

Backlash 2003 (2017 Redo): Make It Raw

Backlash 2003

Date: April 27, 2003

Location: Worcester Centrum, Worcester, Massachusetts

Attendance: 10,000

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz, Jonathan Coachman, Jerry Lawler

If WWE held the least important pay per view in recent memory, does it matter in the slightest? This is a glorified Raw pay per view with a handful of Smackdown matches thrown in to fill out the card. It's a really bad time for WWE at the moment and I don't remember looking forward to a pay per view less than this one in a long time. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at Rock vs. Goldberg, which is billed as a dream match (fair enough) but the build really hasn't done it any favors. No other matches are mentioned.

As a side note: Scott Steiner beat Rico in the dark match. I know you hear about how big of a collapse his WWE run was but my goodness I never realized it was this bad.

Smackdown Tag Team Titles: Team Angle vs. Los Guerreros

Eddie and Chavo are challenging. Team Angle brings out a framed picture of Kurt, complete with medals hanging off the corner. Haas starts with Eddie with the champ getting rolled up a few times for some early near falls. It's off to Chavo, who stops to lay over the top rope for a bit of fun.

Benjamin comes in as well and Chavo actually wrestles him down, which only seems to give Benjamin a bit more of a serious look. A knee to the back slows Chavo down but Eddie gets in one of his own to keep Benjamin in trouble. What's good for the champ is good for the Guerrero perhaps? Eddie gets in a few cheap shots on the floor and puts something into his

boot. The slingshot hilo gets two as this has been all Guerreros to start.

For some reason Eddie lets Shelton tag out and some choking from the apron lets the champs take over. Shelton does the jump over Haas spot for two before slapping on one of his own. A powerslam sets up another chinlock as the match has slowed considerably. Haas comes in to stay on the back but a few kicks to the head allow Eddie to make the hot tag.

Heel miscommunication puts both champs in the corner but Shelton gives Chavo a good looking powerbomb. Eddie is right back in with Three Amigos to Charlie and Chavo gets a very near fall. A great looking frog splash crushes Haas so Chavo can get two more with Shelton making the last minute (perhaps post last minute) save. Chavo tries a suplex but it's the Bobby Heenan Wrestlemania V finish with Shelton holding his foot so Haas can get the pin to retain the titles.

Rating: B-. Good choice for an opener here with the mostly fast paced action and a few hot near falls near the end. They got some time to make this work as well and it was a better match as a result. Eddie and Chavo will be fine as they're so smooth in the ring that they can make almost anyone look better than they can on their own.

Post match, Los Guerreros jump the champs and steal the belts, leaving in a great looking green car.

Torrie Wilson tells Test to stop calling her but he keeps hitting on her anyway. Test calls her a tease for being in Playboy and insists that she wants him. Being a human, Torrie says no because A, he's Test and B, she's Stacy Keibler's friend. Torrie goes to leave but Test pulls her back and kisses her. She storms off as Sable looks on with a rather evil smile. This storyline just went from stupid to REALLY bad n near record time.

Before the next match, here's Roddy Piper with a basket full of coconuts. Piper: "I have a lovely bunch of coconuts." He introduces Sean O'Haire and promises that he'll teach Rikishi that everyone pays the piper. When purchasing coconuts perhaps?

Sean O'Haire vs. Rikishi

Rikishi wins a slugout on the floor to start and throws O'Haire inside for the opening bell. An early Samoan drop gets no cover as Rikishi has to go after Piper, allowing Sean to get in a superkick. We hit the neck crank with some kicks to the back thrown in for good measure. The fans keep booing something in the crowd as Rikishi fights up and splashes O'Haire in the corner.

Sean pretty easily kicks away the Stinkface as Piper gets inside with the coconut. That goes nowhere as a double superkick puts both guys down. Piper comes in again but gets coconuted to the head. The distraction is enough for O'Haire to hit the reverse Death Valley Driver for the pin.

Rating: D-. Terrible match of course but points for putting someone young over. I know the focus is on Piper (not a surprise) but at least they're trying to push someone fresh. I'd come up with something other than the Snuka vs. Piper feud from twenty years ago, though at least they don't have Snuka getting back in the ring. Yet at least.

