Rumble, why is this match happening? I'm going out on a limb and say that Stephanie isn't as smart as she thinks she is.

Brock Lesnar/??? vs. Big Show/A-Train

Before the match, Heyman goes on a rant about how Lesnar has no chance because he won't beat Big Show in the first place. If he somehow does though, he'll have to deal with Team Angle and A-Train. Cue Lesnar with partner....Rey Mysterio. Rey charges right in and kicks A-Train into the F5. Show gets clotheslined to the floor and it's the 619 and a springboard splash to put A-Train away in less than 35 seconds. So to clarify, the pecking order of non-Big Show giants goes Bill DeMott, Rikishi and then A-Train. Yet A-Train is consistently dealing with the main eventers because WWE.

Back to the funeral home when Torrie (also in an outfit that shouldn't be at a place like this) comes in to stare Dawn down.

Matt Hardy vs. Funaki

This is the result of Funaki calling out Matt, who was in the academically gifted class in elementary school, for the earlier attack. Kidman and Shannon are here as the seconds. Funaki goes right after him to start and hammers away on the mat. A Side Effect gives Matt two and it's Shannon choking on the ropes.

Matt chokes a bit as well, followed by the Ricochet for two. Back up and Matt misses a charge so Funaki grabs a bulldog for two. Funaki sends him hard into the corner but the seconds get in a fight on the apron so there's no one to see Matt being covered. Matt sends Funaki into Shannon and it's a Twist of Fate for the pin.

Rating: C-. Not bad here and at least the champ didn't take another fall. Matt getting a win is a good idea and hopefully it actually leads somewhere for him. By somewhere, I mean something other than just getting squashed by Lesnar or Rikishi, because there's no one else to do jobs like that for some reason.

Shannon: "WE DID IT!" Matt: "NO! I DID IT!" And he throws in a slap to Shannon's jaw.

We go back to the funeral home (GET ON WITH IT ALREADY) where Dawn blames Torrie for Al's death. She didn't love him enough or something and that broke his heart. They get in a slap fight and Dawn shattered a lamp over Torrie's back. The worst part is this could have been even worse.

According to a recent interview with the writer of this whole mess, the original ending was going to see Al sit up in the casket, berate Torrie for being the worst daughter ever, then walk outside and get hit by a bus to kill him once and for all. Even with that ending, I'd love to know what the real point to this was, because even I can't believe that it was really just for the sake of what's probably a four minute match at Royal Rumble.

Back from a break and HERE'S A REPLAY OF THE FIGHT BECAUSE THIS HASN'T EATEN UP ENOUGH TIME IN THE LAST FOUR MONTHS!

Nathan Jones video.

Royal Rumble rundown. The graphics showing the thirty Rumble entrants make me sadder than anything not associated with the Wilsons. It really does look that bad.

Kurt Angle/Team Angle vs. Chris Benoit/Edge

Kurt is still on a crutch. Joined in progress with Benoit suplexing Charlie and asking Kurt to come in. He has to settle for chopping Haas some more and then throwing him down with another suplex. Shelton finally gets smart by drawing Benoit in though and Angle's low blow turns things around.

Charlie starts in on the arm while cranking on Benoit's neck but a third

suplex gets Benoit out of trouble again. The hot tag brings in Edge to clean house with his series of clotheslines but Shelton gets in a cheap shot from the apron. Kurt actually comes in to stomp away until he gets caught in the half nelson faceplant (which he over rotates, making it a half nelson backplant).

Benoit comes in and gets taken down for some right hands to the head. The ankle lock is broken up in a hurry so it's back to Shelton. Edge comes in with a top rope clothesline for two but Angle sends him outside in a heap. The heels take over again with Shelton jumping over Charlie to crash down onto Edge's back. Charlie gets two off a bulldog and Shelton grabs a chinlock. The Edge-o-Matic gets Edge out of trouble but Charlie breaks up a hot tag attempt. Angle gets in a few suplexes to keep Edge in trouble and the slow (not a bad thing) offense continues.

Now it's time to roll the German suplexes but Angle takes too much time, allowing Edge to snap off a belly to belly of his own. Shelton breaks up the hot tag AGAIN, only to get kicked away for the tag to Benoit. Everything breaks down and that means a lot more suplexes. Angle tries to bring in the title but gets Crossfaced. Shelton makes a save but Benoit puts Kurt right back in....for a DQ because Angle isn't legal. That's a bit confusing, especially when Benoit's music doesn't play at the bell.

Rating: B. I really liked the slow paced offense from the heels and the buffet of suplexes didn't hurt either. This was a lot of fun with all five looking good. It's also a smart move to have Angle get in the ring before Sunday to knock off any potential ring rust. Very entertaining match here, which is something this show needed in spades.

Angle taps as Edge dives onto Haas and Benjamin. Benoit unloads on Angle with the crutch to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. The main event is good but it's way too late to save this show. The funeral home stuff is more bizarrely terrible than anything else and you really wouldn't know the Rumble was coming on Sunday without a few random ads for it. Other than Undertaker and whoever wins Lesnar vs. Big Show, almost no one on Smackdown looks to be any kind of a threat to win the thing. The focus is on everything else (basically

the same on Raw) and that makes for a really weird set of shows leading up to the pay per view.

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