

No Way Out 2003 (2017 Redo): Half and Lower Half

No Way Out 2003

Date: February 23, 2003

Location: Bell Centre, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Attendance: 15,100

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole, Tazz

It's time for another pay per view that is little more than a glorified pit stop before the real pay per view. At least this time around there are some major matches though, including Scott Steiner vs. HHH II and Rock vs. Hulk Hogan II, the latter of which is a little more interesting as Rock is a full on heel. Let's get to it.

There's no regular opening video this time as it's just the logo flying through what looks like a standard dungeon in a 90s PC game.

Jeff Hardy vs. Chris Jericho

This was originally going to be Test vs. Jericho but he missed a show earlier in the week and Jeff got the spot instead (thank goodness). Jericho armbars him to start but gets sent hard into the ropes for some right hands. A belly to back suplex cuts him off though and the fans are behind their Canadian hero. Jericho is quickly sent outside though and it's a springboard Whisper in the Wind to drop him again.

The apron run clothesline misses though and Jeff gets sent into the steps to slow things down. We hit the chinlock for a bit until Jeff fights up and sidesteps a charge to send Jericho into the post. A Codebreaker and DDT give Jeff two each but he misses an enziguri and it's off to the Walls. That goes nowhere so Jeff reverses another attempt into a small package for two.

A reverse Twist of Fate looks to set up the Swanton but Jericho rolls away, setting up the Lionsault for another near fall. Chris gets two off a sleeper drop with his feet on the ropes and heads up top. Jeff crotches

him down but the hurricanrana is countered into a superbomb, followed by the Walls to make Hardy tap.

Rating: B. Solid opener here with Jeff more than holding his own but not being ready to beat someone like Jericho on his own yet. The ending looked good too with Jeff finally giving up, especially after a huge move like the superbomb. Jeff would have his day, though the abandoned heel turn has left a few questions that aren't likely to be answered.

Jericho won't let go so Shawn Michaels runs in (to a chorus of boos) for the save. Christian comes in as well but it's a superkick for both Canadians. The fans like Shawn again.

Kurt Angle gives Team Angle a pep talk because this country has no Canadian heroes. They're not teaming up for the first time and losing to a walking gorilla and two Canucks. Kurt has an idea for an early advantage.

Evolution arrives and pass Austin's truck.

Raw Tag Team Titles: William Regal/Lance Storm vs. Kane/Rob Van Dam

Kane and Van Dam are challenging. For your stupid statement of the night (so far), Coach says Van Dam made his debut a year ago at No Way Out 2002. He was already a three time Hardcore Champion by that point. Van Dam grabs a headlock on Storm to start and kicks him down into the champs' corner.

Regal comes in and takes a spinning kick to the shoulder, followed by the split legged moonsault for two. Kane is so unscared of the champs that he takes Regal into Storm's corner to keep beating on him. Van Dam can't launch Rolling Thunder so he dives onto the champs instead. Back in and Rob gets shoved off the top and into the barricade, followed by Regal dropping him on his head with a half nelson suplex.

Storm grabs a DDT and a chinlock as the fans want Regal. A kick to the face allows the hot tag to Kane, who comes in with all of his usual. The chokeslam is loaded up but Storm twists Kane's mask around, which is completely irreversible for some reason. The blind Kane chokeslams Van

Dam to give Regal the pin.

Rating: D+. Basically a Raw match, which is the problem with so much of the tag division these days: these teams are thrown together and don't have a ton of chemistry together in the first place so they're not likely to have a very good match. This match wasn't terrible but Regal and Storm aren't thrilling in the first place and the ending was pretty stupid.

Van Dam isn't pleased.

Matt Hardy is being interviewed when Jeff stumbles by. Matt insults him and the Imag-I-Nation for losing all the time. Jeff slaps him in the face but Shannon Moore holds Matt back.

Cruiserweight Title: Matt Hardy vs. Billy Kidman

Matt, who is annoyed by snow and ice and takes hot tea with milk and sweetener, is challenging. Kidman gets armdragged down to start and we hit the jumping jacks. A hiptoss to the apron and a whip into the post put Kidman on the floor. Back in and a neckbreaker gets two and we hit a chinlock.

It's off to a front facelock as this is entirely one sided in the first five minutes. Tazz talks about banana juice which is likely a joke that I won't find funny. Kidman fights up but gets caught in the Ricochet for two. An enziguri gives Kidman a breather though in his first significant offense.