Sable tells Stacy that Torrie kissed Test and even gave him the advance copy of Playboy a few weeks ago. I've started typing a few different things about how stupid this is but I think it speaks for itself. I mean....Eugene was presented as ten times smarter than Stacy in this segment.

Rob Van Dam likes being a champion but says it doesn't matter what happens tonight because Chief Morely (guest referee, as announced on Heat) won't let he and Kane retain. Kane says they'll take everyone down with them.

Raw Tag Team Titles: Rob Van Dam/Kane vs. Dudley Boyz

The Dudleys are defending and Morely is guest referee. Bubba jumps Van Dam from behind to start but a quick leg trip gets him out of trouble. A standoff slows things down but more importantly allows Van Dam to hit that signature pose. Bubba drops him with a right hand and does the same pose to a rather negative reaction. It's off to D-Von vs. Kane as this is already feeling like a glorified Raw match. The abundant amount of empty

chairs would seem to back up that theory.

A big boot gives Kane two and it's back to Bubba to change things up a bit. The fans want tables but have to settle for Kane getting two off a spinebuster instead. Morely hasn't been much of a factor so far. Van Dam's split legged moonsault is good for two but it's time for some good old fashioned cheating. D-Von comes in sans tag to draw Kane in as well, meaning Van Dam has to take What's Up.

It's off to a chinlock and Bubba actually comes in with a basement dropkick. Rob finally gets in a kick to the face and the hot tag brings in Kane. Everything breaks down and it's Rob's top rope kick to D-Von's face. Rolling Thunder hits Bubba but Kane comes back in with the top rope clothesline to D-Von.

Morely finally does something by hitting Kane low but a second swing hits Bubba in the jaw by mistake. That's enough for D-Von who beats on Morely but Lance Storm comes in with a springboard clothesline. Bubba dispatches Lance without too much effort and it's a 3D to Morely. Kane grabs a chokeslam on Bubba and the Five Star is enough for the pin from another referee.

Rating: C-. Overbooking aside, this wasn't half bad but it was really just a longer version of what they do on Raw most of the time. The story is out of gas at this point and unfortunately that ending is likely to see it continue for whatever reason. The division needs more teams and hopefully the evil French guys can help out a bit.

Since this story hasn't gone on long enough, Stacy goes to see Torrie, who says Test kissed her. Stacy doesn't buy it and a cat fight is on. I have no idea why most of these women are here when they're not on the card, nor why Ivory is in a towel despite not having a match.

Women's Title: Jazz vs. Trish Stratus

Trish is defending and comes in banged up. We get a staredown early on until Trish actually takes her down without too much effort. A backbreaker gets Jazz out of trouble and we hit the double chickenwing. Trish gets thrown down by the hair and Jazz sits on her ribs for good

measure. The comeback is short lived as Trish charges into a boot in the corner and the Stratusphere is countered into something like a super Styles Clash.

Jazz goes with a weak half crab but Trish reverses into the full thing. The Chick Kick gets two and Stratusfaction gets the same with Teddy Long throwing in a shoe (make your own Austin Powers joke) for the save. The referee believes that Teddy didn't do it, despite the fact that HE'S ONLY WEARING ONE SHOE! Trish tries a sunset flip but Jazz sits down on it and grabs the rope for the pin and the title.

Rating: C+. Rather solid match with a finish that felt like it belonged in the NWA. Above all else though they both looked comfortable out there, which is a big step up from most of the women around this company. Good little match here and the finish should hopefully help set up some fresh challengers for the title in the not so distant future.

Booker, Shawn and Nash agree to trust each other but Nash wants HHH for himself. Well they would be the only ones to want that match.

We recap Big Show vs. Rey Mysterio, which is entirely built around a single 619 that knocked Show down. For some reason, this warrants a pay per view match.

Big Show vs. Rey Mysterio

Rey trips him down to start and Show is annoyed again, earning Mysterio a toss into the corner. One of the hardest chops you'll ever see or hear has Rey's eyes bugging out of the mask and he rolls outside. Back in and Show stands on the chest for a bit until Rey slips out of a gorilla press. Some right hands stagger Show but Rey heads outside again, this time for a chair. The referee is conveniently knocked away so Mysterio can get in a chair shot, followed by the springboard seated senton for two. A 619 to the leg sets up a 619 to the face but the West Coast Pop is countered into the chokeslam to give Show the pin.

