

Smackdown – March 20, 2003: At Least They're Admitting It

Smackdown

Date: March 20, 2003

Location: Freedom Hall, Louisville, Kentucky

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're ten days away from Wrestlemania XIX and hopefully things are going to pick up around here. The big story coming out of last week is Kurt Angle screwing over Brock Lesnar in their big showdown last week. You know Lesnar isn't going to stand for that so violence is likely due. Let's get to it.

We open with a montage of America the Beautiful from Wrestlemania over the years in honor of the US armed forces invading Iraq. The fact that I can tell which Wrestlemania each is from on the audio alone tells me that I've spent WAY too much of my life watching Wrestlemania.

Long recap of last week's title match, including showing the brothers Angle switching during Lesnar's entrance. That wasn't shown last week.

Opening sequence.

Charlie Haas vs. Rhyno

Rhyno wastes no time in slugging away before Haas can even get his belt off. Some hard right hands (that intensity is always cool to see) have Haas in even more trouble but he sends Rhyno outside for a superkick from Shelton. Back in and a belly to belly sends Rhyno flying before it's time to work on the knee.

We hit a few leg locks until Rhyno finally crawls over to the ropes. Charlie sticks with the leg until Rhyno uses the good leg to kick him away. A suplex drops Charlie but the knee gives out again. Tazz: "It's like a table with three legs but Rhyno has two legs because he's a human and not a table". Shelton grabs the bad leg to break up the Gore and it's

a belt shot to Rhyno's head for the DQ.

Rating: C-. I was starting to dig the match until the pretty stupid ending. If you want to do the DQ, just do it off Shelton interfering. Either way, at least Rhyno got to show off a bit as you rarely think of him doing much more than the Gore. He can wrestle a pretty decent power match and he was having a good little match here until the messy ending. I can always go for preventing title match participants from taking a pin before a pay per view though.

Bob Costas talks about how big Hulk Hogan vs. Vince McMahon will be, because it's like the seniors' golf tour. That's quite ahead of its time for a featured Wrestlemania match.

Brian Kendrick is in Stephanie McMahon's office so she can yell at him (shocking I know) for defying her authority in his efforts to get a job. Uh...if he doesn't work here, why does he answer to Stephanie? Anyway she's giving him a match tonight and if he wins, he gets a contract. You know, because Stephanie is firm but kind.

John Cena issues an open challenge for a rap off at Wrestlemania. This was scheduled to take place but the rapper, Fabolous, was arrested before the show and therefore the whole thing was canceled. Cena is ready for Lesnar too and is back next week.

Los Guerreros go to a golf course and annoy some semi-racist golfers. One golfer suggests a foursome but Eddie didn't quite mean that. They agree to a winner take all bet and of course Eddie and Chavo cheat to win. Chavo: "If you're not cheating, you're not trying."

Rikishi/Los Guerreros vs. FBI

Nunzio jumps Eddie to start but Chavo comes in with a Batista Bomb of all things for two. It's off to Palumbo so Chavo starts in on his leg but a clothesline takes him down. Cole: "I've got a nickname now: the gangsta." As you try to get that image out of your head, the Italians lure Eddie in and put Chavo in a double half crab (seems unnecessary) so Nunzio can drop a middle rope leg to the back of his head.

Palumbo gets two off a Samoan drop but a tornado DDT gives Chavo a bit of a reprieve. There's the hot tag to Eddie and everything breaks down with Rikishi cleaning house with a double clothesline. All three Italians get crushed in the corner by the big man, leaving Palumbo to take a superkick and the frog splash for the pin.

Rating: D+. Am I missing something with the four non-Guerreros? Rikishi and the FBI get TV time almost every week for some reason and I have no idea why. They're not interesting and there's nothing special about them but for some reason they're treated like fairly big stars. At least Eddie got the pin, though they should be getting more attention on their upcoming title match rather than this one off match.

Bobby Heenan calls Hogan vs. McMahon the old timers' match as well. He's right, again. It's still sad to hear his voice that way though.

Rey Mysterio vs. Jamie Noble

Mysterio sends him into the corner to start but gets powerbombed into the buckle for his efforts. Rey gets tossed outside for a hard clothesline from Nidia and it's off to an inverted Gory Stretch back inside. A tornado DDT plants Noble and a top rope hurricanrana makes things even worse. Nidia grabs Mysterio's mask so he dives over the top to take her out in a rather violent moment. Back in and the 619 into the West Coast Pop gives Rey the pin.

Rating: C. Mysterio rising up the cruiserweight ranks is the best thing that can happen to the division and it's cool to see him starting to get closer to the title. It's also a good idea to have him go after Matt Hardy, who is a far bigger star than anyone in the division and therefore a better match for Mysterio. Unfortunately the rest of the division is pretty interchangeable and expendable, though they can put on some nice filler matches, just like Noble did here.

