

Monday Night Raw – April 28, 2003: Timing Isn't Their Strong Suit

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 28, 2003

Location: FleetCenter, Boston, Massachusetts

Commentators: Jonathan Coachman, Jerry Lawler

It's the night after Backlash and that means it's time to start the build towards Kevin Nash vs. HHH, which will be built off a combination of Nash and HHH's long and storied off screen friendship as well as HHH pinning Nash last night at the pay per view. Somehow, that's as good as it's getting at the moment. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence, with a big red X over Austin's picture. That's a nice touch.

Here's Chris Jericho to say that since Roddy Piper and Piper's Pit sucks, it's time for the most thrilling man in this company to have his own show. Therefore, it's time for the debut episode of the Hi-Lite Reel, with a very special first guest: GOLDBERG. Jericho talks about their history together in WCW and all the times that Goldberg refused to fight him.

Goldberg is willing to make up for lost time but Jericho backs off because he's just an interviewer at the moment. He'd like to know why Goldberg left his quiet life at home to come here but Christian comes out to cut them off. Since Rock is gone, it's pretty clear that he's the new People's Champion. Christian rips on the Red Sox and asks Goldberg what it's like to be booted.

Goldberg doesn't mind because these people can cheer him or boo him and he's cool with it (Where have I heard this before?). He's here to do a job and threatens to spear everyone but Jericho brings up no one wanting Goldberg here. This brings out Rico, 3 Minute Warning, Steven Richards

and Victoria, none of whom want Goldberg around.

Christian lists off the reasons it should be him getting this push but Goldberg tells him to bring it. The group all teases coming to the ring but only Richards actually gets in, earning himself a spear. As usual, Goldberg feels completely out of place saying more than two words but that's WWE for you: turn everyone into your style of a wrestler, no matter if they're a once in a lifetime talent.

The Hurricane vs. Chief Morely

Feeling out process to start with the Chief doing Hurricane's pose. Hurricane grabs the cape and wraps it around himself for a Val Venis hip swivel and now it's on. They trade some rollups for two each until Hurricane works on some basic holds. The announcers debate superpowers and of course Lawler picks X-Ray vision. Coach: "Then you'd just be looking at the bones King." Lawler: "...WHAT?"

Morely's butterfly suplex puts Hurricane down and Val cranks on the arms. A spinebuster gives the Chief a delayed two but a suplex is countered into the Eye of the Hurricane for a break. Back up and the Shining Wizard is countered into the Blue Thunder Bomb, which still can't get a pin on anyone. The Money Shot misses though and the Overcast puts Morely away.

Rating: C+. Nice little match here with Hurricane finally getting a clean win instead of all these flukes that don't take him anywhere. He can wrestle a good match and the fans love his antics so I don't know why they're so skeptical to give him more wins like this. As usual, Morely is more than capable of having a fine match and that's a very valuable asset to have.

Ric Flair sucks up to HHH, who sucks up right back. Tonight, HHH has gotten them a Tag Team Title match.

Here are Teddy Long and Rodney Mack to say that Larry Bird wouldn't have had a chance as a black man. Teddy is all about giving people a chance so let's have another Five Minute White Boy Challenge.

Rodney Mack vs. Willy Harrington

Mack pounds away in the corner as Long, on commentary, talks about the Atlanta Zoo. Willy avoids a charge in the corner but gets caught in a heck of an STO. An Oklahoma Stampede ends Willy in less than two minutes.

Post match Teddy brings out Jazz, who changed Backlash into Blacklash. Balloons fall and we have a quick celebration as Trish Stratus watches from the back. She leaves and reveals Tommy Dreamer and I believe Jonah from Tough Enough awkwardly sitting behind her.

After a break, Trish comes in to see Bischoff about a rematch with Jazz, but for some reason she doesn't have a guaranteed rematch. Eric agrees and offers her a match where if she wins, she gets a title shot. The match will be with Bischoff, but if she loses, she has to sleep with him. Again, this really doesn't fit Bischoff. Trish agrees.

Test is still trying to talk his way out of trouble with Stacy Keibler but isn't cool with teaming with Scott Steiner tonight.

Tag Team Titles: Rob Van Dam/Kane vs. Ric Flair/HHH

Flair/HHH are challenging. Kane throws Flair around to start and press slams him for good measure. It's off to Rob who gets to kick HHH down and then dive onto both villains. We cut to Shawn Michaels in the back, saying that someone in the ring is a sitting duck, sending us to a break.

Back with Van Dam kicking away at HHH, which is the champ's version of putting someone over. Flair offers a distraction though and it's a spinebuster so HHH can take over. We hit the stomping in the corner, followed by the jumping knee to the face for two. It's time for the leg work to begin with the knee being wrapped around the post and HHH slapping on the Indian Deathlock (You thought you were free of that one didn't you?). Rob finally kicks HHH away and the hot tag brings in Kane to clean house.

