

Smackdown – May 8, 2003: In Which I Ask Many Questions

Smackdown

Date: May 8, 2003

Location: Metro Centre, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

Commentators: Tazz, Michael Cole

With the pay per view right around the corner, it might be nice if they set up a few more matches. There's only a few things set up already and unfortunately we're likely in for more of the Mr. America story dominating the show. Last week's segment was fine, but I have a feeling it's going to overstay its welcome in a hurry. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of the Mr. America story, which somehow seems to focus on Stephanie. Vince has vowed to take the mask off of America and prove it's really Hogan.

Opening sequence.

Here's Vince to get things going. He's had a change of heart so tonight Hogan is going to be here tonight...via satellite from Tampa, Florida. That means Mr. America won't be here because they're clearly the same person. Even Canadians could figure something like this out. The YOU SCREWED Bret chants start up with Cole saying that means Bret Hart. Thanks Mikey. Vince: "You're right I did and I'll screw every one of you if you just give me the chance!"

This brings out Stephanie with Vince demanding to know why she signed Mr. America. She did it for the fans because she had heard about how big a star he was and all his experience. Vince wants to know why she did this, which Stephanie says was to counter Bischoff's attempts to sign Mr. America, which is why he got the iron clad deal. The only way to break the contract is to prove that Mr. America is Hogan. That's cool with Vince and he has Stephanie leave so he can interview Hogan from Tampa.

We go live via satellite to Hogan's office, featuring a prominently

displayed copy of his new book on the shelf, what appears to be a Divas swimsuit magazine on the table and....a really big Home Depot catalog/book? Hogan says he wants to be back in front of the crowd because it's killing him to not be out there.

He'd love to team up with Mr. America one day, even if there are some physical similarities between the two. Of course Hogan's Pythons are bigger and he's much better looking. Vince laughs it off and says we should see Mr. America right here in Nova Scotia. Hogan looks upset but quotes George Washington by saying he cannot tell a lie. There's a chance that Mr. America will show up tonight, which is an idea that Vince loves.

I have SO many questions. Who in the world was telling Stephanie all this stuff about Mr. America without mentioning THAT IT WAS HULK HOGAN??? Who would have seen Mr. America wrestle in person and called Stephanie to tell her about him? Are we supposed to buy that Hogan was just off working independent promotions throughout his career under a mask?

Stephanie said she was told he had a lot of experience, which would suggest he's been doing this for awhile. So some people who she apparently trusts called her and told her to sign this guy who Eric Bischoff was interested in as well but apparently either didn't realize that it was Hogan or didn't know/care about Vince banning Hogan from wrestling? Was Bischoff just going to sign Mr. America and hope Vince didn't notice? Or did he have the same stupid sources too?

In theory this would have been a long term plan from Hogan but he was sent home on April 3 and the first vignette played on April 17. That would suggest that Mr. America was signed during that two week period as Stephanie couldn't advertise him until he was signed. So he and Bischoff heard about Mr. American, got obsessed with signing him sight unseen, got into a bidding war to sign him, and then signed him in less than two weeks?

Back to the sources who hyped up Mr. America, did they sound like a San Francisco barber, a mouth from the south and a nasty sensation by any chance? Or did Hogan start doing this months ago on the off chance he lost at Wrestlemania? Oh and did Hogan sign the other contract "Mr.

America"? And is he now getting two checks? There are so many questions I kind of need answered about this whole shindig. Unless this whole thing is Stephanie and Hogan being in cahoots with each other, this story really doesn't make much sense.

Post break, Vince is told that Mr. America is here. So wait: did Mr. America pay off the production staff to lie and say they weren't in Florida? Was the tape a fake? Did Hogan convince them all to fly back to Canada, set up a room to look like his office and then show up later? Why am I thinking about this more than I did in any class in college?

Matt Hardy vs. Eddie Guerrero

Non-title. Matt hates waking up before noon and eats slowly to savor his food. Eddie headlocks him down to start and the fans are entirely behind Guerrero. A springboard...something that seemed to have been edited gives Eddie two but Matt sends him chest first into the middle buckle to take over.

