

Smackdown – September 16, 1999: A Tale of Two Vince's



IMG Credit: WWE

Smackdown

Date: September 16, 1999

Location: Thomas & Mack Center, Las Vegas, Nevada

Attendance: 8,219

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler

This is only the fourth episode of the show and there's a big time main event which we'll get to soon enough. We're at the dying end of the Russo Era and that means things are going to be a little bit screwy. In other words, expect a lot of stuff going on at once but almost no good wrestling in sight. Let's get to it.

Earlier today, the referees were on strike. Why do wrestling companies think we care about referees?

Opening sequence, including a shot of Chris Jericho, who had only debuted about five weeks earlier. That's some fast turnaround.

Cole calls this "the hottest action adventure series" on network TV. Vince must have had a thing about that kind of term around this time.

Here's Steve Austin to get things going. Cole: "He is sports entertainment personified!" Oh yeah Vince wasn't happy with something. Austin lost to HHH via DQ on Monday but that's not it between them by a long shot. When HHH beat on his knees with a chair at Summerslam, he stopped way too early. As long as Austin is walking, he's going to hunt HHH down like the jacka** he is.

Austin wants a rematch tonight and we might as well make it no holds barred. That's the easy way, but HHH could go with the hard way and be taken out in a body bag. Cue HHH, flanked by Chyna and a bunch of cops, to respond. HHH says no shot tonight so Austin tells him what the fans are shouting. The title is on the line tonight but Austin isn't getting the shot. Instead it's someone of HHH's choice and Austin has shared the ring with him before. Austin promises to follow him all night long.

Of note: this is your standard opening but, counting the opening sequence, they're done about nine minutes into the broadcast. You CAN do these things in less than the fifteen to twenty minutes they tend to receive, but they decide to go long with them anyway. And yet people still can't get TV time.

We see clips of referees getting beaten up.

Tonight: Big Boss Man vs. Al Snow in a PEPPER ON A POLE MATCH! Make your own Russo jokes.

Here's Shane McMahon to call out Mean Street Posse member Joey Abs. Shane isn't happy with Joey interfering in Stephanie's personal life so it's time to demonstrate some brotherly love.

Shane McMahon vs. Joey Abs

Joey has the rest of the Posse and Terri (a pairing I don't remember at all) with him. Shane wastes no time in slugging away but the Posse comes in because there are no referees due to the strike. Then who ordered the bell to be rung? Gerald Brisco runs out to referee and counts two off Shane's rollup.

Joey's suplex gets the same so Shane elbows him in the jaw, only to have

Pete Gas pull Brisco out at two. Somehow Pete gets the better of it but heel miscommunication drops Rodney. Cue Pat Patterson to count two off a small package with Rodney making another save. Shane hits a corkscrew swanton (because of course he does) for the pin with Shawn Stasiak running in as the third referee.

Rating: D. I have a feeling we've got a show long storyline here and since it's about the referees, I have no idea why that's supposed to be a good thing. WWE has a bad tendency to put focus on people who shouldn't be getting said focus and that's what's going on here. Shane vs. the Posse is in the same boat but at least Shane has charisma.

Stephanie comes out to celebrate with the three referees and Shane as Test, Stephanie's fiance, looks on. She also kicks Joey low for a bonus.

Internet celebrity Cindy Margolis is shown in the crowd and Women's Champion Ivory isn't happy.

Here's Ivory to talk about all the people she gets to meet as champion. She introduces Margolis and asks for her to get in the ring, which Cindy declines. Ivory finally talks her into it and praises Cindy for being even more beautiful up close. She asks Cindy to do one of her poses but when Cindy says no, Ivory grabs her by the arm and makes her do it. Cue Jeff Jarrett to put Cindy in the Figure Four, sending her into....well it doesn't seem to be pain. Fear maybe? Jarrett takes Ivory's knee out too just for good measure. Just a celebrity cameo to advance Jarrett's chauvinist run and there's nothing wrong with that.

HHH won't say who he's challenging tonight but it won't be Austin. This is kept short, mainly because it doesn't change anything.

European Title: Mark Henry vs. Steve Blackman

Henry is defending after leaving Blackman in a tag match to go watch Godfather's girls dance. Tony Garea of all people is refereeing as Blackman easily knocks Henry outside. Cue Val Venis with a kendo stick to take Blackman out, giving Henry the easy pin.

Henry's ex-friend D'Lo Brown comes in and hits a REALLY impressive Sky

High on Henry.

Jarrett yells at Cindy as she's being taken away in an ambulance but Test comes in for a save.

Post break, Jeff challenges Test to an Intercontinental Title match.

Chris Jericho vs. Ken Shamrock

Jericho is flanked by Curtis Hughes, his bodyguard of three days. I barely ever remember this very short run, mainly as Jericho hasn't even been around for six weeks yet and Shamrock is almost gone from the promotion. Before the match, Jericho insists that Shamrock has declared him as the World's Most Dangerous Man. Therefore, tonight Jericho is allowing Hughes to take his place. Before we get started though, Jericho brings out his own guest referee: the masked EL DOP0!

