

Armageddon 2003 (2018 Redo): Merry Christmas To Us



IMG Credit: WWE

Armageddon 2003

Date: December 14, 2003

Location: TD Waterhouse Centre, Orlando, Florida

Attendance: 12,672

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

We'll wrap up the pay per view schedule for the year here with another show that is hardly inspiring. The main event here is a triple threat match between Raw World Champion Goldberg, HHH and Kane, because why have one challenger who can't bring out the best in Goldberg when you can have two? I'm almost scared of how lame this could be so let's get to it.

[Here's the go home Raw if you need a recap.](#)

The Fink opens us up. Fink: "Would you please rise TO HONOR THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA???" Lillian Garcia does her usual great rendition but I don't have the urge to punch a French guy, meaning it's kind of a failure on WWE's part. This is the day after Saddam Hussein was caught so it's not as random as it seems.

The opening video is your standard collection of Bible verses about Armageddon and as expected, it's all about the triple threat.

Booker T. vs. Mark Henry

Booker goes aggressive to start with a long series of right hands and is shoved down just as fast. We even get a rare Booker T. chant until Henry clotheslines him to the floor to calm them right back down. A whip sends Booker into the steps but he's right back up with a slingshot dive to take Henry out. Back in and the missile dropkick puts Henry down again as the fans are sticking with this one early on.

Teddy Long offers a distraction though and Henry runs Booker over to cut him off and the pace slows right back down. We hit a modified bow and arrow for a bit before a running crotch attack to Booker's back has him in even more trouble. Back in and we hit the chinlock as Henry isn't exactly known for his varied offense. He mixes things up (by his standards at least) with a bearhug. See now he's squeezing a different part of Booker so it's a completely different style.

A hard clothesline cuts off Booker's comeback but the legdrop misses. Booker's bicycle kick sets up an ax kick for two in what might have been his big shot. Henry grabs a spinebuster and nearly collapses when covering for two. Dude it's eight minutes into the match. You shouldn't be that tired. Now the legdrop is good for two and Henry hits a jackknife of all things, which looked more like Booker slipped than being intentional. Possibly out of fear of his safety, Booker hits another ax kick for the pin.

Rating: D+. Henry has been wrestling for going on eight years at this point and somehow he's still not getting better. The power moves look good in spurts but the powerbomb looked horrible (not to mention dangerous) and you can only do so much squeezing in a nine minute match. At least Booker won though and Henry can drop back down to the midcard (at best) where he belongs.

Eric Bischoff is livid and gives Christian and Chris Jericho a pep talk for their mixed tag later tonight. Jericho looks hesitant but here's Mick Foley in the arena to cut them off. Foley talks about how he's here in Orlando to deliver his first pay per view as co-manager (I'm sure he'll be yelled at for getting the title wrong.) of Raw. The Steve Austin

petition has now broken one million signatures and that means it's time for a celebration. Cue Stacy Keibler as a cheerleader for a series of cartwheels and the obvious visual appeal.

With Foley picking Stacy up, here are Randy Orton and Ric Flair to interrupt. Orton holds that Foley didn't pull anything because he'll need to be ready to count the pin in the Intercontinental Title match. Austin is gone because Orton got rid of him at Survivor Series so it's time to crown a new champion. Foley says Orton wants to go so let's have the title match right now.

Intercontinental Title: Randy Orton vs. Rob Van Dam

Orton is challenging and Foley is guest referee. Rob sweeps the leg to start and Orton is already taking a breather on the floor. Back in and they hit a technical sequence with Orton not being able to do anything and leading to a standoff. Rob goes with what he does best and kicks Orton down. Another kick sets up a running flip dive to the floor as Orton can't get much going so far.

Rob gets caught on top and shoved into the barricade though, which happens to him far too often. Then again it's not like wrestlers are people who learn very well in the first place. Flair gets in some choking from the floor and Foley yells at him, which just lets Orton hammer away even more. We hit the chinlock (requirement fulfilled) for a good while until Rob gets two off a rollup.