Back to back Side Effects set up a Ricochet for two on Eddie. The middle rope legdrop is broken up though and Eddie rolls some suplexes. Matt avoids the frog splash but can't get the Twist of Fate. Instead it's a middle rope legdrop to the back of the head for two. Matt tries another Side Effect, only to get rolled up (sweet) for the fast pin.

Rating: C. Matt was trying here, though I'm not sure what the point is in having a champion lose over and over. There are other heels you could have in this spot to protect the title but it's not like there's anyone around to challenge him for it at the moment. They could develop some more talent for the division but it's not likely anytime soon.

Team Angle runs out and steals the gold medals back from Los Guerreros.

Big Show is with the FBI for some reason when some production guys carry a piece of equipment. As they walk by, a good sized guy in a blue mask can be seen.

Brian Kendrick vs. Jamie Noble

Brian is now officially Brian "Spanky" Kendrick. Before the match,

Kendrick gets a CENA SUCKS chant going in honor of last week. Kendrick flips out of a wristlock to start and nips up into a kick to the chest. Sliced Bread #2 is broken up though and Kendrick is tossed outside where Nidia gets in a few kicks to the ribs.

Back in and a cravate doesn't keep Kendrick in trouble for very long but a half crab has some more success. Kendrick fights up for a bit, only to get tossed into the corner for his efforts. An enziguri gives Kendrick two but he has to bail out of a moonsault. That's fine as he lands on his feet and grabs Sliced Bread #2 for the pin.

Rating: C+. This didn't have much time but they packed in some good stuff. As usual, these guys could be tearing the house down for the Cruiserweight Title but for some reason Matt is stuck as a midcard jobber. Let some of these guys have ten minutes somewhere and see what they can do, perhaps in a pay per view title match. Really, what could it hurt?

Cena is watching in the back when Mr. America comes up. John doesn't believe his eyes.

We see the whole Big Show attacking Rey Mysterio scene from Backlash. Mysterio will be back next week.

Brock Lesnar is ready to team with Chris Benoit against A-Train and Big Show. As for the title match with Big Show, let's make it a stretcher match. Do you know what that means? At Judgment Day, Big Show is leaving on a stretcher.

Vince is getting coffee when Funaki comes up to say Mr. America is here. The boss insists that he's an impostor and makes Funaki make the coffee.

Here's Mr. America as the first fifteen minutes of the show just wasn't enough time. Vince and Stephanie are watching from a small office with what looks like the same furniture from Austin and Bischoff's office last night. Even the plant is the same. Anyway, Vince insists that this is an impostor.

America finally starts talking and we cut to Vince's panicked face. Back

in the arena, America insists that he's not Hulk Hogan. No, he's actually a former 165lb accountant from Hoboken, New Jersey who bought Wrestlemania to see Hogan. There was something about Hogan that made him want to get in the gym and now he's the physical specimen he is now. So he was 6'6 and 165lbs? That's quite the odd visual.

Anyway here comes Vince to say that mask is coming off and Stephanie is going to come out here and make it happen. A quick distraction lets Vince get in a low blow but he can't get the mask off. America shoves him away and right into Stephanie, who is knocked cold. The boss gets knocked to the floor and America carries Stephanie to the back. I'm guessing you can now add Stephanie to the list of people this story shouldn't be about but will be anyway.

During the break, Stephanie was getting medical attention when Vince stormed in. She blames him for the injuries, of course. Vince freaks out and yells about Hogan.

Dawn Marie vs. Torrie Wilson

Sable is out to watch. They do a catfight for a bit until Torrie gets a sunset flip for the pin in less than a minute.

Post match Sable challenges Torrie to a bikini contest at the pay per view. Torrie unzips her gear to reveal a bra, which seems to be a yes. Considering Torrie is currently in Playboy and her entrance video is mainly her in bikinis, I'm not sure why someone is going to pay to see her in another swimsuit. The same is pretty much true of Sable but WWE doesn't like to use common sense all the time.

Video on Kurt Angle.

