

Backlash 2004 (2018 Redo): Making A Legend



IMG Credit: WWE

Backlash 2004

Date: April 18, 2004

Location: Rexall Place, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Attendance: 13,000

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

Remember last month at Wrestlemania XX when the main event was an instant classic? Well now we're doing it again with Chris Benoit coming in as the World Heavyweight Champion. That's not the worst idea in the world as the first match was so great that there's almost no way this won't be awesome too. Throw in Randy Orton going to the gallows to face Cactus Jack and we could be in for a very good night. Let's get to it.

The opening video looks at the original triple threat, with Shawn Michaels and HHH saying it won't happen again. Benoit disagrees, as you might have guessed. No other match is mentioned.

Ric Flair vs. Shelton Benjamin

Fallout from Benjamin beating HHH twice in a row. Flair makes the referee hold the ropes open for him, which is quite the Flair thing to do. Shelton easily takes him down to start and does it again with a fireman's carry. That earns Shelton a shove so he slaps Flair in the face, meaning

it's time for the Flop. The Stinger Splash misses but Shelton just lands on the top rope, because of course he can.

A clothesline puts Flair on the floor as this is one sided so far. Back in and Shelton hits another clothesline but Flair goes for the knee, as you knew was coming. The leg gets wrapped around the rope and Flair stomps away, setting up a pretty early Figure Four. Shelton gets out so it's chair time as JR wonders why Flair doesn't just bring in a bazooka.

The chair doesn't really matter as Shelton scores with an enziguri but can't follow up because of the knee. The Dragon Whip keeps Flair down and Shelton whips him over the corner. Back in and Flair gets slammed off the top but finds some brass knuckles. The Stinger Splash makes him drop them right back though and the top rope clothesline gives Shelton the pin.

Rating: C. Totally fine match here with Flair making Shelton look good. This is the kind of win that Shelton needs to rack up to support the HHH wins. Flair may put a lot of people over but he's not exactly one to lose stock or status as a result. Just keep talking about how he's Ric Flair and let him do his signature stuff and he'll be right back where he needed to be. Not many legends get that and few of them got it like Flair.

Randy Orton talks about how he'll beat Cactus Jack just like every other legend. He sounds like he's trying to convince himself. Orton is NOT scared, even after seeing everything Foley has done over the years. Tonight, Orton is going to show a new side of himself and Foley will never forget it. Foley is like an old, sad, toothless dog who needs to be put down. That's the best promo Orton has given to date and you can see how much he's grown out of this feud.

Tajiri vs. Jonathan Coachman

Coach actually armdrags him down to start and avoids an early spinning kick. Some more kicks hit the leg but the big one to the head misses. They head outside with Tajiri kicking the post, allowing Coach to wrap the leg around the post. There's a shinbreaker as Coach must have been watching some Flair tapes. Tajiri escapes a second shinbreaker into a sunset flip but Coach is right back on the knee. Even the announcers are

impressed by Coach, who grabs the rope like a veteran would do.

After a leglace, Coach goes up top but Tajiri kicks the rope to crotch him. Coach gets caught backwards in the Tree of Woe for some kicks to the back and a kick to the head gets two. Back up and Tajiri grabs the Tarantula, which is broken even faster than usual. Cue Garrison Cade with a right hand to drop Tajiri though and Coach rolls him up for the pin.

Rating: D+. This was surprisingly not terrible as Coach wrestled a perfectly watchable match. He's perfectly fine for a low level heel and it's not like Tajiri losing here hurts him very much. I can always go for something that sounded like filler turning into a match that isn't half bad. Nice little surprise here.

Long recap of Chris Jericho vs. Christian/Trish Stratus. Jericho fell for Trish but it turned out that it was a bet between himself and Christian. Trish's heart was broken but Christian beat Jericho up to try and give him some tough love. It turned out that Trish had gotten together with Christian and they're out to ruin Jericho's life.

Christian/Trish Stratus vs. Chris Jericho

Lawler drools over Trish again so JR goes on a rant, saying Lawler has no idea if she has feet because his eyes never go that low. Jericho is back to being from Winnipeg for the sake of crowd support. A slap takes Christian down to start and Trish bails straight to the floor so the chase is on. Jericho is smart enough to slow down and backdrop Christian as the fans chant a rather rude term at Trish. Well I think it's Trish but I could be wrong.

