

Monday Night Raw – March 3, 2003 (2017 Redo):

Monday Night Raw

Date: March 3, 2003

Location: Nassau Coliseum, Uniondale, New York

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

It's Wrestlemania month and that means it's time to pick things up in a hurry. Tonight that will be accomplished by having Steve Austin show up to confront the Rock, who called him out last week for winning Superstar of the Decade. Other than that we're going to start the build to HHH vs. Booker T. for the Raw World Title, which certainly won't get really uncomfortable in a hurry. Let's get to it.

Eric Bischoff is in the back and has Rico and 3 Minute Warning waiting on Austin. I'm sure that's the ticket.

Opening sequence.

Here's Booker T. to get things going. Booker calls himself a five time WCW Champion (which he says six times) and says last week felt like he won a trip to Disneyland. Cue HHH and Ric Flair with some nasty looking smirks. HHH gets right to the point: Booker can go to Wrestlemania, but people like him don't deserve to be a World Champion. You can hear the fans gasp and it gets worse as HHH says Booker is just here to entertain people. HHH: "Do a little dance for me Book." Booker has "nappy hair" and his "suckas" and they made HHH laugh last week when Booker won the battle royal.

HHH brings up Booker's World Title reigns, which were won around the same time as David Arquette and Vince Russo's. Now that we've gotten the required WCW insults out of the way, we're talking about Wrestlemania and Booker is going to wrestle the best wrestler alive today. When he gets there, he's going to lose, when people like him always do. Booker isn't so sure because someone like him is going to win the World Title. HHH goes to leave but says good luck against Scott Steiner tonight. It's

implied that there's something up with the match, perhaps with HHH and Flair getting it made.

I don't think there's any secret that this was a horrible idea, though to WWE's credit they started rolling it back (almost) immediately and turned the story into something slightly less offensive about Booker being an ex-convict. Now that being said, there was no hiding what they were doing here and it made the story a mix between uncomfortable and really bad, though a lot of it would have been fixed if HHH had dropped the title.

Christian vs. Jeff Hardy

This is fallout from Jeff trying to save Stacy Keibler from the Vitamin C attack last week. Jeff starts fast and knocks Jericho outside for a big plancha from the top. Back in and Jeff's shirt goes off with my ears getting a bit weaker due to the high pitched screeching. Christian crotches him on top to take over though and Jeff is dropped ribs first across the top rope. We hit the abdominal stretch for a bit until Jeff makes his comeback with a mule kick. A bad looking Whisper in the Wind gets two but a reverse Twist of Fate doesn't work. The Unprettier gives Christian the clean pin.

Rating: C-. Jeff was kept short here and that's the best option for everyone involved. His in-ring work was basically on life support at this point and it took someone familiar with him to make the match work as well as it did. If nothing else though, it's rather odd to see a match end clean around here these days.

Bischoff recruits Lance Storm as the second line of defense. It's weird seeing Storm in jeans.

Chief Morely vs. Spike Dudley

Morely says if Spike wins, Bubba and D-Von's suspensions are lifted. Spike charges in and hammers away to start, including a bite in the corner. The Dudley Dog is countered into a Blue Thunder Bomb (sweet) and Morely hammers away on the back and head. Some rolling suplexes capped off by a slingshot suplex set up the Money Shot to end Spike in a hurry.

Christian is all fired up while Jericho is brushing his beard. He has a surprise for Test later but here's Bischoff to recruit them as well.

Trish Stratus/Jacqueline vs. Victoria/Jazz

Jacqueline wastes no time in flapjacking Jazz to start. Victoria gets kicked off the apron but the distraction lets Jazz take Jacqueline down. A sitout powerslam gives Jazz two but Victoria kicks her in the face by mistake. That doesn't seem to mind as Victoria racks Jackie and spins her down into the side slam for two. For some reason the announcers compare Jazz to James Earl Jones and talk about smoking cigars, likely due to the commentators not being very good when they're bored.

Lawler is very happy with Trish leaning over for the tag but the fans aren't as thrilled with her as she hammers away on Victoria. A Thesz press gets a bit better reaction and Jazz is knocked outside onto Steven Richards. Jackie baseball slides both of them down and Trish grabs a jackknife rollup to pin Victoria. Lawler: "LOOK AT THE PUPPIES!"