Team Angle vs. Rikishi/Tajiri

Non-title. Rikishi knocks Charlie to the floor to start and sits on his chest for trying a sunset flip. He's no Torrie Wilson. Tajiri comes in for a spinwheel kick to Shelton but Charlie offers a cheap shot to take over. A hard superkick drops Charlie though and the hot tag brings in Rikishi. Cole actually tries to convince us that Rikishi only weighs

350lbs, which might be the case if you cut off his upper half. Everything breaks down and Rikishi superkicks Haas and Tajiri adds the Tarantula. Shelton pulls Rikishi out though and it's the superkick into the jackknife cover to put Tajiri away.

Rating: D+. The time issue strikes again as there's only so much you can do with less than five minutes. Well that and with Rikishi in the match as he's getting bigger and bigger every single week. I'm still not sure why Tajiri isn't used in a more prominent role as he's solid in the ring but stuck in jobbing roles like this one.

Los Guerreros run out and steal the picture of Angle and the gold medals.

John Cena vs. Rhino

Kendrick is on commentary. Before the match, Cena promises to rip the nose off the rhinoceros and make him need a gynecologist. Rhino hammers on him to start and kicks Cena in the side of the head to send Cena outside. Back in and Cena scores with a suplex before cranking on Rhino's arms. Rhino slugs away but gets caught by the Throwback for two. Cena is back up in a hurry but walks into the spinebuster. Rhino is down though so Cena goes for the chain. It's Kendrick making the save though, allowing Rhino to grab a rollup for the pin.

Rating: D+. Not a bad little power match here and it advances the entertaining Kendrick vs. Cena feud. Rhino was playing it mostly even with Cena so it didn't even feel like the last second fluke win. Cena needs a good win to keep his momentum though as he lost to Lesnar and is in a much lower level feud with Kendrick. I'm sure he'll be fine though.

Cena goes after Kendrick and avoids a Gore from Rhino, who hits the steps instead.

The FBI is planning something.

Judgment Day rundown.

Lesnar is on his way to the ring when he runs into Nunzio, who wants more respect. Nunzio hits him and gets Brock to run into a room, which the FBI barricades with a forklift. So he's kind of dumb too? Big Show and A-

Train are rather pleased and Show says he's going to face Benoit on his own. Is there a reason Lesnar isn't banging on the door to try to get out?

Chris Benoit vs. Big Show

Show has a stretcher with Mysterio, Benoit and Lesnar's names on it. Benoit gets right in his face and is promptly chopped back down. Some shots to Show's leg and head are shrugged off and it's a big side slam to put him down. There's a delayed suplex as Cole says Andre the Giant vs. Killer Khan was in 1986 (1981 really). Benoit fights out of a bearhug and dropkicks the knee, setting up the Swan Dive. The Crossface is broken up as A-Train distracts Benoit with the stretcher. That's enough to set up the chokeslam and give Show the pin.

Rating: D. This was just a step above a squash though at least they kept it quick. Show beating Benoit with some help is an acceptable enough of a way to build him up for Lesnar, though the stretcher thing is another lame gimmick that feels very tacked on. They'd be better with something like Last Man Standing or a street fight or something but we get this lame idea instead. Also was there really a need to announce the tag match for an hour and a half and then switch it to a singles match at the last minute?

Benoit gets beaten down until Lesnar makes the save, only to take a beating of his own to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. The wrestling in the first half of the show saves it from being a failure but the overkill of Mr. America is already getting to be a lot. Aside from the litany of holes in the story's logic, you can only assume that we're heading towards America vs. Piper or McMahon (like O'Haire would get that spot). It's probably going to be Piper and the thought of that makes my skin crawl. The story is fine for something simple that gets a few minutes a week but this was close to a quarter of the show. That's too much for almost any story, especially one that doesn't have a lot of depth like this one.

The rest of the show is up and down with some good matches that very little but not much in the storytelling department. Los Guerreros vs.

Team Angle over Eddie and Chavo stealing stuff isn't all that interesting and Sable vs. Torrie is what it is. That leaves you with Lesnar vs. Show, which isn't doing much for the champ at all. Lesnar really needs a top opponent and Big Show just isn't that person. Angle and Undertaker coming back will help things out but Lesnar has already beaten both of them. It might be, gulp, time to elevate someone for more than a month at a time.

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