The BK Bomb gets two but Matt is right back with a clothesline and the middle rope legdrop. The Twist of Fate is countered into a rollup but a Shannon distraction sets up the Side Effect for two. Kidman comes right back with a Bodog but Shannon breaks up the shooting star. The distraction lets Matt grab a super Twist of Fate for the pin and the title.

Rating: C. Matt winning is completely the right call here as Kidman was another name on a long list of boring champions (partially because WWE won't do anything with the title). At least Matt has a ton of charisma and vignettes of him trying to keep the weight off could be entertaining

stuff.

Edge is out cold in the back with Benoit and Lesnar checking on him. In other words he needs neck surgery and would be out for over a year.

We recap Undertaker vs. Big Show. Undertaker was laid out back in the fall but returned at the Royal Rumble, wanting some revenge. This led to a series of segments where Show sent presents to Undertaker to fill in time before beating him down on Smackdown earlier this week. In other words, GET ON WITH IT ALREADY BECAUSE WE'VE SEEN THIS MATCH A TON OF TIMES AND IT DOESN'T NEED TO HAPPEN AGAIN!

Undertaker vs. Big Show

Show has Paul Heyman with him. Undertaker circles the bike around the ring and they start slugging it out until Show easily posts him to take over. They head inside with Undertaker kicking him in the head (more of a dropkick than anything else) and the apron legdrop makes it even better. The referee gets shoved down so Show punches a chair into Undertaker's head. As usual, this isn't a DQ because these are big hosses and you don't disqualify them.

A slam doesn't work as Show falls back onto him for two. Cole's analysis: it's tough to slam a 500lb man. Some slow elbows have Undertaker in trouble as we hear about Edge being taken to a hospital. With Heyman shouting that Show has him, Undertaker charges straight into a bearhug to stay on the bad back. A side slam gives Show two as Cole things Undertaker is trying to get Big Show to punch himself out.

Some headbutts bust Undertaker open with Cole pointing out how quiet the crowd is. That's not something you want to point out but at least a Taker chant brings them back a bit. Undertaker fights back with right hands and the running clotheslines in the corner, followed by a REALLY BIG CLOTHESLINE for two. Old School sets up the battle of the attempted chokeslams and it's a standoff. A low blow sets up a running DDT to drop Show for two.

Back up and Undertaker walks into a spinebuster to slow things down even more. A dragon sleeper has Show in trouble but of course Heyman offers a

distraction. Cue A-Train for a distraction but it's the Taker Dive to put both Heyman and A-Train down. Back in and a chokeslam gives Show...nothing as Undertaker pulls him into a triangle choke (not a great one either) to knock Show out for the win.

Rating: D. The match wasn't terrible but it went WAY longer than it needed to. This went on over fourteen minutes and would wind up being the longest match of the night. Undertaker vs. Big Show isn't the most interesting match in the world and after three to four months of build, I really need more than a slow power brawl that we've seen them have so many times.

Undertaker goes to grab a chair but walks into the Trainwreck (which Tazz calls the Derailler) to leave him laying.

Quick look at Edge being taken away.

Eric Bischoff and Chief Morely talk potential stipulations for Bischoff vs. Austin but Vince comes in and says it's one on one with anyone interfering being fired.

Kurt Angle/Team Angle vs. Brock Lesnar/Chris Benoit

How awesome did Angle look in the track suit with the hood up and the title on? Or just the track suits in general? Cole thinks Angle and company had SOMETHING to do with Edge being taken out. Benoit has on the Toothless Aggression shirt which was always good for a chuckle. Benjamin and Benoit start things off and hit the mat for a bit until Benoit whips him hard into the corner.

Haas comes in and gets to be stomped in the corner by Brock Lesnar. That's what you get for joining the team chum. Lesnar cleans house and stares Angle down, sending Kurt out to the floor. Team Angle's interference earns them another beating as Tazz tries to figure out what a Canuck is. Angle sneaks in for a choke on Brock and Shelton adds a superkick to take over.

Like any good heel, Angle comes in and stomps away before grabbing a chinlock with a grapevine. This goes on for a good while as the match

isn't exactly as energetic as you would expect from a match of this magnitude. Brock finally drives Angle into the corner for the break, which according to the Kurt Angle 24 special on the WWE Network, broke his neck AGAIN. You can see that he's very shaken up as he crawls over for the tag off to Benjamin, who gets elbowed in the face by the legal Benoit.