Christian gets sent outside so Jericho hits the springboard dropkick as Trish is starting to panic. Back in and Jericho accidentally shoves Trish off the apron but the distraction lets Christian drape him over the top. Trish is able to come in for some slapping, which certainly seems to appeal to Lawler. Does that surprise anyone? One grab at Trish's foot is enough to send her running to the corner for the tag so Christian rips as Jericho's face. The Walls attempt is broken up but Jericho lands head first on Christian's crotch.

The Flashback (which is almost never called such) gives Jericho two so Trish slaps Jericho again, this time allowing Christian to hit a reverse DDT out of the corner. Jericho pops right back up and sends Christian outside, meaning it's time for the expected spanking. That's enough for Christian to come back in and deck Jericho, who clotheslines Trish before knocking Christian down as well.

The Lionsault hits knees as JR is sick of hearing about Lawler wanting to go check on Trish. A Texas Cloverleaf stays on Jericho's ribs but he rolls out pretty quickly and slaps the Walls on the returning Trish. That's broken up in a hurry as well, so Christian tries the Unprettier but gets catapulted into Trish in the corner. You knew that was coming. Jericho hits the enziguri for the pin.

Rating: C+. I still like this feud a lot and they had to let Jericho get a win back here to make up for Wrestlemania. Christian and Trish colliding like that was the most logical finish they could have used and Jericho gets to fight another day as you know this is continuing. Issues between the new couple would make sense here and it's not like their relationship was the strongest in the first place.

Eugene comes in to the women's locker room while Gail Kim is changing and asks for an autograph. Screaming ensues until William Regal makes the save, though not before taking a long look at Gail. Why exactly are they here anyway?

Women's Title: Victoria vs. Lita

Lita is challenging after winning a joke of a battle royal. Lawler is drooling over Victoria's gear (fair enough) and mistakes holes for polka dots. They hit the mat to start for some near falls and bridge up, though not into a backslide. A lockup sends them falling out to the floor with Victoria looking to take a bad looking bump. Back in (with Victoria limping a bit) and we hit another pinfall reversal sequence with Lawler being a big fan of the camera shots.

Victoria's dancing moonsault gets two and cranks on Lita's arms for a bit as JR has had it with Lawler's comments (again). There's a surfboard and you can see the images going through Lawler's mind. Back up and Victoria

tries the spinning side slam but Lita reverses into a nice headscissors to the crowd's delight. Lita scores with a suplex and nips up, followed by a quick hurricanrana. A sleeper of all things puts Victoria down and you can hear the fans lose their energy.

Victoria makes the rope and now the side slam connects. The moonsault...I don't know if you can say hits or misses. Lita was supposed to roll away but she doesn't roll fast enough, meaning Victoria "missed" but landed on her nearly perfectly anyway. The reverse Twist of Fate gives Lita two so it's time for the snap DDT, only to have Victoria reverse into a small package to retain.

Rating: D-. Pretty terrible match but the JR/Lawler banter was the most memorable thing here. There's something hilarious about JR getting so annoyed and Lawler going full speed ahead with his shtick. Other than that though it was a bunch of bad spots (that moonsault was ridiculous) and a flat ending.

Post match Molly and Gail run in for the DQ, thereby validating their presence.

We recap Randy Orton vs. Cactus Jack. Last year, Orton went after Mick Foley, who wasn't ready to face a young gun like Orton. Foley went away for a few months but came back to face him, eventually setting up a handicap match at Wrestlemania. Orton pinned Foley, but now Mick wants a one on one match under hardcore rules with Evolution banned from ringside. They actually agreed, but Foley realized that this needed something special. Like Cactus Jack, which has Orton scared. As it should.

Intercontinental Title: Randy Orton vs. Cactus Jack

Foley is challenging (and looking slim here) and it's hardcore. Orton comes out with a garbage can full of toys, including a barbed wire 2x4 with the wire moving around. Oh dear you really have to go with quality in this case. Jack of course brings out Barbie and uses it to knock a trashcan out of Orton's (wrestling in his shirt to start) hands. More big swings miss and Orton does the smart thing by running for his life. A drop toehold sends Jack into the steps and Orton gets Barbie (JR: "I can

see Orton playing with Barbie.") so Jack punches him in the face. You don't touch a man's barbed wire baseball bat.

