

Smackdown – August 7, 2003: Obvious Isn't Bad

Smackdown

Date: August 7, 2003

Location: Skyreach Place, Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada

Commentators: Tazz, Michael Cole

Smackdown has some work to do to catch up with Raw, which announced an Elimination Chamber match for the upcoming Summerslam. Tonight Smackdown has a big match of its own though with Brock Lesnar vs. Vince McMahon in a cage with Kurt Angle as guest referee. Why that's a big deal isn't clear, but note that we'll be having two McMahons in main events this week, meaning the ratings should be through the roof. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Kurt Angle giving Brock a rematch for the title but being cut off by Vince. For some reason Vince agreed to face Brock in a cage tonight. You really can feel the shenanigans coming here and in this case that works best. Just because you can see the ending doesn't mean it's a bad thing.

Opening sequence.

Chris Benoit vs. Eddie Guerrero

Non-title despite Benoit asking for the title to be on the line. Eddie picks the leg to start and they hit the mat for a technical sequence as you might have expected from these two. The Canadian fans are VERY pro-Benoit (well duh) but an Eddie chant pops up as well because Eddie is just on another level at this point.

Benoit backdrops his way out of a wristlock and Eddie bails to the ropes before Benoit can grab a hold of his own. Instead some insanely loud chops have Eddie begging for time out but he's still able to snapmare him down and take over again. A slingshot hilo and belly to back suplex give Eddie two and it's off to an armbar.

Back up and Benoit grabs a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker (stealing both Eddie's move and gimmick), followed by a very hard powerbomb. Cue Rhyno to break up the Swan Dive but Benoit avoids the frog splash. A dive takes Rhyno down, only to have Tajiri come in and take Eddie down for the DQ.

Rating: C+. Even with the lame ending, Eddie vs. Benoit in any form is worth seeing. They didn't have very long here but they managed to get something out of it because they're that popular. Having the Canadian fans cheer for Eddie shows you what kind of a roll he's on at the moment and that's an incredibly positive sign for Guerrero. It's also a good sign that they were doing the technical stuff here, making the US Title feel more like the wrestlers' title. Almost no title has an identity and this one having such a thing and doing it well so far hopefully is a sign of things to come.

They keep brawling but Sgt. Slaughter of all people (like Stephanie would lower herself to this) says we're going to restart this as a tag match. Now I need to see Slaughter doing the Teddy Long dance.

Chris Benoit/Tajiri vs. Rhyno/Eddie Guerrero

Joined in progress with Benoit getting the Crossface on Rhyno and Eddie having to make a save. Eddie comes in legally with a hurricanrana but Tajiri makes a save this time around. A baseball slide dropkick takes Eddie's knee out and now Tajiri can come in legally. The handspring elbow drops Rhyno as they're working a very nice pace to start things off.

Tajiri goes after Eddie but gets run over by Rhyno. That just earns him a Tarantula but Eddie is there with a dropkick for his own save. Rhyno actually puts on a Sharpshooter, drawing Benoit in to protect Canada's honor. He's fine with Eddie's half crab though, suggesting that he's not much of a Lance Storm fan. Rhyno comes in for some forearms as Benoit's save attempt goes nowhere.

Instead it's Eddie getting backdropped to the floor and Tajiri makes the tag, albeit thanks to Rhyno knocking him into Benoit. With Benoit on the floor, Rhyno powerbombs Tajiri but gets misted (with the referee looking at them). Eddie didn't see the tag and frog splashes the illegal Tajiri, only to get caught in the Crossface for the tap.

Rating: B-. It was certainly a creative ending and odds are this sets up a big title match, perhaps with all four fighting at the same time. As mentioned earlier, this is the kind of wrestling that makes the show a lot more interesting and I'd really like to see it happen a lot more often. Benoit and Eddie are the wrestlers so it's a smart idea to throw in a striker like Tajiri and a power guy like Rhyno to really even things out.

