

Monday Night Raw – April 21, 2003: Where Do I Even Start?

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 21, 2003

Location: Phillips Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Jonathan Coachman, Jerry Lawler

It's the go home show for Backlash and we have a major main event for a change. This week will see HHH defending the Raw World Title against Booker T. in a Wrestlemania rematch, but there's something a bit bigger to cover. Tonight is also the second Rock Concert as Rock is ready to deal with Bill Goldberg this coming Sunday. Let's get to it.

Ric Flair is in Eric Bischoff's office complaining about Bischoff's actions of late. Bischoff calls it compelling television and makes Shawn Michaels guest referee for tonight's title match. Flair is livid but seems to calm down when Bischoff suggests that Shawn might beat Booker up out of principle.

Opening sequence.

Chris Jericho vs. Hurricane

Fallout from last week's main event. Hurricane throws the cape over Jericho's face to start and hammers the Canadian out to the floor. That means a big dive as the announcers debate whether or not Hurricane is a real superhero. Back in and we hit a very early Walls of Jericho, sending Hurricane bailing to the ropes. Jericho sticks with the back and grabs a chinlock with a knee to the spine.

Hurricane fights up with a running clothesline and neckbreaker for two but the Overcast misses. It's too early for the Lionsault though and Hurricane gets two off the Shining Wizard. The chokeslam gets the same with Jericho getting a boot on the ropes as this is already better than it should have been. Back up and the Eye of the Hurricane is countered into the Walls for the tap.

Rating: C+. Not a great match here but Hurricane continues to show off his more than adequate in-ring skills. If they were to, say, have him win another big match it might actually go somewhere. As usual, this is a case where the Intercontinental Title would do wonders for them but instead the focus needs to be on Shawn vs. HHH vs. Nash for the only title worth anything. Brilliant indeed.

Post match Flair runs out to beat on Hurricane, including the Figure Four.

Rock arrives and he's got a guitar. Rock: "No no no, it's not boo. It's the Rock Concert TWO!"

Rodney Mack vs. Sean Evans

Behold, the debut of the Teddy Long Five Minute White Boy Challenge. Teddy promises that this will be off the hizzle fo shizzle. In about as long as it takes me to look up what that means, Mack crushes the jobber while Jerry defends himself from running against a black man for Mayor of Memphis. A running powerslam ends Evans in less than two minutes.

Booker T. asks Shawn what's up with him being guest referee tonight. It was in this arena where Shawn superkicked him out of the NWO, which Shawn says makes them even after last week. That's how Booker wants the match tonight called: even.

Goldberg got to meet some troops earlier today.

Coach brings out Lita for her first appearance on Raw in over a year. She's gotten some great news from her doctor but here's Bischoff to cut her off. Bischoff sends Coach off and tells the fans to cheer for Lita. In a rather out of character moment, Bischoff creepily hits on her and suggests that she do Playboy instead of wrestle. After the fans get done being rather pleased with Bischoff's suggestion, Lita says no way. Bischoff offers to just let her give him a private showing instead, or just sleep with him to save her job. Lita tells him where he can go and walks off so Bischoff fires her.

What was the point of this? Bischoff is a lot of things but he's not the

creepy predator like Vince. This was completely out of character for him and felt much more awkward than evil. I can buy people trying to get the Divas to sleep with them to keep their jobs but Bischoff isn't that kind of villain. I'm also not sure what the point of this was in the first place, though it's good to have Lita back.

Flair and HHH want some insurance for the title match. HHH has an idea.

3 Minute Warning vs. Test/Scott Steiner

Chris Nowinski is on commentary. Jamal takes Steiner into the corner and hammers away to start before Rosey comes in with a side slam. The announcers talk about Stacy as Jamal breaks up a hot tag attempt. Jamal misses a top rope splash and the hot tag brings in Test for the running clothesline in the corner. The pumphandle powerslam gives Test two as Rosey splashes Jamal by mistake. Rico kicks Stacy down so Steiner checks on her, allowing Rosey to splash Test. Not that it matters as Steiner comes back in for a reverse DDT and the pin on Jamal.

Rating: D. 3 Minute Warning had a lot of potential but sweet goodness they've become one of the lamest acts I've seen in a long time. They're just big guys who do the stereotypical big man offense, which is about as interesting as you can get. Test and Steiner are no better as Stacy continues to be the only good thing about either of them, which really isn't all that surprising. You can tell the story is going to continue as well, which is far from the best news.

Post break Test and Steiner yell at each other until Stacy breaks it up.

Kevin Nash comes in to see Bischoff and talks about being brought in under the false pretense of teaming with HHH and Shawn. Nash says he's going to pick a side and it'll be the winning one.

Rock is warming up for the concert and promises a surprise.

Here's Rock for the concert. After a hitch of the pants and some annoyance at the Rock chants, we're ready to go. First up is Goldberg on My Mind but the fans chanting for Rock makes him snap again. Rock has had enough of this and calls Goldberg out right now....and it's time for

another Gillberg cameo, complete with fire extinguishers and sparklers.

