

Monday Night Raw – February 24, 2003 (2017 Redo): You Can Still Smell the Greatness

Monday Night Raw

Date: February 24, 2003

Location: Air Canada Centre, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Attendance: 10,000

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

It's the night after No Way Out and that means it's time to start things shifting towards Wrestlemania. HHH defeated Scott Steiner last night to end their feud (thank goodness) and now he needs a new challenge for the titles. Other than that we have Steve Austin back tonight and it should be interesting to see how he holds up as a full time guy instead of someone just back for a stand alone appearance. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's a very banged up Eric Bischoff to say he's still standing even after Austin beat him up last night. As for tonight though, Austin is banned from the building, meaning he'll miss tonight's 20 man battle royal to crown a new #1 contender. Austin will be dealt with next week though when Bischoff has a special welcoming committee waiting on him. Even though Austin isn't here tonight, Bischoff has a special surprise: THE ROCK! It must be Wrestlemania season if they're ignoring the exclusive roster statuses like that.

Rock isn't pleased with the mixed reaction and says that he's FINALLY come back "Toron....Toron....to run his mouth all over" these people. Rock advises us to not boo until you hear what he has to say. Last night he did Vince a favor by taking care of Hogan, in return for being able to go wherever he wanted. Rock wanted to go to Raw in Toronto, Canada. The fans cheer of course so Rock rips them apart for cheering over something so stupid. Rock: "YAY! HE SAID TORONTO! THAT'S WHERE WE LIVE! SHUT UP!"

He wanted to come to Toronto because it's where the people turned on the People's Champion. Last year at Wrestlemania, 68,000 of you mother Canuckers booed the Rock out of the building. That strikes up a Hogan chant so Rock has to slowly explain that this isn't Smackdown. Rock wasn't about to forget last year, if that's what these people think. Then again, it doesn't matter what they think.

Then at the Raw Tenth Anniversary, they gave the Superstar of the Decade Award to Steve Austin. There's only one Superstar of the Decade and he's "stronger than a bear, faster than a buck, the biggest thing to hit Canada cause the MAPLE LEAFS SUCK!" The fans get in whatever insults they can and Rock is just basking in the hatred.

He's even going to enter the battle royal tonight and go on to Wrestlemania. Rock loads up IF YA SMELL but cuts them off in a rather deep voice. Rock: "YOU CAN'T SING ALONG WITH THE ROCK! NO! NO! NO MORE!" The Rock and the Rock alone gets to say IS COOKIN to wrap up one of the most amazing heel performances you'll ever see.

This was nothing short of outstanding with Rock completely destroying the entire arena in the span of ten minutes. He took some of the simplest ideas that makes a face promo work and turned them around on the fans with the MAPLE LEAFS SUCK clearly cutting them deeply. Rock came into this with complete confidence and sold every word of it to the point where he was suddenly the biggest heel in years. Watch this if you haven't seen it and take notes.

Jazz vs. Jacqueline

Victoria and Steven Richards are on commentary. They slug it out to start and head outside with Jackie taking over as Lawler is confused by Jackie's chest tattoo. Back in and Jazz gets two off some clotheslines and loads up a powerbomb. I'm not completely sure what happens next though as I think Jazz tried to drop her backwards and face first onto the mat but Jackie might have tried to reverse into a sunset flip, leaving her to just drop off to the side in what looked like a botch. Jazz takes her down by the leg and puts on the half crab into the STF for the tap.

Post match the lights go out and Trish makes her return to beat Jazz up. She was gone in the first place? Victoria tries to interfere and gets kicked in the face.

We see Test arriving at a Girls Gone Wild shoot. For some reason JR didn't know what GGW was despite the Girls Gone Wild boss showing up on Smackdown. Test goes to a club to pick the finalists for Miss Girls Gone Wild and shows off that awesome charisma (or he might just be really drunk).

Test and Maven are watching the clip with Test saying it makes up for all the stupid stuff Stacy has done. Apparently she didn't know what GGW was and isn't happy about it. Cue Stacy to accuse him of doing a few things he shouldn't have been doing. Chief Morely comes in and makes Test/Stacy vs. Chris Jericho/Christian.

We recap Goldust being electrocuted.

JR sits down with Goldust for his first comments. Goldust talks about Booker T. having his back....while randomly shouting and making noise because he now has Tourette's Syndrome. I'm assuming someone finds this funny and I'm not sure I want to see anything else they perceive as humor.

Kane vs. Lance Storm

Storm jumps on Kane's back for a choke and is quickly clotheslined out to the floor. Back in and a big boot sets up an elbow drop for no cover as this is one sided for Kane so far. Kane charges into a boot in the corner and eats a middle rope missile dropkick for two. Back to back chokeslams end Storm in a hurry.

Randy Orton's shoulder is healthy (99% at least) and he's back in the ring tonight.

Randy Orton/Batista vs. Booker T./Scott Steiner

Booker chops at Orton and forearms him down, only to have Flair trip Booker up to take over. Steiner chases Flair away but Batista comes in to work over Booker. Flair holds Booker in the corner so Orton can hammer

away, only to have Booker fire off the kicks to get a breather. A Flair distraction lets some double teaming bring Booker back into the corner though and we hit the bearhug.

Orton grabs a chinlock, only to have Booker fight up and hit the ax kick (Not the Spinarooni JR. That's bad even for him.). More double teaming keeps Booker in trouble so Steiner finally comes in without a tag and cleans house. Flair gets caught in the Recliner but Batista makes the save and spears Booker down. Orton adds the high crossbody but Booker rolls through for the pin.