Orton smashes him in the head with some trashcan shots so Jack kicks him in the face and shows him how it's done. They get inside for the first time with Jack hitting a running knee lift and dropping a leg for two. A baseball slide sends Orton right to the floor but he gets out of the way before Jack can try the middle rope elbow. They head up the ramp with Orton belly to back suplexing him down for two. With the wrestling not working, Orton just slams him head first into the ramp to scramble some brain cells.

A ram into the steps scrambles some knee cells but Jack kicks him low to avoid the barbed wire going into his face. It's Socko time, which really feels out of place in this match. Actually hang on as Jack does an informal poll, which tells him to use the bat. The first good shot to the head busts Orton open (there's something so eerie about watching it stream down someone's face) and Jack drives it into his face again. JR: "He could be on the cover of Disfigurement Weekly!" You can see the look in Jack's eyes as he hammers Orton down in the corner and hits the running knee.

Orton loses his shirt and Jack legdrops Barbie between Orton's legs. Jack goes over to Orton's weapons and throws the 2x4 down in disgust. Instead, let's go with gasoline and a lighter. He pours the gas onto Barbie but here's Eric Bischoff to say the show will be shut down if he lights that up. That's enough to bring Jack to his senses as Orton looks to be near shock. Instead of the fire...here's a board covered in barbed wire. The fans know this is about to get really nasty but Orton pulls out some powder to save his life and slams Jack onto the wire.

Orton whips him into the board in the corner (after a great reversal tease) and Jack's arm is cut open. The RK0 is loaded up but Orton gets thrown onto the tacks and MY GOODNESS he is covered in them. That's the kind of visual you really don't see in WWE and that is a great look. They fight up the ramp and Jack throws him off the stage, through some tables. Orton is still down (and remember, his back is full of tacks) so Jack dives off the stage with the big elbow for two. I bought that as the

finish when I watched this live and I bought it again here.

Back in and the double arm DDT gives Jack two so he goes after the board again. That's enough of a delay for Orton to get in some Barbie shots and Jack is bleeding from the face. One more shot knocks Jack down but he lands on Socko. The Mandible Claw goes on but Orton gets in a low blow. The RK0 gets two and there's that shocked look on Orton's face again. Another RK0 onto Barbie is enough to retain the title.

Rating: A. I've always loved this match and it's one of Foley's last great performances. The match was exactly what it was supposed to be as Orton shows that he has the guts to survive anything and was that match that every top star has to have at some point in their career. This took Orton completely out of his comfort zone and that's when you can see the greatness coming out. It's the same story as the HHH match at the 2000 Royal Rumble, which is something that is always going to work. Outstanding match here with Foley playing the role to perfection and Orton getting everything he could have out of it.

Flair and Batista are immediately out to carry Orton to the back. HHH comes up to Orton in the back and says that's what Evolution is all about. He even says he's proud of Orton. With Orton carried away, HHH says he wouldn't bet against himself tonight. Beating Shawn is always great but beating Chris Benoit in Canada is where the money is at.

La Resistance vs. Hurricane/Rosey

This was made on Heat and welcome to the death slot guys. There are so many empty seats opposite the hard camera that the camera is suddenly much tighter with the regular shots only popping up for a few seconds at a time. Hurricane works on Conway's wrist to start before Rosey comes in to hiptoss his partner onto him. A powerslam gets Conway out of trouble and it's Grenier coming in for a suplex as the announcers talk about Orton vs. Jack. Normally that gets on my nerves but what are you expecting here?

Grenier slaps on a bearhug and here's Eugene as the already nothing match breaks down. Rosey comes in and cleans house as Eugene starts playing with the Quebec flag. The French guys get sent to the floor so Hurricane

can dive onto the two of them, leaving Hurricane to get inside and run the ropes. Cue Regal for the save as a mask less Hurricane hits the Eye of the Hurricane for the pin.

Rating: D-. I don't like to use this term but this was what it was and that's all it was going to be. There was no chance that this match was going to be anything more than a five minute nacho break match and that's what they did. I don't blame them a bit for the match not being very good as it's not like they had anything to work with here.

We recap Edge's return, which hasn't been the most thrilling thing in the world so far.

Edge vs. Kane

Edge's hand is in a cast and he's suspended if he uses it. Edge, who has been very aggressive since coming back, backs up into the corner to start before being planted with a two arm chokeslam. A middle rope clothesline gets Edge out of trouble and Kane bails to the floor before the spear can launch. For some reason Edge thinks it's a good idea to follow him, allowing Kane to send the bad hand into the steps.

