

Monday Night Raw – April 5, 2004: The Meaning Of Hardcore



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Monday Night Raw

Date: April 5, 2004

Location: Toyota Center, Houston, Texas

Attendance: 12,000

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Jim Ross

We're less than two weeks away from Backlash and things are already starting to come together. It's a rare case of the Raw crew being miles ahead of their Smackdown brethren as the combined forces of Chris Benoit, Shawn Michaels, Mick Foley and Shelton Benjamin fight Evolution. Let's get to it.

[Here are last week's results if you need a recap.](#)

We open with a recap of Shelton beating HHH. Still a very nice surprise.

Opening sequence.

Here's HHH (with his music only starting halfway down the ramp) to open things up. He's not happy with some young punk coming over from Smackdown and thinking he can get in the ring with the greatest wrestler alive today. Then the guy (HHH won't say his name) actually WINS and gets his hand raised. It was just a fluke though and it's not happening again in a

million years.

Just like Chris Benoit beating HHH again in a rematch of the greatest main event in Wrestlemania history. See, this time Benoit is in the same place that HHH was in before: he doesn't even have to get beaten to lose the title. The odds are stacked so high against Benoit in the first place but when you consider that both triple threat matches include HHH, it's just impossible.

Cue Shelton Benjamin to brag about winning, much to HHH's annoyance. Shelton actually challenges him to a rematch tonight but HHH doesn't sound impressed. He turns the rematch down but it's him doing a favor for Shelton. No one beats HHH. Shelton: "Correction: I did." That's enough for HHH to accept the rematch for tonight. HHH: "It's going to be the greatest wrestler in the world vs....what the h*** ever your name is." Shelton laughs it off because after tonight, HHH can call him Mr. Benjamin. Longer than necessary (as always with HHH) but the no name thing was great and Shelton sounded good.

Video on the recent trip to Mexico.

Chris Benoit vs. Rob Conway

Non-title. Hang on though as Johnny Nitro (now coming out to the old Nitro theme song for a little flashback) is guest referee again, despite his arm being in a sling. Benoit goes straight to the chops but stops to yell at Nitro. Sylvan Grenier grabs the champ's foot and Conway rakes the eyes. A snap suplex gets two and it's off to a neck crank.

Benoit powers out and throws more chops, followed by a backbreaker for two. A snap suplex to Conway takes out Nitro so La Resistance comes in for what would eventually become known as the Magic Killer, which gets two from a replacement referee (who apparently saw the bump but not the interference). The Crossface makes Conway tap.

Rating: C-. Conway's time on offense wasn't the best but Benoit didn't have much trouble and beat up a team who wasn't exactly intimidating in the first place. Nitro makes for a nice little pest and hopefully they leave it at that instead of going with Benoit vs. Bischoff in the same

old story.

The returning William Regal comes in to see Bischoff but Eric isn't sure he can have a job. After a discussion of Regal joining Vince's club, Bischoff says he's brought Regal here to manage a special talent. He's in his 20s, 6'1 and 240lbs and a very "special" talent. His name is Eugene Dinsmore, and Regal thankfully agrees.

Chris Jericho vs. Matt Hardy

Matt has broken his nose three times and never over-orders in restaurants. Trish Stratus and Christian bring a chair to the stage and watch the match, allowing Matt to get in a cheap shot from behind to start. An elbow to the back sets up Matt pulling on both of Jericho's arms but Jericho scores with the running bulldog. The Lionsault misses and the Walls are broken up so Jericho hits the running enziguri instead. Now the Walls are enough to make Matt tap.

Rating: D+. Just a quick match here but it gives Jericho a win for the sake of some momentum, which he really needs after everything that's happened to him in recent weeks. Matt's losing streak continues because that's his lot in life for some reason. The match didn't have time to go anywhere, but this wasn't really supposed to be competitive.

Christian kisses Trish to mess with Jericho some more.

Mick Foley is sitting in a rocking chair with a box over his lap and a flower in his hand. As he smells the flower, he talks about never forgetting your first time. During his career, he would pick up a few during the week, use them for a few days, and hand them off to a lucky fan. He means the flannel shirts of course, and he got his first one in 1977. The other day he found the original one, and that brought him back to the hardcore state of mind.

Hardcore isn't about chairs or trashcans, but about being willing to put himself through unimaginable pain for the sake of the fans. When he went to Japan and took part in some barbaric matches, he did what he had to do for the sake of paying the bills. Foley has sworn that he would never do that again or even watch the matches, but now he's seen them all fresh.

He did some inhumane things but they didn't catch his eyes.

No it was his eyes that caught his eye because deep down, maybe there was a little part of him that didn't mind hurting people like that. Maybe deep down he loves it. Foley did those things to people he didn't hate so what is he going to do to someone like Orton, who has done so many things to him?

Everyone promises to hurt someone, but that's not what Foley is going to do to Orton. He's going to use one of his old friends named Barbie (which he takes out of the box) and use it to cave Orton's skull in, drawing the kind of blood usually reserved for special effects in Mel Gibson Biblical epics. Foley uses Barbie to break the set and promises to love it. This was the Foley that we've been needing to see and you believe every word he said.

Orton watches this and is as scared as he should be. Flair's pep talk doesn't work this time, nor does HHH talking about beating Shelton.

