

Smackdown – February 20, 2003: That's a Sweet Puppy

Smackdown

Date: February 20, 2003

Location: Conseco Fieldhouse, Indianapolis, Indiana

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

It's the go home show for No Way Out and the big draw this week is Hulk Hogan and the Rock being in the same building. I know it's a battle of the generations but I'm not quite sure they're going to have the same magic they had a year ago. Other than that, Kurt Angle has agreed to face Brock Lesnar. I'm sure he's an honest man so let's get to it.

There are two gift boxes on stage for Undertaker this time but here's Rock, looking full on heel, to open things up. Cole acknowledges the mixed reaction and Rock certainly seems to notice it as well. Rock loads up FINALLY but has to do it three times before saying it doesn't matter. He knows there are some fans booing and some that prefer Hogan but it doesn't matter because he's still the most electrifying man in sports entertainment today. Point to Rock on that one.

Rock gets back on track but hang on because his phone is ringing. It's his personal assistant and he not so politely requests some silence. Rock is going to fly out tonight because he doesn't want to be surrounded by all these hick. He means hickory trees of course and the Rocky chants start up again. Rock has one question: do you really want to boo the Rock? That's crossing a line and the people need to understand what that could mean.

They keep booing so Rock promises a different Rock at No Way Out. Rock knows Hogan's not here yet (Rock: "Late as usual.") but tonight he's going to show up again and tell Hogan what's coming for him on Sunday. IF YA SMELL.....hang on a second. If you people want to boo the Rock, SING-A-LONG WITH THE ROCK IS NO LONGER AN OPTION! Rock: "What are you a bunch of sheep? Have some self respect!"

This was one of the best heel promos you'll ever see as Rock completely directed the crowd exactly where he wanted them to go. When you have a star like the Rock, who is one of the most popular wrestlers of all time, it takes some incredible talent to make the crowd boo him with so much ease. The key thing for me was how Rock was clearly showing them where to go but still looked like he was smiling all the way instead of beating them over your head with his heel stuff as so many would. Check this out and see how to be a great heel.

Chris Benoit vs. A-Train

Benoit is clearly favoring his arm coming in. A-Train throws him around to start and even hits a Muscle Buster. The Trainwreck is countered into a Crossface but A-Train slips out without too much effort. That's fine with Benoit, who grabs a rollup for the pin in short order, likely due to the bad arm.

Hogan arrives.

Funaki can't get in to interview Rock due to personal security.

Johnny Stamboli vs. Rikishi

Rikishi hammers him in the back to start as the rest of the FBI leaves. That's fine with Johnny who GORILLA PRESSES Rikishi (ignore the shaking knees) in the spot that should have gotten him on quite a few highlight reels. Johnny fires off some shoulders in the corner but it's a Samoan drop and the superkick to give Rikishi the pin in less than two minutes.

And that's why that gorilla press isn't ever talked about among impressive feats of strength: because a guy having his first match as part of a new stable had to job to Rikishi clean in less than two minutes because RIKISHI is more valuable than someone who can gorilla press him. I've gone on about how ridiculous Rikishi's status is for months now and it just keeps going for whatever reason. I'm sure Stamboli will be just fine and the whole team, which is a stupid idea in the first place, will be completely successful.

The FBI beats Rikishi down post match. I care so much after seeing

Stamboli destroyed in short order.

Angle is warming up with Shelton Benjamin and promises to lead by example tonight.

And now, for one of my favorite moments from this era.

We go to Los Guerreros in Beverly Hills. Chavo: "Didn't we steal a car over there once?" They hit on a mom walking her baby in a stroller (and of course there's a camera where the baby would be). The baby is named Emily, which Eddie says mean Light of God. Eddie and Chavo talk about how cute the baby is before sending the woman on her way. The baby is ugly but more importantly they stole the woman's wallet and watch. This one is a little rough but these would get REALLY good in a hurry.

Shannon Moore/Matt Hardy vs. Rey Mysterio/Billy Kidman

Warmup before Matt, who is miserable when dieting and finds Shannon very hard to teach, gets a Cruiserweight Title shot on Sunday. We even see the weigh-in from earlier today where Matt stripped to make weight. Shannon spinwheel kicks Rey for two to start but Kidman comes in to drop Rey into a legdrop for the same.

It's off to the now svelte Hardy to slam Kidman and drop an elbow for two. A front facelock doesn't last long as Kidman pops up and makes the hot tag off to Mysterio. Matt powerbombs him for two and it's right back to Kidman for a missile dropkick. Shannon makes the save with a top rope legdrop to give Matt two, only to be sent outside. Rey gets backdropped onto Rey, leaving Matt to Twist of Fate Kidman for the pin.

