

Monday Night Raw – April 1, 1996: Here's A New One



IMG Credit: WWE

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 1, 1996

Location: Orange Pavilion, San Bernardino, California

Attendance: 3,000

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

It's the night after Wrestlemania XII and that means the boyhood dream has come true. Shawn Michaels is the new WWF World Champion and is the new undisputed top star in the company. Everything is about to start changing and unfortunately it would be part of a bad time for the company. However, there's a BIG development tonight that would mean a lot of positives going forward. Let's get to it.

[Here's Wrestlemania if you need a recap.](#)

We open with a recap of last night's biggest events, as you might have been able to guess.

Opening sequence, which actually isn't new. You would kind of expect that here but not so much.

Mankind vs. Bob Holly

Here's the big deal as Mick Foley makes his WWF debut. Ok his real debut as I'm not counting those squashes from 1986. This guy is BIZARRE, walking with that weird hunched over look and the dark lighting. Mankind TERRIFIED me as a kid and this first appearance makes me remember why. He really was that creepy and no one else could play that character. Some early right hands in the corner and the running knee have Holly in trouble.

An elbow to the mask gives Holly a breather and there's the dropkick for his first real offense. Mankind low bridges him to the floor though and grabs a hot shot onto the apron. Fans: "HE'S HARDCORE!" The running ax handle in the Tree of Woe rocks Holly again and Mankind pulls out his own hair. The Mandible Claw makes its debut to finish Holly, who foams at the mouth after Mankind pulls out.

Rating: C-. So that's how Mankind debuted and WHAT THE HECK WAS THAT? Mankind is instantly one of the creepiest things wrestling has ever seen, looking like he was completely deranged to the point where you almost have to watch and see what he's doing next. I never knew what to make of him as a kid and looking back he's still just as odd. Incredibly performance here and no one knew just how good he was going to become.

Stills of Marc Mero debuting last night.

Sable is in the front row.

Isaac Yankem DDS vs. Marc Mero

Sable pops up and cheers for Mero. Marc wastes no time in dropkicking him to the floor and hitting a running flip dive, followed by a slingshot

legdrop for two. A top rope ax handle gives Mero two but here's Hunter Hearst Helmsley to flirt with Sable. The distraction lets Yankem send him into the corner and we hit the chinlock. Mero fights up and gets two off a crucifix before a big left puts Yankem down. The top rope sunset flip gives Mero the pin.

Rating: D+. Not much to the debut here but the key thing that stuck out to me was Vince's commentary. I couldn't count how many times he said "the Wildman Marc Mero" so that it stuck in your head. That's the entire point of something like this and Vince knows how to make you care about someone like Mero, who isn't the most interesting guy in the world to begin with. Just a debut, but it did its job.

Post match Sable applauds and slaps Helmsley before leaving with Mero.

Ed Begley Jr. is going to host the Weekly World News April Fools Special and is looking for a clothing optional barber shop. Moving on.

Bodydonnas vs. Barry Horowitz/Aldo Montoya

Non-title as the Bodydonnas won the titles the night the night before on the Free For All (preshow). Aldo chops Skip in the corner to start and headlocks him down but it's quickly off to Zip. Another headlock takeover has the champs in trouble and Aldo does a third, this time adding a headscissors to Skip at the same time. Barry comes in and keeps kicking Zip away as Vince gets distracted by Sunny's low cut top.

A blind tag puts the champs in control, though it might be that they're fighting Horowitz and Montoya. Zip tries a suplex over the ropes but gets suplexed over the top for a big crash on the floor. You don't see that counter very often. The referee misses Barry's victory roll on Skip so it's a delayed two, followed by the regular version for the same result on Zip. Skip's super hurricanrana sets up a top rope seated senton for the pin on Montoya.

Rating: C-. This was a nice little match with Horowitz and Montoya being good enough to put on a good performance. To be fair though, the division was bad enough that it wouldn't have taken much more than a few wins to make them realistic #1 contenders. That's not a good sign when you have

two very low level jobbers in that spot but it's where they were at this point.

Bob Backlund campaigns for President.

Call the Hotline! Set to Lex Luger's WCW music for some reason!

Here's Shawn Michaels for his first comments as WWF Champion, complete with a white hat saying "WWF Champion 3-31-96 Heartbreak Kid". That's so generic looking that you would think a fan made it. Shawn talks about being here because of the fans, who deserve a lot of thanks for getting him here. He's not worried about facing Jerry Lawler next week or Diesel at this month's In Your House.

As for Bret Hart, he made a believer out of Shawn last night and Bret will always be a champion in the fans' eyes. Shawn promises to wear and defend this belt with the dignity that Bret did in the past. Back to Lawler (cue the BURGER KING chants), who Shawn calls Kingfish, he'll be going back to the White Castle next week. Vince mentions Diesel being on commentary next week but Shawn isn't sweating him either. He and Diesel were good friends but they're better enemies (In Your House's subtitle) so at In Your House, he'll dance on Diesel's face.

So to recap: take everything Shawn did that made him awesome and turn him into the smiling good guy that the company is always trying to push. It didn't work for Diesel and it's not going to work for Shawn, but never let that spot the company from trying to do something that doesn't make sense.

Justin Hawk Bradshaw vs. Undertaker

Bradshaw, undefeated at this point, wastes no time and actually plants him with a powerslam. No cover of course, as Undertaker sits up so they can fight to the floor as we take a break. Back with a sidewalk slam getting two on Undertaker, who catches Bradshaw diving off the top with a powerslam.

There's no cover again, with the idea being that Undertaker is so worn out from last night's match against Diesel that he's not at full

strength. I've heard worse ideas. Bradshaw hits a big boot but a raise of the Urn lets Undertaker hit the jumping clothesline. The chokeslam and Tombstone have Bradshaw finished but here's Mankind for the DQ.

Rating: C+. Now that's more like it with both guys beating the heck out of each other. I know Bradshaw doesn't have the best reputation but if you put him in a power match with someone like Undertaker, he's more than capable of holding his own and even putting on a heck of a match. Even a weakened Undertaker can still go and this was a lot of fun. But now for the important stuff.

Post match Mankind annihilates Undertaker, sending him into whatever he can find and putting on the Mandible Claw. Undertaker foams at the mouth, which had me terrified as a kid. Referees get Mankind off of him but he comes back to beat on Undertaker even more as Undertaker is left laying. He's finally dragged away and Undertaker's music plays over the ads for next week's show to wrap things up.

Overall Rating: C+. Aside from the main event, this was almost all about setting up the new stuff with Mankind being a major highlight. You could tell they had something new here and he comes off like a star immediately, which isn't the easiest thing in the world. It makes him seem like someone who isn't going to be easy to get rid of like Kamala or Giant Gonzalez, which is the right idea. The rest of the show was good enough too, but bigger things are on the horizon.

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