Shelton Benjamin vs. HHH

Before the match, Flair is in the ring and demands his own introduction. According to Bischoff, anyone out here must be on official business. Therefore, Flair is your announcer, Batista is timekeeper, and Orton is the official trainer (complete with stool and spit bucket). JR: "This is starting to reek like nine week old cheese." HHH is all annoyed and punches him into the corner to start.

A crossbody gives Shelton two so JR lists off all of his college accolades. HHH cuts him off with a spinebuster and throws Shelton outside for a drop onto the barricade from Batista. Back in and Shelton scores with some right hands until a facebuster cuts him off again. HHH shouts a lot but charges into a raised boot as Lawler is starting to get a little nervous. The Stinger Splash (which finished HHH last week) sends HHH outside with Shelton catapulting HHH into the post for the countout win.

Rating: D. The wrestling was nothing but that's not the point here. Shelton gets another win over HHH and even defeats the forces of Evolution to pull it off. He already has the pinfall win so while the

countout wasn't as impressive, it's a huge relief to have HHH lose again instead of getting his win back. I'm not sure how smart it is to do this before he's main eventing a pay per view, but this could be more important in the long term.

Post match the Evolution beatdown is on with Shelton being busted open. Benoit, Michaels and Foley (with Barbie) make the save.

After a break, Bischoff storms the commentary booth and says Shelton is going to the hospital. Benoit, Michaels and Foley are getting yelled at later.

Battle Royal

Lita, Jazz, Nidia, Molly Holly, Stacy Keibler, Gail Kim, Trish Stratus

The winner gets a title shot at Backlash. We're joined in progress...with just Trish, Lita and Jazz left. Really? Like...REALLY? You can't even keep them around until we're back from a break? Not even two more of them or something? Anyway, Jazz is eliminated ten seconds later and it's down to two. They circle each other and we look back at the eliminations, making me wonder why in the world they did it this way. Lita swats away a handshake attempt and slaps her in the face, only to get caught in a fireman's carry.

That goes nowhere so here's Jericho to cheer for Lita. You know, the other person involved in his bet with Christian. Trish hangs on as Lawler is worried about her damaged pectoral muscles. Jericho trips Trish though and Lita dropkicks her out (through the bottom two ropes) for the title shot.

Rating: F. Sweet goodness what's the point? No really, I'd love an explanation of why this was a seven woman battle royal when about three seconds of the four and a half minutes that we saw had more than two people involved. Just do a triple threat match or something but don't do this, which was one of the dumbest things I've ever seen them air match wise.

Smackdown rebound, looking at the Great American Award Nominee matches.

Regal finds Eugene and let's just get this over with. Eugene is of course mentally handicapped (you know the word they're likely going to skirt around) and can barely say anything besides his own name. He does have a nametag saying "Hello, my name is Eugene." Regal gets a hug and Eugene says "manager". Regal calls Bischoff a dirty rotten swine.

Coach comes out to commentary to show Tajiri misting him last week.

Christian tells Trish that the match against Jericho at Backlash is actually a handicap match. Trish is NOT happy.

Christian vs. Tajiri

Coach is on commentary. Christian shrugs off some early kicks and it's already time for Coach to come to the ring. Back up and Tajiri hits the handspring elbow, followed by the Tarantula. The Unprettier is broken up with another kick but Coach breaks up the Buzzsaw kick with a trip. Now the Unprettier connects to give Christian the fast pin.

Backlash rundown.

Regal leaves Eugene outside of Bischoff's office before going inside to say Bischoff can't put him with that window licker. Bischoff freaks out because Eugene has been left alone (like he was when Regal found him) and of course he's gone. Eugene is now on commentary with Lawler saying "special" over and over. Lawler says Eugene's gear is wacky so Eugene starts walking around like the Bushwhackers and licks Jerry. Regal comes in for the save and gets rid of Eugene, as this is already looking bad.

Kane vs. Rhyno

Rhyno gets jumped before the bell and Kane wraps his arm around the post. Back up and Rhyno slugs away, followed by a flying shoulder which breaks the middle rope. That always looks cool. The Gore gets two but Kane pops up with a big boot and the chokeslam for the pin. I wonder if the broken rope made that one shorter.

Post match here's Edge, with a cast on his hand, for the brawl. Kane gets the better of it but goes for a chair, allowing Edge to lay him out with a cast shot.

Benoit and Michaels don't think much of Bischoff's orders to meet him in the ring. Last week's near title win was awesome so Shawn has his back anytime. Until Backlash that is. Foley comes in and says they're united tonight. Johnny Nitro shows up and makes Foley put the bat down. If anything happens to it, Nitro is responsible. Benoit hits Nitro in the bad arm.

Here's Bischoff for the big show closing yelling. Benoit, Michaels and Foley come in and Bischoff makes an eight man tag with the three of them teaming up to face Evolution next week. Evolution's music plays and they try to come in from behind so the fight can be on. HHH sledgehammers Shawn in the back and chairs Benoit down. A Pedigree onto the chair plants Benoit and Evolution stands tall with HHH holding the title up to end the show. Nice segment here and it's going to make Shelton look all the more important when he's there to even the odds next week.

Overall Rating: C+. They're actually going somewhere at the moment and that's a lot more than I was expecting. Benjamin is starting to get a push and putting him in the main event with that level of talent is a good sign for him. Jericho and Christian are still going pretty strong and we'll see what can come out of the Edge vs. Kane stuff. Some of the stuff isn't all that great, but there's clearly a point to most of the stuff (even Coach vs. Tajiri is a story) and that's WAY better than some the stuff this company was doing just a year or so ago.

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