Orton throws him onto his shoulder for a powerbomb but takes a step forward into a neckbreaker for a cool move. That means another chinlock until Rob fights up with a spinwheel kick. Rob (with his ponytail nearly out in a rare look) slugs away in the corner and gets two off a northern lights suplex, sending Orton bailing to the floor again.

The breather works as Orton grabs the hanging DDT back inside and yells at Foley on the two count. As you might guess, Van Dam kicks him down again and hits Rolling Thunder but has to kick Flair away. There's the stepover kick to set up the Five Star but another Flair distraction lets Orton crotch Rob. The RKO gives Orton the pin and the title.

Rating: C+. This is the perfect role for Rob: he can keep the title warm and give you a good match to make a bigger and better name champion. Orton had to win here as it's high time to make him look like he has more than potential. Evolution looks better here too as the team has a second champion instead of HHH and three lackeys. Good match, even with Rob being his pretty usual self. Then again, it's not like he cranked it up to another level most of the time in WWE.

Orton's post match celebration makes the title seem like a huge deal as he seems blown away by winning it. You don't see that often enough.

We recap the battle of the sexes with Jericho and Christian romancing Trish Stratus and Lita to some success. It turned out to be a bet between the guys though, which crushed both women and broke their hearts. Now though, Jericho seems to be having second thoughts, even as Bischoff has set up this mixed tag.

Chris Jericho/Christian vs. Trish Stratus/Lita

Jericho tries to talk his way out of trouble with Trish but gets slapped, setting up the forearms that you would expect from Sapphire instead of a multiple time Women's Champion. That earns Trish a spanking so she kicks him away and slaps him in the head. Some bad dropkicks have Jericho in trouble so it's off to Lita vs. Christian. Lita slaps him as well and then runs away, followed by some equally lame forearms.

A headscissors puts Christian down but Jericho gets in a cheap shot from the apron in a good heel move. It's off to Jericho for some trash talking and some standing on Lita's hair. A powerbomb is countered into a loose hurricanrana for two and Lita loses her top to the delight of both Lawler and the fans. Lita finally gets smart with a low blow, allowing the tag to Trish who thankfully throws the forearms that she would throw in matches instead of like she's a terrified schoolgirl.

The Chick Kick rocks Christian and Jericho gets crotched on top. He's fine enough to block the Stratusphere but Christian gets sent into Jericho. That's enough for two off a rollup but a hard clothesline takes Trish's head off. Lita comes back in with a hurricanrana, only to have Jericho make a save. Jericho checks on Trish and seems to show some

sympathy until Christian rolls Trish up for the pin.

Rating: D+. This was two different matches in one as the first half felt like something out of Memphis in 1974 and the second felt like it could have been interesting. In other words, once Trish and Lita realized they were Trish Stratus and Lita rather than fans in over their heads, it got a lot better. If that was the case throughout, this could have been a fun underdog match but for what we got, it was too little too late.

We recap Shawn Michaels vs. Batista. Shawn was trying to survive for Team Austin at Survivor Series when Batista interfered and cost him the match. Batista wasn't done though and beat Shawn up some more, setting up the match tonight. In other words, they're hoping Shawn can pull off a good match to make Batista look better than he is. I mean, it's not the worst idea in the world.

Shawn Michaels vs. Batista

Shawn goes with the speed to start and snaps off some rights and lefts in the corner to annoy Batista. More punches get the same result and a slide between Batista's legs allows Shawn to punch Ric Flair out. Things reset a bit and this time Batista goes with power in the form of some knees in the corner.

Flair goes into cheerleader mode as Batista starts in on the back with a hard whip, followed by just driving an elbow into the side of Shawn's head. Shawn blocks a belly to back superplex though and gets two off a moonsault press (which was a foot or so off center). There's the nip up so Batista takes it outside for a whip into the steps to put Shawn down again. They're doing well with the power vs. heart/experience idea here.