Rating: C. Not bad here and it accomplished its goal but there was something missing to keep it from getting to the next level. Matt needs to be champion almost immediately as Kidman hasn't done anything with the title (not his fault as that's what's going to happen in a division with no stories and almost no interesting characters) since he won it months ago.

Earlier this week, Cole sat down with Nathan Jones, who has paid his dues and done his time so he's ready to start in WWE. He wants to be WWE

Champion but first (with his head shaking) he has business with the biggest dog in the yard. Jones grabs Cole's throat and says it's tick or tock. Tick means they're alive but tock means they're dead, even if they have all the time in the world.

The gifts are placed in the ring so it's Undertaker time. Undertaker, looking annoyed at this thing continuing, opens the smaller box (which is nearly as tall as he is) and finds....a dog. He beats the other one open and finds....nothing, only to have Big Show come in from behind to attack. Undertaker eats a chokeslam to end the quick beatdown.

Torrie Wilson vs. Nidia

Paddle on a pole. We hit the token wrestling to start as the announcers again speculate on which Diva will be in Playboy. Torrie takes over but has to drop Jamie Noble, only to have Dawn Marie come out for a distraction. Noble powerslams Torrie and Nidia pulls the paddle down to win.

Torrie gets spanked a few times until Funaki makes the save.

Hogan goes looking for Rock but the security won't let him in Rock's locker room.

Here's Hogan in the arena for a chat but Rock comes out for the staredown before he can say anything. Rock has to get some water first but then he's ready for an apology. From Hogan that is because there have been a lot of rude and disrespectful things in recent weeks. The ROCKY SUCKS chants come back from the dead as Rock brings up the Rock-a-Jabroni line.

Based on that, Hogan needs to know his role and...and shut his mouth. A year ago, Hogan was nothing until Rock turned him into something again. Hulk refuses to apologize and thanks the fans for being there for him. Rock brings up Wrestlemania, which Hogan probably doesn't remember after the beating Rock gave him. He tries to do the MILLIONS line but receives near silence for his efforts.

Rock does Hogan's catchphrase but cuts him off before the shirt can be torn. A handshake is offered but Rock spits at Hogan and bails. More

great stuff from Rock here with one important note: Rock kept walking around in circles instead of standing still like he would at the top of his powers. It made him seem more nervous because he didn't have the people behind him, which is the kind of thing that most people aren't going to add in.

No Way Out rundown.

Video on the end of last week's show with Lesnar beating up John Cena to get to Kurt Angle.

Cena raps a threat to Lesnar and declares war on him.

Brock Lesnar vs. Kurt Angle

Oh of course not. Angle says there's a stipulation to this so we'll make it a gauntlet match instead.

Brock Lesnar vs. Team Angle

Lesnar throws Haas around to start before getting caught in a release German suplex. There's almost no effect though as Lesnar tosses him a few more times before hitting the backbreaker into the F5 for a quick pin. Little more than a squash. Angle fires up Shelton for the second match as we take a break.

We're joined in progress with Brock sending Shelton flying off a butterfly suplex. Another suplex has Angle hyperventilating but Shelton gets in a few kicks to the face to take over. It's off to the arm with a flying armbar and then a cross armbreaker. Brock reverses into a powerbomb for the break as Angle is biting his fingernails.

We hit the belly to belly suplexes and Kurt's distraction completely fails. A spinning belly to back suplex (called an Angle Slam) finishes Shelton and it's time for Kurt to panic. Heyman's pep talk gets Kurt inside for the bell, followed almost immediately by Heyman hitting Brock with a chair for the DQ.

Rating: D+. This was an angle disguised as a match and there's nothing wrong with that, bait and switch left aside. The ending helps set up

Angle vs. Lesnar at Wrestlemania, but we've still got a six man tag on Sunday and this didn't do much for that match. The other problem is the crowd, who won't be happy no matter what happens because it's not the match they were expecting. WWE is doing that far too often anymore and it's very frustrating.

Angle saves Heyman from an F5 and it's Team Angle with the big beatdown. Edge and Benoit make the save to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. Rock helps a lot but that's all this show had going for it. So much of this show was spent on short segments and matches that add nothing to the show, but even worse do nothing for the pay per view. The ending with Edge and Benoit felt very tacked on as well and that's not a good thing for a go home show. Not a good episode, though Rock's stuff is worth seeing.

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