Everything breaks down and Benoit starts firing off German suplexes, including a now very scary one to Angle. Kurt is fine enough to run the corner for a belly to belly superplex on Benoit as we hit the second heat segment. It's off to Charlie for some stomping and a release belly to belly. Angle comes back in to start in on the arm and shoulder, followed by a front facelock.

Kurt looks fine for the most part here though it could just be adrenaline carrying him. Benoit's comeback is cut off by another German suplex and it's off to Shelton again. They're doing a very solid job of cutting the ring off here but I could go for a bit better choices of offense than stomping and the occasional suplex.

Benoit dropkicks Shelton down and the hot tag brings in Lesnar. Everything breaks down and Benoit reverses the ankle lock into a Crossface which is reversed into an ankle lock which is reversed into a Crossface until Haas makes the save. That's countered into another Crossface for the tap as Lesnar F5's Angle.

Rating: B-. This felt like it was waiting to get into the next gear and they never even attempted to get there. Maybe the lack of Edge really messed things up here but I'm glad they didn't go with Lesnar pinning Angle in the most likely finish. Having Benoit make Haas tap doesn't hurt anything and Lesnar beat Angle up at the same time so they helped most that forward a bit as well. This would fine for a big Smackdown main event but it doesn't do much on pay per view.

We recap HHH vs. Scott Steiner. They had one of the worst big matches of all time at the Royal Rumble and now we're having a rematch in a vain attempt to validate Steiner's main event push. HHH now has the full Evolution behind him so Steiner is fighting an even more uphill battle.

This gets the music video treatment, which is often the case with HHH matches. Eh I like Bring Me To Life so it's fine.

Raw World Title: HHH vs. Scott Steiner

Steiner is challenging and HHH only has Flair in his corner. The champ also had a thigh injury coming in and his leg is heavily taped up. They go nose to nose to start and you can see the fans going off while Steiner shouts SHUT UP at no one in particular. Steiner sends him into the corner and the fans boo him out of the building.

The clothesline (with HHH falling before contact) sets up the Push-Up Elbow and the fans are just not having it from Steiner. He goes after the bandage (which Lawler thinks is illegal) before going with a leglock. The fans go into a STEINER SUCKS chant, which Coach thinks will mess with HHH. Steiner grabs a Figure Four but Flair offers a distraction and gets chased around a bit. HHH sends him into the steps to take over and the fans start the YOU SCREWED BRET chant at Earl Hebner.

Now it's the BORING chant, even though it's not that bad. HHH's neckbreaker gets two but he walks into the first belly to belly suplex, drawing the loudest booing of the match. HHH stops a charge with a boot but Hebner won't count with the feet on the ropes. Hebner won't disqualify him either so we get the traditional argument with the referee. Another belly to belly puts Steiner in control again and he hammers the champ's head.

The third belly to belly has me scared and a super Angle Slam gets two with Flair pulling Scott off the cover. The Steiner Recliner goes on and here's Orton for the distraction. Batista gets whipped into the steps and Steiner throws Orton on top of him before the rest of Evolution is FINALLY ejected. HHH gets in a belt shot for two, followed by the Pedigree to retain.

Rating: D-. Well it's still horrible, but this is Austin vs. Rock II by comparison to what they did back in January. This match is a mess in its own right but Steiner only threw a handful of suplexes and the match was a manageable thirteen minutes instead of pushing twenty like the original. The fans were ready this time too and it made the match a lot

more odd than bad. It's certainly bad of course but it's nothing as bad as what we saw at the Rumble.

Various wrestlers laugh at Bischoff.

We recap the kind of confusing Eric Bischoff vs. Steve Austin massacre. Vince gave Bischoff thirty days (which turned into less than four weeks) to turn Raw around or be fired. This turned into an obsession with bringing Austin back, which became the only possible way to turn Raw around. Bischoff then went on a wild goose chase to find Austin until Jim Ross got Austin to agree to show up. Apparently Vince agreed that signing Austin back to Raw would save Bischoff's job but Eric had to fight him first. That's how we got here, despite it not being close to thirty days.

Jim Ross comes out for commentary.