Rating: D. Not a very good match but the really telling part here is the fact that Steiner never actually tagged in. The night before he was wrestling on pay per view for a World Title and he couldn't even get into a tag match here. You can tell they've completely pulled the plug on him and I'm actually surprised they even let him stand on the apron instead of swapping in ANYONE else, or just making this a singles match.

We recap Rock entering the battle royal. As in we show a fifteen second clip of it.

Chris Jericho/Christian vs. Stacy Keibler/Test

Stacy is in a cutoff Maple Leafs jersey and little white shorts so the sympathy is really turned up. Test leaves her on the ramp (Why not leave her in a hotel somewhere?) and charges in but Stacy gets on the apron anyway. Jericho pulls her down to send her face first into the apron and the double teaming begins. Chris grabs a chair and blasts Test for the DQ in less than 80 seconds.

With Test down, Jericho handcuffs him to the ropes and puts Stacy in the Walls. Jeff Hardy tries to make a save but gets beaten down, leaving Shawn Michaels to make the real save. Christian really didn't need to be there at all, save for making the odds a bit stronger. The silence for most of the beatdown segment was rather telling to put it mildly.

Post break Jeff is still in the ring when Christopher Nowinski comes out to call him a failure. Those are wrestling words.

Jeff Hardy vs. Christopher Nowinski

Jeff hits him and drops the Swanton for the pin at 13 seconds. Actually hang on as Jeff beats on Nowinski post match, drawing a reversal of decision.

Van Dam and Kane are ready for the battle royal but don't agree on who should win after they get rid of Rock.

Speaking of Rock, he's in a somewhat cramped dressing room and tells someone on the phone that Austin can come see him next week. Rock gets off the phone and grabs his guitar but cue Hurricane of all people. Hurricane chastises him for ripping on the people and wants to know whatsupwithdat. Rock wants to know who he is but realizes that it's the Hamburgler.

He's not impressed though because any superhero could beat Hurricane, even Aquaman. Rock: "Yeah the dude that talks to the fish." Hurricane knows he could beat the Scorpion King though. Rock: "OH NO YOU...!" Hurricane asks if Rock can fly and promises to make him fly over the top rope tonight. He leaves but Rock insists that losing to Brendan Fraser was just a special effect. Good stuff here as Rock clearly has no issue working with people way beneath him, which so many people can't say.

Jerry Lawler vs. Chief Morely

No DQ so just get the interference ready now. Morely hammers away to start as JR points out how much experience Lawler has. Lawler gets in a clothesline and knocks Morely outside as the YOU SCREWED BRET chants start up. Back in and Morely grabs a spinebuster to set up the Money Shot for no cover. Instead he goes for a chair but Hebner kicks it out of the ring for no apparent reason. Cue the Dudleys for a 3D and Lawler drops the middle rope fist for the pin.

Rating: D-. This is the second match of the night that made it to five minutes and they certainly didn't make use of the time. I have no idea what the point is in having the announcers fighting Bischoff's lackey but it's getting really annoying in a hurry. Lawler can work a brawl just fine but couldn't this be used for ANYONE else who could use a rub?

Lawler is a legend and won't be wrestling full time so who does this really help?

Evolution is ready for the battle royal and Orton wants Booker T.

Battle Royal

Chris Jericho, Al Snow, Booker T., Batista, Christian, Jamal, Rosey, Jeff Hardy, Kane, Lance Storm, Maven, Randy Orton, Rob Van Dam Rodney Mack, Scott Steiner, Steven Richards, Test, Hurricane, Tommy Dreamer, The Rock

Winner gets HHH at Wrestlemania. Jericho and Christian bail to the floor as Test gets in. A bunch of people go after Rock to star, leaving Jericho to dump Test. Geez bad night for him. Test goes back in and Jericho eliminates himself to run into the crowd. Van Dam kicks Jamal out and Rock gets rid of Dreamer and Maven.

Richards is out next as the crowd is rather silent. Again. Evolution gets rid of Van Dam, followed by Snow and Mack being eliminated. Hurricane slugs away at Rock but gets kicked low for his efforts. That's enough to get rid of Hurricane but Booker throws Rock through the ropes to the floor. They brawl on the outside (neither are eliminated) until Rock goes up and joins commentary.

Rock talks about JR's barbecue sauce as a production guy pokes his head out from underneath the stage in a funny visual. Orton backdrops Hardy out but Steiner gets rid of Randy. Batista gets rid of Steiner and Booker gets rid of Batista, leaving us with Booker, Christian, Kane, Rosey, Rock and Storm. Rosey and Storm of all people team up to beat on Kane as Rock mocks JR's hat.

Kane gets rid of Rosey and shrugs off some of Storm's horrible right hands. They're bad enough that Kane throws him out and Booker takes a chokeslam. Now Rock heads back to the ring and gets rid of Kane and Christian. Booker chops away but gets caught in a DDT. Rock loads him up but Booker reverses and throws Rock out for the completely clean win and the title shot.

Rating: D. Just a bad battle royal here though the ending was a good

call. Booker is the kind of guy who could get a major rub out of a win here and an even bigger one out of the Wrestlemania match. Eliminating Rock like he did was a perfect way to wrap things up as well, making this a good ending to a bad match.

Overall Rating: D. Let me make this clear to start: everything good about this show has to do with the Rock and everything bad has to do with almost everyone else. Rock is the ONLY good thing going on here and the lack of Austin was really bad. HHH wasn't there either but at least he was beaten up last night (kind of) to explain the absence.

The problem here was so much of the show being built around bad matches that didn't have any time to go anywhere. How much can you do when four matches aren't even three minutes long? You can tell they're getting ready for the Wrestlemania season and that means some improvements but sweet goodness there's some horrible stuff that they need to drop for the sake of stuff that could actually benefit from the extra attention.

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