Rating: D-. Well that happened. I have no idea why this needed to be on pay per view as they could have either done the exact same thing on Smackdown or had Mysterio face Matt Hardy for the Cruiserweight Title

here. But no, the solution was to give Big Show a squash win, likely so he can have a big match next month. And of course Mysterio is the only person you can put in here against him because you can't have show win a competitive match against a name of equal value (Benoit would have been a better choice). Putting this on pay per view in this form was ridiculous and more booking that makes my head hurt.

Mysterio does a stretcher job but Show picks him up and swings the backboard (with Rey still attached) against the post. Just in case you didn't get the entire idea from the match you see. The bump looked great though.

HHH, Ric Flair and Chris Jericho are ready for the wholesome trio tonight.

Torrie and Stacy get in another fight until Scott Steiner saves Stacy. Test FINALLY returns to yell at Steiner for carry Stacy to the trainer.

We recap Brock Lesnar vs. John Cena. Lesnar won the title at Wrestlemania and Cena has been calling him out both before and since the title win. Cena then won a tournament to earn the shot so it's an actually well built match. Unfortunately it's also the biggest match on the Smackdown side and feels like a slightly glorified TV main event.

Smackdown World Title: Brock Lesnar vs. John Cena

Cena comes out in a Yankees jersey which must have his skin crawling. His rap talks about how he's going to be added to the list of great champions, meaning he's crazy like Mankind and coming at you from so many angles that you'll call him Kurt. Cena jumps him at the bell and slugs away but you can only do that for so long against Brock. Two backbreakers into a fall away slam has Cena in trouble and Brock at the cut on his forehead from Smackdown.

A front facelock keeps Cena in trouble as Tazz goes into his rare yet useful explanation of how to get out of a hold. Brock stomps away in the corner and there's a gorilla press for good measure. Cena wisely bails out to the floor and grabs a chair but settles for throwing Lesnar into the steps instead. The cut is busted open so Cena slugs away back inside.

A running shoulder sends Lesnar to the apron and there's the middle rope Fameasser to put him fully outside.

Back in and we hit a chinlock for a good while before a DDT gives Cena two. Lesnar grabs a spinebuster to put both guys down for a breather as Cole starts talking about momentum. Tazz thinks whoever is up first might have the advantage. Thanks for that analysis there buddy. Cena is back up with a chinlock and a bodyscissors for a rather long while.

Back up and Cena gets driven into the corner for the break and it's comeback time. Some clotheslines and a powerslam give Lesnar two. Cena is smart enough to almost send Lesnar into the referee, allowing John to hit a low blow for two more. It's chain time but a quick F5 retains the title.

Rating: C-. Pretty watchable match (save for that long chinlock) but there was no hiding the fact that Cena was in way over his head and had almost no chance to win the title. Lesnar did what he could and sold a lot, though there's only so much you can do when the ending is never in doubt. Cena would have his day of course but it just wasn't here yet.

We recap the six man tag, which was all about who is Nash's best friend. In other words, it's a story that all of five people are interested in and for some reason we have to do this six man tag instead of HHH vs. Booker T. II here and Nash doing his hair somewhere instead. This is little more than a pit stop before Nash gets his big singles title match that isn't interest in and no one wants to see anyway. This gets the music video treatment because it's the big match in the eyes of the people who matter the most around here.

Kevin Nash/Shawn Michaels/Booker T. vs. HHH/Ric Flair/Chris Jericho

Nash wants to start with HHH but thankfully we do Shawn vs. Jericho instead. Jericho punches away in the corner but Shawn speeds things up and starts a pinfall reversal sequence. A Walls attempt is broken up and it's off to Nash to hammer on the arm. Jericho skins the cat (I still want to know how it got that name) but Nash is smart enough to be right there with a big boot.

It's off to Booker, who scores with a kick to HHH's jaw, only to get caught in the facebuster. The spinebuster puts Booker down and it's off to Flair for the old school portion. Shawn comes in off a missed elbow drop and house is quickly cleaned. Sweet Chin Music connects but HHH is right there with a Pedigree for the save. HHH and Flair take turns beating on Shawn until it's off to Jericho for a hard belly to back.