Kurt Angle tells his brother Eric, now in a leg cast, that they'll make things right.

Here are the Angles for a chat. Kurt brags about retaining the title and credits his intelligence in making it happen. He explains the entire plan

from last week and says Eric is the best brother anyone could have. Eric: "Mom was right. You don't suck bro." Now on to serious business though, as Kurt has to deal with Lesnar for putting his hands on Eric. Kurt calls him a disgrace to all forms of wrestling and says if you hurt one Angle, you hurt all Angles.

He wants Brock out here right now but gets....Stephanie instead. Well to be fair she's more intimidating. She changes the rules for Wrestlemania, saying that if Kurt gets disqualified, he loses the title. Stephanie: "Don't look at me like that Kurt!". Kurt isn't happy but he's staying out here until he gets his apology from Lesnar. Cue Brock to go after Eric but Kurt hits him low and Angle Slams Brock through a chair. Angle puts a knee in Brock's back and grabs something like a Crossface until referees break it up.

Undertaker vs. Bill DeMott

Undertaker shoulders him down to start as Cole mentions that Undertaker has never lost at Wrestlemania. A kick to the ribs is countered into a legbar to send DeMott over to the ropes. Snake Eyes looks to set up a big boot but DeMott grabs a spinebuster for two instead. Undertaker is right back up with Old School for the same but the chokeslam is broken up. The second attempt works just fine though and the Tombstone ends Bill without too much effort.

Rating: D. Just a step above a squash here but it was good to give Undertaker a win like this. If nothing else it might get rid of DeMott even faster as he's still not an interesting heel. At the very least he's likely heading to Velocity now as there's little left for him to do after a loss like this.

Brock thinks he's broken his ribs again. Isn't that always the way before a big title shot?

Brian Kendrick vs. Shannon Moore

Shannon has Matt Hardy, who graciously included Shannon in his book and is Shannon's idol, in his corner. Brian tries some fast rollups to start and slips out of an electric chair into la majistral for two. A snap

suplex gives Shannon two and we hit the bow and arrow. Back up and Brian gets in a facebuster followed by a springboard missile dropkick for two, with Tazz saying that was his best shot.

Matt has had enough of this being in trouble thing and pulls Brian to the floor for a faceplant onto the steps. That's only good for two though and here's Mysterio to go after Matt, allowing Brian to hit Sliced Bread #2 for the win. Since Kendrick doesn't have music, he leaves to Rey's instead.

Rating: D+. Nothing wrong with this one and I'm glad we can get rid of the Kendrick doesn't have a job story as he's wrestled more often than most people already on the roster. Mysterio and Hardy getting involved works as well as anything else and it's not like Moore losing is going to hurt anyone. Not the worst match either.

This week's Wrestlemania moment: Mr. T. vs. Roddy Piper in a boxing match. That's the ONLY option they had?

We run down the Wrestlemania card.

Clips of the Wrestlemania press conference.

Vince is happy with the contract before the signing later tonight.

Chris Benoit vs. Shelton Benjamin

Benoit chops away to start and gets one off a belly to back suplex. Shelton gets in a suplex of his own for two and chokes on the mat to set up a chinlock. That's fine with Benoit who comes back with a Crossface but Shelton rolls out, only to get dropkicked back down. The Crossface goes on again with Rhyno going down an interfering Haas, leaving Benjamin to tap.

Rating: C. It was really short but intense while it lasted, which is all you can expect from these two. I'm really not big on a champion losing in about three and a half minutes at any point, especially less than two weeks before the pay per view. At least it wasn't in a tag match though, which would have been even worse. Fun match while it lasted though.

Jesse Ventura doesn't think there's ever been a bad Wrestlemania and thinks Vince is willing to take chances. Did he just stop watching when he went to WCW?

Gene Okerlund is here to moderate the Vince and Hogan contract signing. Hogan comes out first and makes sure to soak in some cheers from some unbelievable Maniacs. Hulk wants to know what's up with McMahonamania because Vince didn't create Hulkamania. We see Vince walking through the back but here he is attacking Hogan from behind with a chair. I know it's a simple editing trick but I've always been a fan of that kind of thing. Vince chairs Hogan down and busts him open, forcing him to sign the contract in his own blood. We get the big dramatic shots of the bloody Hogan to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. If there was any doubt about the Smackdown main event for Wrestlemania, this show certainly got rid of them. This was full speed ahead on Hogan vs. McMahon and it's towering over Lesnar vs. Angle. The title match has the more entertaining build but there's no hiding the fact that the old timers are the real focal point. The wrestling was short here but it was entertaining while it lasted, especially for matches designed to set up the pay per view and not be big deals on their own. They're starting to focus on Seattle but there's not a lot of time left and it's really starting to show.

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