Rating: C-. Better than I was expecting but the Jazz discussion got really annoying in a hurry. In theory this sets up Trish vs. Victoria for the title at Wrestlemania, which really isn't all that interesting after all the times we've seen them fight already. It's better than Jackie or Jazz getting the shot though.

Morely wants Austin as well.

Coach knocks on Rock's door and is immediately asked if he's on crack. You don't just knock on the Rock's door, at least not without an appointment! Rock has time to talk to him on Wednesday and sends Coach away with some hair insults. The camera follows Rock into his dressing room where he insults the fans a few times.

Rock goes looking for his guitar but finds Hurricane sitting behind a curtain. He pulls the curtain back, takes off his glasses, shakes his head, and then lets Hurricane out from behind the curtain. Hurricane calls him a hypocrite for having Bischoff leaving welcoming committees for Austin. Rock: "HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN SITTING IN THERE???"

Rock accuses Hurricane of watching him walk around without any clothes on and then brings up eliminating Hurricane (Hamburgler) onto the top rope. When Rock tossed him, he whispered something in Hurricane's ear. Hurricane doesn't remember that, but he remembers Rock screaming when Booker T. eliminated him. Rock to the audience: "STOP CHEERING!" See, last week, Rock tripped over the top rope. Rock: "YEAH THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED! The Rock said that's what happened!"

What Hurricane needs to understand is that he's 100lbs of nothing. Hang on though as Rock gets a phone call. Rock: "Hey it's nothing! He says he knows you! AND THE SUPERHERO HAS BRACES!" Rock thinks Hurricane is going to be selling band candy after the show but first, Rock reminds him that he was shouting Scorpion King's battle cry when he eliminated Hurricane.

Actually, if what Hurricane saw behind that curtain means anything, it means that the Scorpion King has a tiny ding-a-ling. Rock: "HUH???" Hurricane calls Rock a coward who is scared of Austin. Rock may talk a big game but he's full of it. With that, Hurricane flies off, leaving Rock to look at his crotch and say that it's still the man.

Much like last week, Rock shows why he's not only one of the best talkers of all time but also one of the most selfless performers in WWE. Rock gains absolutely nothing from this segment save for some more lines on a highlight reel. Hurricane on the other hand gets probably the best moment of his career to date and looks like a much bigger deal because he gets to share the screen with Rock. On the other hand, look at the opening segment, which basically boiled down to:

HHH: You suck because you're black and you'll never have a chance at being the top star in this company because I'm just better than you!

Booker: Uh...I'm going to win!

Hurricane might not go anywhere off of this but he's being given a chance. Booker on the other hand is getting the chance but HHH is making him look like absolutely nothing in the first round between them. Compare that to Hurricane who got eliminated in the battle royal, only to come back with some really funny lines that Rock sold like the master that he is.

Chris Jericho comes out for a match but first he apologizes to Stacy, who was stupid enough to hook up with an idiot of a boyfriend. Jericho has Girls Gone Wild footage of Test signing a woman's chest (while slightly pulling down her tank top, revealing far less than Trish does on any given night). In the back, Stacy freaks out about this because she needs to overreact so Test can plug the Girls Gone Wild pay per view. Test yells at her about how it's no big deal and orders her to stay in the back.

Test vs. Chris Jericho

Test unloads on him to start and drops Jericho with a gorilla press slam. He hammers away with right hands but here's Christian to intimidate Stacy down the ramp. The distraction lets Jericho take over with a belly to back suplex, only to charge into a tilt-a-whirl slam. A very good looking powerbomb gives Test two but Jericho grabs the referee, allowing Christian to hit his reverse DDT.

Jericho rips the turnbuckle pad off but goes after Stacy, earning himself a full nelson slam. Now it's Christian offering a distraction, allowing Jericho to hit a low blow and the Flashback (not the Breakdown JR, though it's been at least a year since he used the latter) for the pretty easy pin.

Rating: D. Test just isn't working in this role and it's clear that he's not going to get a fall over Jericho, or even Christian for that matter. The matches aren't even dramatic or entertaining for the most part (save for that good powerbomb) and that makes these just a series of bridges to get us to Jericho vs. Michaels. I'd think that's going to make up for everything though, even how overbooked this mess was.