A series of clotheslines, including the top rope variety, gets two on Flair with HHH diving in for a save. HHH throws in a chop block so Flair can put on the Figure Four but this time it's Rob making the save. A bad looking Pedigree hits Kane but here's Kevin Nash (you mess with one Diesel you mess with all of them) with a sledgehammer. Nash chases HHH

off, leaving Flair to take the chokeslam and Five Star to retain the titles.

Rating: D+. Pretty dull match and, again, it's all about HHH vs. Nash, despite the complete lack of interest in that feud. The champs getting a win here is fine and at least they weren't completely done when Nash came in. Van Dam and Kane are really good in this kind of role but they need an actual team to feud with in a hurry.

HHH runs through the back and dives into a limo with Nash right behind him. It takes four shots with the hammer to break the window, which is finally enough to make the limo drive off. I'm assuming Shawn was talking to Nash about HHH? That's rather unnecessary and added absolutely nothing.

Christopher Nowinski/Rico vs. Scott Steiner/Test

Nowinski forearm Steiner in the back to start and somehow busts Scott's forehead open. A belly to belly sends Chris outside and it's off to Rico to take the beating for him. Steiner gets posted but is still able to suplex his way out of Rico's sleeper. Of course Test is outside yelling at Stacy, leaving Steiner to take a double suplex. Another suplex sends Nowinski flying though and the hot tag brings in Test. Everything breaks down and Rico kicks away at Test, only to have Steiner hit his reverse DDT for the pin on Nowinski.

Rating: D. This is really the best use of their TV time? I liked Test back in the Attitude Era but sweet goodness he's just there at this point. That being said, seeing Steiner fall this far in such a short amount of time is amazing. We're to the point where a win over Rico wasn't a guarantee for him, which isn't something you would ever expect to see.

Steiner hits his catchphrase but La Resistance makes their debut to interrupt. We see a clip from two weeks back with Steiner running down anyone who disagreed with the Iraq War and running down France. French is spoken and Steiner gets beaten down.

Morely tells Bischoff that everything is ready and the Dudleys are

suspended after last night's events. Eric is going to get stratusfied tonight.

Goldberg runs into Booker T. in the back and they reminisce about the old times, like when they nearly kill each other. Booker is ready for Christian tonight.

Christian vs. Booker T.

Booker headlocks him to start and gets two off a clothesline. Some choking in the corner cuts him off though and it turns into the punching and kicking match you would expect. Christian gets two off a dropkick and we're off to a chinlock. More choking on the ropes fires Booker back up and a sidewalk slam gets two. Booker grabs a spinebuster and hits the ax kick but here's 3 Minute Warning for the DQ.

Rating: D. This was about as flat of a match as you could have as they just did basic stuff until the Samoans came in for the beatdown. The story of the match seems to be setting up the post match stuff with Goldberg making the save because that's what Goldberg needed in wrestling: friends.

Rico and Christian make it a 4-1 beatdown until Goldberg makes the save. The Jackhammer to Jamal and a spear to send Rosey through the barricade are impressive, though is this really all they can do with Goldberg the night after he beat the Rock? Really?

Trish Stratus vs. Eric Bischoff

Before we get going, Bischoff makes it No DQ. Eric does the Karate Kid pose (THAT'S TOO FAR) and gets Chick Kicked for his efforts. Cue Victoria to jump Trish but she gets knocked outside in pretty short order. Now it's Jazz to really beat Trish down, including the double chickenwing. Bischoff says that's enough because we want to make sure she stays conscious. With a promise to teach her a thing or two tonight, he gets the pin to end the angle disguised as a match.

A few seconds after the match ends, a limo arrives containing Linda McMahon. Suddenly Bischoff orders the referees to help her up as we go to

a break. Back with that sweet Wrestlemania X theme playing Linda to the ring. She's been talking to the Board of Directors and they have a message for Bischoff, who has to come back out here. Bischoff immediately sucks up and says he was kidding about the stuff with Trish.

That kind of talk makes her job here so easy because he's been abusive and harassing, bordering on ego-maniacal. Therefore, a co-General Manager will be sharing power with Bischoff. He's someone who has a better feel for the audience and the common man. Of course it's Austin, who thinks they can make this work. Bischoff isn't convinced, despite all of the WHAT treatment. A handshake sets up the Stunner to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. I get the idea of bringing Austin back but is it really the right time with Goldberg trying to be turned into the top face of the show? Austin hasn't even been gone a month yet and I'm not sure you really need to be bringing him back less than a month after Goldberg debuts to a lukewarm reception. I can't imagine they're pulling the plug on Goldberg already, but he doesn't seem to be in the best place this soon into his run.

The rest of the show was the usual drek from this time, though at least HHH vs. Nash was mostly confined to just one segment instead of carrying it on and on for hours at a time. There's very little to interest the fans at this point and Austin isn't going to do a ton of good as he's going to get a lot of the focus despite not being able to get in the ring. Not a good show but that's all you can expect from this period.

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