Curtis Hughes vs. Ken Shamrock

Jericho jumps in on commentary and rips on Cole's terrible commentary skills. Shamrock takes Hughes down to start and hammers away, only to be backdropped to the floor. Jericho gets up and the chase is on, allowing Hughes to clothesline Ken down. The double beatdown ensues but Shamrock picks the ankle for the ankle lock. Hughes grabs the rope and it's an immediate DQ for not letting go of the hold.

Rating: D. This pairing feels so out of place, mainly because of two of the three people leaving the promotion so soon. Shamrock could have done well in the company around this time but he was just gone rather soon, not even wrestling at the upcoming pay per view. His last match would be the following week and it's not like this one was anything worth seeing.

El Dopo is...known Jericholic (seriously) Howard Finkel!

Mankind says he and Rock will be teaming together in this five man Royal Rumble. They're like a finely tuned automobile: Rock is the front end and Mankind is the rear end, but the PEOPLE'S rear end!

The referees are still on strike.

Before the five man Royal Rumble, here's Rock to tell his four opponents to go to a casino and play the people's slot machine. Someone can pull the handle and get three Brahma Bulls. Maybe it's Undertaker with his eyes rolling back while Kane uses his voice box to say WE WON WE WON LET'S PARTY and turn some cartwheels while Big Show makes odd noises. Then Rock will come in, shine up the gold coins and....well you know. I remember this from when I was a kid and thought it was the funniest thing I'd ever heard.

Royal Rumble

The winner gets....to start against HHH in the Six Pack Challenge at Unforgiven. That's not the greatest prize in the world but the writing isn't the best in the world around here either. Rock is in at #1 and Big Show is in at #2 with one minute intervals. A bunch of right hands and an attempt to throw Rock out don't get us very far until it's Mankind in at #3. Big Show gets double teamed and Rock actually gives Mankind a thumbs up.

Kane is in at #4 as the Royal Rumble stipulation is looking ridiculous. More punching ensues and it's Undertaker, in street clothes, in at #5 to complete the field. Undertaker actually sits in on commentary (!) as Rock DDT's Kane. Rock saves Mankind from a chokeslam and the pair gets rid of Kane. That's it for the alliance though as Rock dumps Mankind, only to walk into a chokeslam. Show gets too cocky and can't get rid of Rock, drawing Undertaker in to eliminate both of them for the win.

Rating: F. What in the world was the point of that? It wasn't even five minutes long and the timed entrances meant absolutely nothing. Terrible stuff here and another instance of adding a gimmick that didn't need to be there. As lame as a five man battle royal would have been, it would have been better than this.

Post match Show glares at Undertaker but Mideon and Viscera come out to get between them. Rock tries to come in with a chair and gets beaten down. That would be Undertaker's last "match" on TV for about eight months as he was out with a groin injury and tore his pectoral muscle during a return in December. Next up for him: Biker Taker.

The Hollies come out to challenge Chyna, who has been looking for a partner.

Hollies vs. Chyna

And there's no partner so this is a handicap match, at least to start. Chyna punches Crash in the face to start and it's quickly off to Hardcore. A double low blow brings the Hollies down as Dave Hebner makes an ultra rare cameo appearance and doesn't mind the blatant cheating. Cue Billy Gunn to be Chyna's partner (despite them having issues at this point) as the Hollies elbow her in the face. Hardcore spends too much time running his mouth though and gets caught with a DDT. Gunn tags himself in and slugs away, even if Chyna doesn't seem happy with it. The Fameasser puts Hardcore away in short order.

Rating: D-. Another short and nothing match that was just there to get people on the show. Chyna was doing what she could here and certainly looked to belong out there with the men, though it still feels like a bit of a novelty. At least they didn't waste much time on this one and that's how it should be.

Post match Jarrett comes out and decks Chyna. Cue Jeff's ladies Debra and Miss Kitty, the latter of whom has a bag. They pull out a frying pan, soup ladle and apron, all of which wind up on/in Chyna's hands. Jeff tells her to go start making his supper. So he's a soup lover?

Big Boss Man has, I kid you not, the remains of Al Snow's cooked dog Pepper in a doggie bag. Let's put it on a pole! Seriously that's what we're doing.

Al Snow vs. Big Boss Man

Sgt. Slaughter is referee. Boss Man shrugs off a clothesline and punches Snow down. Al's crossbody is blocked and Boss Man gets in a nightstick shot to the ribs. Cue the British Bulldog with some rottweilers to corner Boss Man (Because the KENNEL FROM H*** IS COMING!). With nothing else to do, Boss Man grabs the bag and throws it to the floor, where Snow picks it up for the win. Total and complete waste of time. Like more so than the Rumble.

HHH and the cops walk as Austin watches.