Josh Matthews (looking as stupid as I've ever seen him with two necklaces and an earring) asks Kurt Angle about some rumors, but Kurt cuts him off. Kurt has been hearing rumors about Josh, scotch tape, two midgets and a picture of Justin Timberlake that still keeps him up nights. He's heard the rumors about Brock, who he still considers a friend. A big stupid friend at times, but still a friend. They're going to resolve their issues face to face though.

Zach Gowen vs. Nunzio

Matt Hardy, who puts ketchup on one fry at a time and is a better commentator than Michael Cole, is on commentary and brought Shannon Moore with him. Gowen takes him down to the mat to start but is easily powered into the corner. Nunzio grabs the leg and mocks his inability to sweep the other leg as Matt complains about having to share the stage with a sideshow freak. As cruel as he sounds, there's really nothing wrong about what he says.

A quick leglock is broken up and Nunzio sends him outside. Gowen gets turned inside out with a clothesline and we hit the chinlock. Matt: "Everybody knows that Matt Hardy's career has more legs underneath it than Zach Gowen's.". Back up and Nunzio crotches himself and a middle rope moonsault hits him in the ropes. A leg lariat and a middle rope Fameasser both get the same. Gowen grabs a neckbreaker but has to elbow Shannon down, allowing Nunzio to hit a top rope dropkick for the pin.

Rating: C-. That's on a bit of a sliding scale and that's the problem: you have to adjust everything for Gowen and the matches are only going to be so good. He has to have a select group of opponents and his offense is almost all based around that one leg. It's nothing special in the first

place and when your entire character is based around your one trait, it's not like you have much of a shelf life. Gowen is incredible impressive, but this isn't going to work for very long.

Post match, Gowen takes another Twist of Fate.

Undertaker finds Sable sitting on Vince's laugh and asks her to leave. He's not happy with Vince sending A-Train after Stephanie so the little "oil hoochie" could get a win at Vengeance. If Undertaker was part of the family, he'd have already beaten the heck out of Vince. The boss is about to tell Undertaker what he can do with that opinion when Funaki comes running in to say Brock has been attacked. Angle and the FBI are near him and Vince gives Kurt a look without saying anything. You can feel the twist coming from here and it's still working just fine.

Undertaker vs. John Cena

Undertaker beat him at Vengeance in a match that hurt a lot of Cena's credibility. Cena's rap implies he wants to force sexual acts onto Undertaker. The big man wastes no time in sending him into the corner and the slow beating begins. He starts in on Cena's shoulder as the fans think Cena sucks. A hard clothesline looks to set up Old School but Cena pulls him down, somehow knowing what to expect.

Cena starts in on the knee, only to get his arm pulled down again. A lifting wristlock keeps Undertaker in trouble as they must have a long time here. Now Old School connects and the slow paced beating heads outside. Totally one sided so far. Back in and Undertaker actually takes him all the way to the top for a superplex but Undertaker bangs up his own ribs.

Back from a break with Cena in control and pounding on the ribs. They had something here with Cena having such a basic offense but sticking with it because it was the most logical thing he had. Undertaker shrugs it off and posts Cena on the floor because he's had enough of being on defense for now. In a good example of everything wrong with commentary, Cole keeps mentioning the bad ribs and Tazz yells at him for saying it over and over. Heaven forbid he tell a story or something.

The Throwback gives Cena two but a big boot and elbow give Undertaker the same. Cena's spinebuster goes back to the ribs but Undertaker mounts him for some rights and lefts. The Last Ride is broken up and the ref is bumped. Now didn't we all know something like that was coming? The chokeslam gets no cover and it's A-Train coming in for a bicycle kick and a backbreaker. That's only good for two on Undertaker so he tries the Tombstone, only to get reversed into the FU for the pin.