Eric Bischoff vs. Steve Austin

Bischoff, in his karate gear, begs for mercy and offers to help Austin make a fortune. That goes as well as you would expect as Austin, in jean shorts, takes him down and stomps away to quite the reaction. Austin takes off Bischoff's gloves, allowing Eric to rake the eyes. A kick to the chest has no effect, because former professional martial artists are worthless once they become authority figures. Austin takes him to the floor for another beating and hits three Stunners for the pin. JR, of course, loses it.

Rating: D-. There's your Raw main event people and it was about what had to be expected. Austin looked good in a short burst like this but he wasn't very interesting when he left in the first place and that's not a good sign going forward. Austin vs. just about anyone on Raw at the moment doesn't sound too appealing (Austin vs. HHH would be their best option and that sounds rather boring) but maybe he's the shot in the arm that Raw needs, at least in the short term.

Austin hits another Stunner for good measure.

We recap Rock vs. Hulk Hogan. After a look at last year's Wrestlemania dream match, we shift to the real story of Vince vs. Hogan. They've been

arguing over who created Hulkamania so Vince brought Hollywood Rock in to deal with Hogan, setting up the rematch. Oh and Hulk called Rock a Rock-A-Jabroni.

The Rock vs. Hulk Hogan

Rock debuts his long form Hollywood entrance, complete with a helicopter flying over the city until we hear Rock starting with the catchphrases. Hogan's entrance seems to take Rock aback so he jumps Hogan to start, only to get knocked outside. We're already in the stall until Hogan goes outside to throw some right hands. Back in and Rock can't send him into the buckle as Cole points out that the referee, Sylvan Grenier, is from Montreal. That can't end well.

More right hands send Rock outside but he snaps Hogan's throat across the top. A quick Rock Bottom gets two and the stunned Rock puts on Hogan's bandanna. Rock grabs the weightlifting belt and administers a whipping, only to stop to grab some water. The hydration break allows Hogan to get in a few whips of his own. That goes badly for Hogan as he gets caught in a DDT to set up the Sharpshooter.

Hogan gets the rope but gets pulled back to the middle, with Grenier not bothering to break the hold. Egads it's going to be a screwy referee in Montreal isn't it? Two arm drops set up a wagging finger though and Hogan kicks Rock out to the floor to escape. They head outside for more brawling with neither guy being able to hit a chair shot. Grenier takes it away from Hogan, allowing Rock to hit a low blow. The announcers are going out of their way to talk about the referee here.

A spinebuster sets up the People's Elbow, including Rock throwing in a Hogan pose before dropping the elbow. That means Hulk Up time with the big boot and legdrop getting...nothing as the lights go out. They come back on to reveal....Grenier out cold next to a chair. Cole: "How did that chair get into the ring?" Hogan brought it in five minutes ago you dingbat.

Here's Vince of course and we hit the YOU SCREWED BRET chants. Grenier slips Rock the chair to knock Hogan silly and the Rock Bottom gives Rock the pin. Cole calls it a screwjob because Montreal is a thing that happened and we'll make sure you never forget it and then mock you for

being wrestling fans who remember things.

Rating: D. Rock was doing everything he could here but there's only so much you can do to get around Hogan being so far over the hill that he's at the bottom of a lake, plus a stupid story. The fact that this is about to set up Hogan vs. McMahon tells you everything you need to know: Rock comes back as one of the best heels in years but he's a lackey for Vince vs. Hogan. Of course he is.

Post match Rock leaves so Vince can get in his big joke: a Hogan shirt with NOTHING written underneath "Whatcha Gonna Do?". A bloody Hogan stares Vince down to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. There's some good stuff in there to help balance out the bad but the second half of this show is one horrible match after another. The better matches weren't exactly pay per view quality, at least partially due to the amount of time they had. As mentioned the longest match was just over fourteen minutes, which likely has something to do with the shot barely breaking two and a half hours. The short length helps when the big matches were so bad but I don't get why some of the good stuff couldn't have been a bit longer.

Other than that though, it's the same problem that so many B show have, especially the ones right before a major pay per view: it feels like nothing more than a pit stop before we get to the really important show. That was the case here, with the handicap match and the main event just feeling like a way to get to the Wrestlemania match. If this show doesn't feel important, why am I supposed to care? Bad show here, but it's only because of a specific half of the show.

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