

Smackdown – April 3, 2003: Tournament Rush

Smackdown

Date: April 3, 2003

Location: Spokane Arena, Spokane, Washington

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're past Wrestlemania and that means it's time to reset a few things. It also means that we don't have Kurt Angle around for a long time as he needs a fresh bandage on that pesky broken neck of his. Brock Lesnar is World Champion again and that means he needs a new challenger. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Wrestlemania set to Crack Addict.

Opening sequence.

Here's Stephanie McMahon for the serious speech about how great Wrestlemania was and the injuries to both Brock (who has a concussion) and Angle (pretty much everything), the latter of whom could be out for several months. But never mind any of that because we'll be having a #1 contenders tournament for the shot at Backlash starting tonight. Here are the brackets:

Rey Mysterio

Undertaker

John Cena

Eddie Guerrero

Chris Benoit

A-Train

Rhyno

Big Show

#1 Contenders Tournament First Round: Undertaker vs. Rey Mysterio

Rey tries to speed things up to start and scores with some kicks to the leg, only to have his head taken off with a big boot. A chokeslam is broken up with Rey grabbing a DDT, followed by the 619 for two with Rey being launched off the cover. The West Coast Pop is loaded up and easily countered into the Last Ride to send Undertaker to the next round.

Rating: C. It was starting to get energetic when Undertaker realized he was selling for Rey Mysterio. The fact that Rey only got in the 619 and then got finished with one big move doesn't do him many favors, but it's not like Undertaker was exactly known for his selling at this point. Not terrible, but Undertaker didn't give him much here.

Undertaker helps him up post match. It's not exactly Jeff Hardy last year.

Vince McMahon wants to know when Hulk Hogan arrives.

Jamie Noble vs. Brian Kendrick

Shannon Moore and Matt Hardy, who was the only Hardy to wrestle at Wrestlemania this year and has read his book twelve times, are out for commentary. Jamie stomps away in the corner as Tazz tries to be funny about Matt's diet focusing on yams instead of banana juice. Brian gets sent to the floor where he kicks Nidia away and comes back in with a high crossbody. A powerslam gives Jamie two and a hard clothesline gets the same. Nidia pulls the ropes down to send Kendrick outside but Jamie's dive takes her out by mistake. Sliced Bread #2 gives Kendrick a fast pin.

Matt dumps Kendrick outside and calls out Brock for a champion vs. champion match. Brian tries to come back in and gets beaten down again.

The FBI steals stuff from a truck after tying the driver up.

Highlights of Lesnar vs. Angle. We also see Brock after the show and he was just gone thanks to the concussion. Now let's look at the botched shooting star from multiple angles in slow motion.

Piper's Pit is back next week. And so it begins. Er, continues.

#1 Contenders Tournament First Round: Chris Benoit vs. A-Train

Cole points out that we could see Big Show vs. A-Train or Benoit vs. Rhyno in the second round. Tazz: "Cole we can't get nothing past you!" A-Train knocks him to the floor to start so Benoit grabs an early Crossface. That's reversed into a very modified camel clutch with Benoit's legs wrapped around A-Train's legs as A-Train is on his feet. Since that's not enough, A-Train pulls him up by the head and slams Benoit down hard for two.

A chinlock doesn't last long and Benoit is chopped out to the floor. Back in and A-Train talks more trash but misses a charge, setting up the rolling German suplexes to a great reaction. The Swan Dive gets two but Benoit charges into the bicycle kick. There's the Crossface again with A-Train powering up to his feet. Benoit is ready for him though and kicks off the ropes to get the hold again, this time for the tap out.

Rating: C. I liked this better than I was expecting to with A-Train acting as a pretty decent tree for Benoit to chop down. In theory this sets up Benoit vs. Big Show for a spot in the finals and if they send Benoit on to face....I'm guessing Cena, everything should be fine. Benoit was his usual good self here and I'm glad to see him back in singles matches as the Rhyno team didn't do much for me.

Stephanie comes in to see Vince, who is ready for Hogan tonight.

Sean O'Haire says break the rules in the weakest of these vignettes yet. Are these things ever going anywhere?

#1 Contenders Tournament First Round: John Cena vs. Eddie Guerrero

Cena is all over him to start with some choking in the corner and a delayed suplex for two. We hit the bearhug early on as Cena is showing the power more than usual. Tazz thinks Cena could be the next big thing. Maybe I should listen to the Tazz Show more often. Eddie fights back with some clotheslines and Three Amigos for two. Cena reverses a victory roll into an electric chair but takes too long going for a chain. Instead it's

Eddie dropkicking it away and picking it up himself, only to have the referee take it away. Eddie tries a suplex to set up the frog splash but has to roll through. A charge sends him right into the Death Valley Driver to advance Cena.

Rating: C. Well if you need someone to look good, put them with Eddie. This was much more of a showcase for Cena and that's a good sign. There's little reason to go with anyone other than Cena to win this tournament after all the promos he's cut on Brock but it's very cool that he's having to beat some bigger names to get there. Barring a surprise it's going to be Eddie, Undertaker and Benoit, which is nothing to sneeze at whatsoever.

Hulk, his son Nick (with a freaking skateboard) and Jimmy Hart arrive. Nick: "Where's catering?" He was annoying even back then.