Intercontinental Title: Jeff Jarrett vs. Test

Timekeeper Mark Yeaton is referee. Jarrett is defending and Test charges to the ring to grab an early spinning sidewalk slam for two. A gutwrench powerbomb gets the same and here are Pete Gas, Rodney and Terri to ringside. Jeff's middle rope clothesline cuts Test off and here's Stephanie to say stop this. Shane comes out to beat up Rodney but here are Patterson, Brisco and Stasiak as the match is thrown out. This was less than two and a half minutes and had EIGHT PEOPLE RUN IN.

Test's shoulder is sent into the steps so Jeff hits a flying armbar. Shane has to save Stephanie from a Figure Four as Jeff runs off.

Post break, Stephanie and Test leave.

Here's HHH for the title defense but he wants Shane of all people to be guest referee. In the back, Vince and Linda (in a rare cameo) ask Shane if he's up for this and of course Shane is ready. Shane comes to the ring and seems cool with HHH (So he's a face but cool with the heels?), who talks about all the people NOT challenging him tonight. It won't be Austin, Undertaker, Kane, Big Show, Mankind or Rock.

That doesn't leave too many people who have been in a main event with Austin (Wasn't it just sharing the ring earlier?), but HHH has an idea. He calls out Vince, who comes to the arena after HHH suggests that Linda might like a little time with the Game. So to recap: Shane is on HHH's side but was hanging out with HHH's top rival? Can we get rid of Russo already? I'm getting a headache. Anyway here's Vince in a suit with a mic but he can't talk HHH down. HHH questions the grapefruits but Vince still says no. Another suggestion of sex with Linda is enough to get Vince to jump HHH and we're on.

WWF World Title: HHH vs. Vince McMahon

HHH is defending and easily stomps Vince down to take over. Vince's right hands are shrugged off and the boss is in even more trouble. Shane cheers Vince on as HHH stomps away and even tells Chyna to stay away. Vince goes

to the eyes and hits HHH low (Which Shane cheers. So he's not on HHH's side but does what HHH asks and stands next to HHH and Chyna in peace?) but can't follow up. They head outside with HHH using a cord for a choke, followed by an elbow to drive Vince through the announcers' table.

Back in and HHH grabs a chair before shoving Shane down. A chair shot to Vince is enough to make Shane tackle the champ, earning himself a chair to the head. Cue Patterson, Brisco and Linda with the Stooges getting beaten down in short order. Chyna grabs Linda as HHH hammers on the bloody Vince. The Pedigree is loaded up and heeere's Austin (through the crowd to avoid the cops) for back to back Stunners to give Vince the title.

Rating: D. Egads where do I even begin? So not only is this basically Foley beating Rock for the title from ten months ago (even down to Austin being the one to run in and change the title) but AUSTIN WOULD NOT HELP VINCE GET THE TITLE! I don't care who Vince is beating or what it gives Austin, he would NEVER do this and it's very out of character for him. Austin isn't going to just accept Vince as someone he'll help just because Vince is now a face (you know, the guy revealed as the Higher Power THREE MONTHS AGO) and it's very stupid to suggest otherwise.

Now for the interesting part: comparing this to Vince Russo winning the title about a year later. As is so often the case, of course it's not the same thing and of course it's more acceptable here. First of all, the WWF is riding high at this point and can afford to take some chances. Russo made himself champion when the company was dead in the water and living on borrowed time.

A risk like this is more acceptable when you're on top of the mountain and not seemingly desperate to pop a rating. To go along with that, what good had Russo done for WCW? I'm guessing a lot less than McMahon had done for the WWF in that week alone. Russo was dragging the company down with him and decided to make himself champion pretty much for his own ego. What a boss.

Second, and more importantly, this advances several stories, including but not limited to Austin vs. HHH, Vince vs. HHH, Shane's issues

(whatever they are at the moment) and adds some drama to Unforgiven. Russo winning the title advanced Vince Russo, who had done it several times before. Sure McMahon looks good here, but he was also a big time character in the WWF and had been for a very long time. Speaking of looking good, consider their physiques. McMahon has been on the covers of fitness magazines while I've seen ten year olds with more muscle than Russo.

These are somewhat comparable angles, but one was well done and benefited several people. The other was an ego trip which served a bad writer who wanted to be a wrestler but wasn't talented enough. Russo can try to say it's the same thing all he wants, but then again he's the kind of guy who still thinks he was some kind of a brilliant writer and...well just look at this show.

Vince is carried to his feet to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. And somehow, this is much better than a lot of what Russo does. Be it the rapid fire short matches which don't have time to offer much of an impact or me trying to figure out which end is up on the face/heel alignments or the show revolving around a storyline about referees, I'm not sure what on here is supposed to be good. The ending is a big surprise but the rest of the show is such a mess and the wrestling is such a runaway train that there's not much positive about the whole thing.

Here's Unforgiven if you're interested (bear in mind that this is old and really not very good):

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2014/04/19/unforgiven-1999-cracking-open-a-six-pack/>

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