Now the villains start in on the knee but an enziguri puts Flair down. That's enough for the hot tag to Nash and we get the showdown with HHH. I'm sure the fans are all going to start cheering as soon as the shock wears off so ignore that silence thing. Snake Eyes and the side slam are good for two on HHH with Flair making the save. The chops have no effect with Nash fixing his hair while Ric fires them off.

Everything breaks down and Booker ax kicks Jericho to set up the Spinarooni. Sweet Chin Music is broken up and Flair grabs the Figure Four as Nash loads up the announcers' table. He comes in for the save instead (how nice of him) but shoves Flair into the referee. The sledgehammer to the head puts Nash away.

Rating: D. So yeah, instead of doing HHH vs. Booker and Shawn vs. Jericho or Flair, we're stuck with HHH beating Nash to likely set up HHH vs. Nash for the title. As usual, 2003 makes my head hurt and somehow we're not even close to done with this story. The match wasn't the worst by any stretch but sweet goodness it was boring and not the way to make me want to see anything else on Raw.

We look back at Mysterio being destroyed in case you didn't get the idea the first time.

The update on Rey: there is no update.

Long recap of Rock vs. Goldberg, which doesn't really have much of a story. Rock is coming off beating Steve Austin at Wrestlemania and Goldberg just showed up to attack him. The match was agreed to and Goldberg has been chasing him since. It's basically Rock being a huge star and someone getting to beat him before he heads to Hollywood permanently.

Rock says he'll win and doesn't care much about Goldberg. This felt like nothing but the time filler that it was. The fans chant for Rock all over again.

The Rock vs. Goldberg

The entrances take a long time and Rock hits the floor before the bell as they're hitting the stall button hard here. They stare each other down as the match hasn't actually started yet. We're finally ready to go after several minutes of killing time, which isn't what this show needed. Goldberg shoves him away off the lockup, which isn't that surprising as Rock isn't known as a power guy.

They do it again with Rock falling to the floor this time around. Back in and Rock slaps him in the face, only to get run over with a shoulder. Rock bails again as the announcers debate music. We hit another long stall until Rock snaps him throat first across the top. Goldberg grabs a Rock Bottom but takes way too long on the spear, allowing Rock to send him into the post. The Sharpshooter goes on for a bit before Rock goes with a low blow.

That means nothing either and it's a spear to cut Rock down. No Jackhammer though as Goldberg gets two off a slam instead. Good grief END THIS SHOW ALREADY. Rock hits a spear of his own (called a spinebuster by Coach, which isn't that far off actually) and the Rock Bottom gets two. Now the spinebuster actually connects and the People's Elbow gets two more. Goldberg pops up, hits a spear, ignores the GOLDBERG SUCKS chant, adds a second spear, and finishes with the Jackhammer.

Rating: D-. This was about as dumb as they could have gone with Goldberg doing the same kind of match that every WWE main eventer has with the multiple finishers and trading moves instead of doing the formula that got him over in the first place. It was a completely terrible debut match with Rock's selling alone completely outshining everything Goldberg did.

Compare this Goldberg match to his recent return (true story: he wrestled more in this match than in a match, a Royal Rumble appearance, a title win and a title defense) and look at which got better reactions, more entertaining matches and just more success overall. It's not hard to

figure out why one was better than the other and a lot of it has to do with booking Goldberg like Goldberg and not like any other star.

Overall Rating: F. The problem here is much more based around this show not being necessary, at least not in this form. The Smackdown stuff was completely unnecessary with most of the blue matches being TV worthy at best and horrible at worst. If you can't even fit Chris Benoit, Matt Hardy and Undertaker on the show (yet there was time for FOUR Stacy/Test/Torrie segments), just cut the Smackdown part out and let it be a Raw pay per view. Turn the six man into HHH vs. Booker II for the title and do Shawn vs. Jericho II with Jericho getting his win back while Nash is guest enforcer or something.

Then there's the show itself, which peaked at a just somewhat above average Team Angle vs. Los Guerreros opener. The wrestling was terrible throughout with matches either not needing to exist or being so uninteresting that there was no reason to care about them. This show felt like it was running overtime and didn't even make it to two hours and forty five minutes. It was an awful show which could have either been a standalone Raw show or just not existed and I don't think anyone would have really noticed. Just awful stuff all around and a really bad sign of things to come.

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