Clips of Limp Bizkit at Wrestlemania.

Here's Torrie Wilson for her Playboy coming out party, complete with the cover dropping down over the entrance. Torrie can't believe so many people want to see her in the magazine. Torrie teases taking her top off...and freaking SABLE makes her return to interrupt. Cole: "She's kicking!" The announcers do their "look at *insert name here*" stuff and it's still just as annoying as it was when Al Wilson was around.

Sable says she's having her own coming out party because she's back. Torrie clearly just wants to be Sable and a lot of people think there's no room for two Divas like themselves. Sable however thinks they'll be the best of friends and gives her a peck on the lips. Naturally the announcers act like it was the most amazing thing they've ever seen.

Team Angle vs. Funaki/Tajiri

Non-title. The champs jump Tajiri to start, leaving Funaki to get backdropped. Shelton offers a quick bow so the Japanese guys beat him down and bow right back in a cute bit. Haas gets knocked to the floor but Shelton uses the distraction to jump Funaki from behind. It's off to Haas, who would rather be facing Tajiri. That earns him a nice spinwheel kick to the face for two as the champs are in more trouble than you might

expect here.

Shelton tries a cheap shot from the apron so Tajiri KICKS HIM IN THE FACE for his efforts. It's back to Shelton to jump over Charlie and land on Tajiri's back, setting up a Boston crab. Funaki makes a save to Tajiri can hit a double handspring elbow and clean house. A high crossbody gets two on Haas and there's the Tarantula to Benjamin. It doesn't last long though and Benjamin chop blocks Funaki, setting up the Haas of Pain for the submission.

Rating: B. Where in the world did this come from? This was WAY better than I was expecting with Tajiri and Funaki getting to showcase themselves for a change instead of just being jobbers. We often forget how talented some of these guys are and it's a shame that they don't get to show it off more often. You might get more surprises like this.

John Cena knows his chances against Undertaker are slimmer than a bus full of anorexic women. He'll shock the world next week and leave Undertaker like a clean pool table with no balls.

The FBI comes up to Undertaker, who makes fun of their accents. They ask him to sit down for a chat and Undertaker, who have some coffee and asks if any of them are wearing a wire. Nunzio talks about whacking Nathan Jones at Wrestlemania, which was in retaliation for what Jones did to Palumbo last week. They want to bury the hatchet, which Undertaker can appreciate. However, he brings in Jones and the Italians bail. This was WAY out of the norm for Undertaker and felt really weird.

#1 Contenders Tournament: Rhyno vs. Big Show

Show smacks him down to start and steps on Rhyno's chest. Rhyno gets tossed around some more as Show is in full on slow mode. A side slam gets two but Rhyno slips out of what looks like a powerslam. Show misses a charge into the corner so Rhyno hits a Gore in the corner, only to have to chase off A-Train. The regular Gore connects but A-Train comes in for the DQ. I'd hope Big Show thrashes him for that.

Rating: D. This was just a step above a squash until the ending, which was rather stupid and little more than a back door to save Big Show's

face. Rhyno vs. Benoit should be fun, though I'm not sure why I'd want to see Rhyno vs. A-Train. Then again, Rhyno should probably buy A-Train a steak for the free pass to the next round.

A-Train holds Rhyno for a legdrop from Show, who doesn't seem to mind what A-Train did.

Here are the updated brackets:

Undertaker

John Cena

Chris Benoit

Rhyno

Here's Vince for the big closing segment, which has a ton of time. Yeah he lost on Sunday and maybe he misjudged Hogan. Tonight though, Vince would like Hogan out here for a talk. Cue Hogan (thankfully minus the pest with the skateboard) so Vince can say Hulk has no idea how to deal with this kind of defeat. He'd like to turn the clock back twenty years if he could (meaning before Hogan had come back from the company) and maybe one day they could be friends again. Vince offers a handshake which Hulk doesn't go for.

The boss heads to leave but Hulk asks if he's serious and extends his hand. They shake hands and Vince leaves but Hulk says stop the music. He thanks Vince, who goes to leave again. Now it's Vince saying thank you for all the memories. That's all people are going to have though as Hogan is in the ring for the last time. Hogan may have pinned him at Wrestlemania but now he's going to sit on the shelf for the duration of his new contract.

That way Hulkamania will rot and finally die a slow, agonizing death of leprosy. If Hulk has something to say about that, Vince will be waiting in the parking lot. Hulk goes to the back where Vince is waiting next to a limo. It's Hulk's limo though with Jimmy and Nick inside. Vince hides behind cops and tells Hulk to get inside, where Nick is begging him to just come on. Hogan gets in and leaves with Vince angrily gloating to end

the show. This would be another example of building up a big match with a big stipulation, doing the match, and then ignoring the stipulation. Such is life in WWE and such is a reason why this story sucked.

Overall Rating: C+. This show was rolling and then the crazy long main event segment killed it. It was the better part of twenty minutes while none of the matches even broke seven, which makes for a fast paced start to the show and then a major grinding halt. I liked the tournament stuff and the faster pace with some good action, though next week is going to be a much better indicator of what the future is going to hold for Smackdown.

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