Jericho and Christian load up the Conchairto on Stacy but give it to Test instead. Shawn runs in for the save but takes a chair to the head of his own to draw some blood. Jericho wants Shawn at Wrestlemania.

Goldust arrives and his new condition scares Rico and 3 Minute Warning off. Really, that was Bischoff's best option for security?

Chris Nowinski comes out to rant about Austin and eats surprise 3D from

some surprise Dudleys.

Jericho and Christian are really proud of their accomplishments tonight.

Booker T. vs. Scott Steiner

We get a quick recap of Booker and Steiner's history, which isn't quite as epic as JR would have us believe. They trade forearms and shots to the face to start until Steiner easily catches a kick and throws him down with a belly to belly. Some trash talk would suggest that Steiner is a heel here and hopefully that's the case as long as he can somehow convince WWE to keep him around.

The clothesline into the pushups has Steiner acting even more heelish so Booker hammers away on him in the corner. Steiner breaks up the Spinarooni though and grabs the saddest Steiner Recliner I've ever seen. Cue HHH and Flair to distract Steiner (who has some blood trickling next to his eye) so the hold is broken, leaving Booker to get a hideous twisting sunset flip out of the corner for the pin.

Rating: F. What the heck was that? In addition to being a terrible match (as is usual the case with Steiner), I have no idea what the point was supposed to be in the end. HHH wants to save Booker from a beating which could have worn him down before Wrestlemania? To get in Booker's head that he can't beat Steiner on his own maybe? That's better than the physical toll Booker would have been taking? If that's what they're going for it didn't go that well and they would have been better off doing almost anything else. At least Steiner was acting like the natural heel that he should have been since his debut.

Rock tells a backstage worker to get Bischoff in here. After a break, Bischoff interrupts Rock's guitar playing to find out that Rock isn't cool with these welcoming committees. Basically if Bischoff doesn't get rid of them, he'll go back to Smackdown. Bischoff leaves to take care of something.

Kane holds a trashcan so Rob Van Dam can hit it with a spin kick.

Rob Van Dam/Kane vs. Al Snow/Tommy Dreamer

Hardcore and I have no idea why this exists. Dreamer brings out a shopping cart so Al puts on a helmet and climbs inside as they ride down the ramp. They start hitting each other with weapons on the floor with Van Dam hitting a moonsault off the apron. Rolling Thunder is broken up with some kendo stick shots and the hardcore guys start cleaning house with various weapons.

Not that it matters as a double chokeslam sets up a Five Star on both guys for the pin in less than three minutes. What in the world was the point of this? I guess Morely and Bischoff set it up as punishment or something but either RVD or Kane could have won this as a handicap match with about as much effort.

Bischoff calls the troops off as Austin arrives with a tire iron. A single stare at the troops sends them scurrying and that's it for the show long idea.

Here's Austin for the big show closing segment. Austin has some things to talk about but first of all, he wants to say thank you. Seven months ago he walked out on this company and told Vince McMahon that he could shove this job, but now he's back and wants to thank the fans. Austin thanks everyone here in the arena and everyone at home in a classy sounding but pretty much required statement.

Cue the Rock for the showdown though and you can tell the fans know this is serious. Rock is glad Austin is back but gives him some advice: as soon as you become successful, these people will turn on you. That means successful like the Rock, who has accomplished everything in this business except for one: he's never beaten Austin at Wrestlemania. That's what Rock wants: Austin vs. Rock at Wrestlemania, one more time.

Cue Bischoff and Morely to say they want to make Rock happy. Therefore, next week it's Rock vs. Booker T. and if Rock wins, he has his choice of a Wrestlemania match. He can either challenge HHH for the title (HUH? Why in the world is that even an option?) or have his match with Austin. Speaking of Austin, he's overstayed his welcome by about three minutes so he gets to beat up Rico and the Samoans. Rock runs in for a staredown to wrap things up but the slugout goes to Austin to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. Rock is trying with everything he's got but he's dying for SOMETHING to help him out. Austin already looks like he's on very borrowed time and HHH is too busy trying to make sure we know he's better than everyone else. Shawn vs. Jericho should be fine but they have to get away from this Test stuff first. The wrestling is bad and the storytelling is even worse as they continue to limp into Wrestlemania in a very bad way.

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