Some backbreakers get Batista back to where he was going before with Flair losing his mind that the referee hasn't stopped it yet. Back up and Shawn hits the forearm into the nip up before countering a chokebomb into a DDT. The top rope elbow connects but Sweet Chin Music is countered into a spinebuster. That means it's Batista Bomb time but Shawn slips out and nails Sweet Chin Music for the pin.

Rating: C. This was a shorter version of Orton vs. Michaels from a few

months back and that's the right way to go. I can live with Evolution not winning every match and Shaw using the experience and intelligence to win over a muscle head like Batista makes enough sense. If nothing else just have Batista power through some nitwit and he'll be fine.

Post match Batista is so out of it that he thinks he won and here's Maven for a match added on Heat. One beatdown later and Maven is done, meaning Matt Hardy (whose fingernails grow very quickly), his opponent for tonight, can get a forfeit win. That's the fast track version of getting Batista back to normal.

In the back, a very sweaty Flair has to calm Batista down and say that Batista is better than Shawn. Everyone trips, but the good ones get back in the game. Flair has an idea and says they're both leaving with titles. Thanks for the spoiler Naitch.

Tag Team Titles: Tag Team Turmoil

Gauntlet match for the titles with the Dudleys defending. La Resistance vs. Rosey/The Hurricane starts things off with Conway slugging at Hurricane to start. A low bridge puts Hurricane on the floor as the USA chants begin. As usual, the fact that two Americans are currently wrestling goes completely over their heads. Dupree comes in and now that the chants are more appropriate, they starts dying down.

Hurricane gets in an X Factor and tags in Rosey to as much of a reaction as a tag to Rosey is going to draw about two minutes into a match. Rosey splashes Conway and dumps Dupree over the top before getting on the middle rope. Hurricane gets on his shoulders for a big splash to pin Dupree. Mark Jindrak and Garrison Cade come in third and roll Hurricane up for the pin in about four seconds.

Lance Storm and Val Venis are in fourth with Venis and Jindrak starting things off. That goes nowhere so Garrison and Lance trade armdrags and headlocks. The BORING chants begin and you can see the empty seats from people hitting the concession stands. One heck of a left hand breaks up a springboard and Jindrak come in to crank on Storm's arms. A missed charge allows the hot tag to Venis as everything breaks down. The Blue Thunder Bomb gets two on Jindrak so Venis tries a suplex but falls victim to the

Rick Rude/Ultimate Warrior finish for the pin.

It's the Dudley Boyz in fifth to clean house with Cade getting caught in the Tree of Woe and Bubba abusing his chest. Jindrak comes in for one heck of a clothesline on D-Von and it's off to the chinlock. A top rope elbow hits D-Von but "misses" and the hot tag brings in Bubba. Everything breaks down and Jindrak rolls D-Von up for two, only to have the 3D send the Dudleys on. Cade decks both Dudleys as Scott Steiner and Test are in sixth. The villains come in with little resistance and Steiner's push-up elbow gets two.

It's off to a Fujiwara armbar of all things before Test comes in for some stomping. A regular armbar has as much effect so Bubba throws him down for a breather. The middle rope backsplash ACTUALLY connects for two on Test and it's back to D-Von to pick things up a bit. A rollup gets two on Test but he's right back with the full nelson slam for two. With the wrestling not working, Test does the old throw in the belt so you can use a chair spot for two on D-Von. The Bubba Bomb hits Test though and D-Von gets the pin to retain.

Well hang on a second as here's Bischoff that we have a seventh team. In case you're really slow, it's Flair and Batista as evil bosses are still evil bosses. The beatdown is on with Flair putting Ray in the Figure Four and the Batista Bomb pinning D-Von. Evolution was in there for about thirty seconds.

Rating: D. This was long and uneventful until the screwy finish. The problem was the same as usual with most gauntlet matches: there's nothing to the matches because they have to go so fast and in this case, most of the teams are so lame that it's not exactly something worth watching. This could have been much worse with less time but still, just a screwy way to set up the ending of the show.