Rating: D+. They really didn't need this much time, especially with the arm work going nowhere. Undertaker vs. A-Train isn't going to be much to see and this seemed to be more about setting that up than helping Cena. That being said, it helped a lot to have Cena get the win off his own move instead of A-Train's. Cena needed a win like this and you knew full well they weren't giving Cena a clean pin, either here or at the pay per view. The match wasn't very good because of the slow pace and the ending didn't really help things.

Jamie Noble vs. Doug Basham

Shaniqua gives Doug a spank for inspiration and the announcers laugh the whole thing off. Jamie, apparently a face for getting to sleep with Torrie and Nidia (ok they've got something there), kicks Doug away but gets caught with some crossface shots to the head. A Vader Bomb elbow gives Doug two as Tazz goes on and on about what Shaniqua does with the Bashams.

The move that would become known as Wasteland gives Doug two and we hit the chinlock. Jamie fights up with a clothesline and dropkick for a near fall each. A top rope elbow looks to finish but Danny distracts the referee. Not that it matters as Jamie gets a small package for the pin.

Rating: D. Commentary made this one insufferable and I don't see it getting much better. I'm sure there was nothing better for WWE to do than spend years on the Bashams in OVW before bringing them up as unintentionally comedic sex characters. On top of that they're apparently feuding with a team that got together over group sex. Oh and the boss is having an affair with his mistress. You really shouldn't need so much of the same theme on one show.

Post match the beatdown is on until Billy Gunn makes the save.

Angle denies attacking Lesnar. I'd believe him.

Next week, Haas and Benjamin defend against Mysterio and Kidman. That would be another week where the Cruiserweight Title isn't so much as mentioned.

Rey Mysterio vs. Charlie Haas

Non-title of course. Haas takes him down without much effort to start and takes Rey's head off with a hard clothesline. A hard whip into the corner starts working on Rey's back and it's off to something like a torture rack with Tazz referencing the luchador Atlantis of all people. Back up and Charlie misses a charge, allowing Rey to hit a springboard flipping seated senton for two, followed by a springboard spinning crossbody (with Haas having to run over to catch him). The 619 connects but a hurricanrana is countered into the Haas of Pain for the tap.

Rating: C. Charlie got to show off here and a clean win over Mysterio is quite the accomplishment. It's a very good sign that both he and Benjamin can have solid singles matches and more proof of how great an amateur background is. Even if nothing else is working, just taking them down to the mat is a good way to get through parts of a match. Mysterio as a tag guy is fine, but get the title off of him already. The problem though is finding someone to put it on as the division basically doesn't exist. On a related note, what the heck happened to Ultimo Dragon? He was around all of two weeks and then vanished.

The cage is lowered.

We recap Brock's injury.

Angle leaves Vince's office.

Brock Lesnar vs. Vince McMahon

In a cage with Angle as guest referee. Brock looks banged up but is easily able to shove Vince down twice in a row. The F5 is loaded up but Brock collapses. Angle won't count the cover so Vince slaps him, earning

himself an ankle lock. Brock of course nips up and F5's Angle for the pretty obvious (not a bad thing) heel turn. No rating as the match doesn't really end and wasn't exactly a match in the first place.

A long, long beatdown ends the show. This is definitely the right move as Brock wasn't working as the good guy and Lesnar vs. Angle II with Lesnar as the heel could be a lot more interesting. One last note: Brock and Vince pose with the camera panning from Vince's face to Brock's, who looks completely maniacal with his eyes bugging out for a really creepy visual.

Overall Rating: C+. There's some very solid wrestling on here (see the first half hour) and Brock turning heel is a good move as Brock just wasn't working in the role. Him working as Vince's heavy is a far better use for his talents and gives him some new people to work against. At the same time though, anything below the midcard is basically death at the moment with stuff like Noble and Gunn being goofy wastes of time and Gowen still riding on momentum even though the foot was taken off the gas a long time ago. Get some better stuff on the bottom part of the card and Smackdown could be awesome all over again.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume VI: July – December 1999 in e-book or paperback. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2017/11/22/new-book-kbs-monday-nitro-and-thunder-reviews-volume-vi/>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>