After some jokes about Gillberg's physique, Rock reads the words to The Rock Went Down to Georgia. Gillberg dances a little jig and the real Goldberg arrives in the back. As Goldberg comes through the back, Rock says that Gillberg is in trouble for the years of impersonations. Goldberg comes out so Rock hides behind the security, which is quickly dispatched.

Rock bails so security gets beaten down, leaving Gillberg to try his luck. That's enough for Rock to sneak back in (as sneakily as a 6'5 275lb wrestler in leather pants can be) for a Rock Bottom before running again. We head to the back where Rock gets in the Hummer limo. Goldberg jumps in his Barracuda to give chase but the car stalls. Well of course it does. Goldberg gives chase on foot but Rock pops up, having faked running away. How shenanigany.

Trish Stratus and Spike Dudley are here for a match but Chief Morely comes out to introduce their opponents, who will also be challenging Rob Van Dam and Kane on Sunday.

Trish Stratus/Spike Dudley vs Dudley Boyz

Bubba powerbombs the heck out of Spike and Trish is even more scared than she was before. D-Von can't bring himself to attack her though, leaving Bubba to splash Trish instead. Morely wants Trish put through a table but D-Von won't have anything to do with it. Van Dam and Kane come in for the save. The guys all leave so Jazz and Teddy Long run in to beat down Trish with the Jazz Stinger sending her into the unset table.

Rock is still here and ready for an encore.

HHH and Nash are having a chat.

Rock is in the ring and it's time to continue the concert. Before he can get a single note out though, here's Goldberg to beat him down again. Christian comes out to take Goldberg down from behind though and the beatdown is on. Rock spears Christian down but gets chaired in the back for the real beatdown. It's nice of them to have Rock get in some shots

like this, but I can't imagine this is making people think he has a chance on Sunday.

Backlash rundown.

Shawn talks to HHH.

Raw World Title: HHH vs. Booker T.

HHH is defending with Shawn Michaels refereeing. They slug it out with Shawn breaking it up multiple times until Booker takes over with some chops. A side slam gets two as the announcers discuss the Trojan Horse. Flair gets knocked off the apron and here's Jericho at ringside because this match isn't big enough already. A few shots to Booker's back while HHH has Shawn distracted (probably planning the next slumber party) take us to a break.

Back with Booker fighting out of the sleeper as Lawler wants to know why Shawn is allowing Jericho to stay at ringside. Fair question actually. The spinebuster gives HHH two and the kneedrop is good for the same. The slow beating continues as King talks about how great it is to see the Kliq back together.

Everyone used to talk about them you see. As usual, the problem is that they were never a thing on WWE TV and it's WWE assuming that everyone knows and/or cares about the backstage stuff. If that's what you're going with, at least make it clear what you're talking about instead of just acting like it's something everyone already knows. HHH grabs the second sleeper until Booker fights back with a side kick to put both guys down.

Another side kick triggers the real comeback, including a third kick to knock HHH out of the air for a rather near fall. The missile dropkick gets two more as Flair is out of the jacket and panicking as only he can. HHH grabs a DDT but the Pedigree is broken up, setting up the ax kick. Flair and Jericho have to be dealt with before the cover though and HHH gets out again.

The Houston Hangover is loaded up but HHH shoves Shawn into the ropes for the crotching. Why this isn't a DQ isn't clear but it's good for two

more. Shawn deals with Flair as Booker hits ANOTHER kick, only to have Jericho get in a belt shot. For once though Shawn is actually smart enough to figure this out and won't count. Instead he superkicks HHH and decks the other villains but they come back in to break up the count, setting up the no contest.

Rating: B-. The match was good, especially if you forget that Booker STILL doesn't have a big singles win as he's stuck in the middle of the Kliq's family fighting. The match was good enough and helped to set up Sunday but that brings us to the big problem: a World Title match and the main event of the Raw World Title match at Wrestlemania is being used to set up a nothing six man tag. That's quite the stretch for priorities and it's not a good thing. Having a match be good doesn't make up for the fact that it's all to set up such a stupid story and actually makes it far worse.

Nash comes out to play peacemaker but HHH decks him from behind to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. Where do I even begin? Above all else, the two top stories on this show range from stupid to completely uninteresting. You can take your pick between Rock having to pretend that the fans love Goldberg and that he actually has a chance of winning on Sunday or HHH, Shawn and Nash arguing over who gets to keep the kid (pick which of those is which) after their divorce in matches that mean absolutely nothing.

The six man isn't going to be used to elevate Jericho or Booker but it gets Nash and Flair main event spots for the simple reason of who they hang out with backstage. I'm assuming we're heading towards Goldberg as the top face star, but not until Nash vs. HHH gets to headline a few pay per views, despite the fact that ONLY Nash and HHH are interested in seeing that match.

What did we have aside from this stuff? Bischoff being creepy, Test and Scott Steiner fighting over Stacy Keibler, Chief Morely as the enforcer who makes the Dudleyz beat up Trish Stratus and the Five Minute White Boy Challenge. I have no idea how this is considered their best possible option but I would love to have that explained to me.

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