Video on the Tribute to the Troops announcement.

Women's Title: Ivory vs. Molly Holly

Molly is defending in a match that I don't think was even mentioned coming into the show. Ivory sends her out to the floor to start as the

announcers debate sexual frustration. A dropkick to the leg knocks Ivory face first into the apron so the champ can take over. It's off to an armbar and the discussion is off to Molly drinking prune juice. There's a handspring elbow to Ivory as you can see even more empty seats now than during the tag match. Ivory sends her face first into the buckle for two but Molly reverses into a rollup with the tights for the pin to retain.

Rating: D. There's no story and they had four minutes. What else can you expect from a match like this? It's not their fault here as they were put in a match to fill in time and given nothing to work with, meaning the deck was entirely stacked against them. The division needs some fresh blood and Ivory isn't the right person to challenge for the title.

We recap the World Title match. Goldberg is defending, HHH is HHH and Kane decided to attack Goldberg so HHH could say it was a different match when he gets the title back again.

Raw World Title: HHH vs. Kane vs. Goldberg

One fall to a finish. The bell rings and they stand around staring at each other for a long time. After a minute of standing there, Goldberg walks to HHH and Kane walks to Goldberg, allowing HHH to jump the champ from behind. The double teaming is on as we're waiting on who gets to cover Goldberg. A clothesline takes HHH down and a powerslam does the same to Kane as the fans are trying to get into this.

Kane sits up so Goldberg knocks him down again, followed by doing the same to HHH. Goldberg slams Kane off the top for a bonus and powerslams HHH for no cover. The distraction lets Kane get in a big boot and some right hands to Goldberg as I'm not expecting much of a story to break out here. A double suplex drops Goldberg and HHH covers for two, much to Kane's annoyance.

Kane clotheslines HHH to the floor by mistake so HHH chairs him in the back, breaking up a chokeslam to Goldberg in the process. Goldberg takes the chair from HHH and wraps it around his ankle but Kane breaks up the Pillmanization. They head outside with Goldberg trying a Jackhammer through the table, only to be broken up with a chair to the ribs from HHH. You know, because why would you want Goldberg to get rid of Kane and

then wear him out with the chair in your hands and a free shot?

HHH elbows Goldberg through the table but winds up in front of Kane while holding the chair that he used to put him down. Kane beats on HHH a bit as this just keeps going. They head inside with HHH getting beaten up some more, including the side slam for no cover. The chokeslam is blocked by a poke to the eye and a DDT plants Kane. That's enough for the ring so they head up the ramp with Kane chokeslamming him there instead. Goldberg is finally back up and spearing Kane as they come back inside for two with HHH making the save.

It's a three way slugout with Goldberg getting the better of it, including a double clothesline to take both guys down. There's another spear to Kane and one to HHH, drawing in Evolution for a distraction. They're quickly dispatched so Goldberg and Kane choke each other until HHH hits Goldberg low. Kane chokeslams the champ but Batista pulls him to the floor, allowing HHH to get the pin and the title. Merry Christmas to us.

Rating: D+. Much like the whole show, this was much more dull and boring than bad. There was a grand total of zero doubt that HHH would win as you have the Evolution title dominance to go with HHH not being World Champion in a few months, which is completely unacceptable. This was as good as "you hit me, I hit him, he hits you, now we switch" for twenty minutes was going to be, which should tell you everything you need to know.

Evolution celebrates to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. There are worse shows, but this was 2003 Raw in a nutshell: a lot of Evolution, a good match here and there, but the whole thing is just so slow paced that nothing is really exciting. Also, much like a lot of the shows on the year, it barely broke two and a half hours, including the National Anthem. These one brand pay per views aren't ready yet and that's getting more and more obvious every single time they're out there. These things need to be closer to two hours than three, but then they couldn't charge as much and that wouldn't be good, much like this show.

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