Back in and the hand work begins so the fans would rather shout about Earl Hebner screwing Bret and something that happens in the crowd. Edge scores with a spinwheel kick but charges into a big boot. The top rope clothesline misses and Edge hits the implant DDT. The threat of a spear sends the referee to the floor so Edge kicks Kane low, hits him with the cast, and nails the spear for the pin.

Rating: D. As I said in the previous match, what in the world were you expecting here? The big story of the match was Kane working on Edge's hand and Edge not exactly looking as fired up as he's been before. It was boring but they kept it short, which does make things a little better. Hopefully Edge can shake the rust off quickly.

We recap the main event. HHH, Chris Benoit and Shawn Michaels had a masterpiece last month at Wrestlemania so let's do it again. I've heard of worse ideas and there's almost no question that this will be awesome. Both HHH and Shawn swear that lightning won't strike twice and Benoit is

ready to prove them wrong all over again.

Raw World Title: HHH vs. Shawn Michaels vs. Chris Benoit

Benoit is defending and gets the hero's welcome, which is always cool to see. They stare each other down to start until Benoit chops HHH with Shawn joining in. Benoit isn't cool with someone stealing his chop fest though and chops the skin off Shawn's chest. Shawn grabs a swinging neckbreaker but HHH is back in with the jumping knee to the face. It's too early for the Pedigree but HHH and Shawn get together and knock Benoit to the floor.

That means it's time for the champ to throw some German suplexes and Shawn gets whipped out to the floor. He's right back up on the apron to break up an early Crossface and Benoit knocks him off the apron again. HHH catches him on top and Shawn comes back in to knock Benoit outside. The facebuster drops Shawn and there's the Swan Dive from Benoit as they're doing a good job of keeping things moving here instead of having it be one on one for long stretches at a time.

The referee gets bumped (kind of early for that) and Benoit gets the Sharpshooter on HHH. Shawn comes diving in for the save so Benoit Crossfaces him down. That's broken up so here's the required Shawn Sharpshooter in Canada as Earl Hebner runs in as the replacement referee. Now that we're past the absolutely 10000% required Montreal reference because every city in Canada is the same, it's time for the YOU SCREWED BRET chant.

Benoit gets the Crossface on Shawn until HHH makes the save. HHH stomps Benoit down in the corner but Shawn is back up. Benoit and HHH are knocked to the floor but Shawn's big dive sends him crashing through the announcers' table. Back in and HHH hammers on Benoit, which at least gives us some relief from YOU SCREWED BRET. Benoit goes shoulder first into the post and we hit a camel clutch.

The fans get behind Benoit again so HHH pounds in some right hands to the head. The facebuster only sends Benoit into the rolling German suplexes to put HHH in trouble again. A quick Pedigree connects though, drawing Shawn back in for another save. Everyone is down and Shawn nipping up

doesn't exactly please the fans. The top rope elbow hits HHH and Sweet Chin Music knocks Benoit off the apron. HHH is right back up with a low blow to Shawn for a close two but gets backdropped to the floor.

We're late in the match and HHH is on the floor so it's sledgehammer time. A shot to Shawn's back (just like at Summerslam) has him writhing in agony but the fans would rather look at something in the crowd. Benoit breaks up a hammer shot to Shawn's head and, after shrugging off a whip into the steps, catapults HHH into the steps. Back in and Sweet Chin Music is countered into the Sharpshooter with Benoit pulling him away from the ropes. HHH tries to come in for the save but Shawn finally taps to retain the title.

Rating: A. They wisely tried a different approach this time around than at Wrestlemania, which makes a lot of sense as there's no point trying to equal or top something that was perfect in the first place. Benoit has now made both of them tap in the middle of the ring to finally prove that he's the better man. That's about as definitive of a push as you're going to get and the match was another classic. They went with a slower pace and less violence here as there was more of a question about who might win here. Wrestlemania was clearly Benoit's night and it was a smart move to switch things up here. Great match, all over again.

Overall Rating: B+. It's an eight match card and the two important matches (the only two to break twelve minutes) were excellent. That's really all you need for an awesome show and the bad stuff, while quite bad, was also quite short. The three awful matches (Women's Title, La Resistance vs. Hurricane/Rosey and Edge vs. Kane) didn't add up to the length of either big match so literally, either Orton vs. Foley or the main event outweighs the three bad ones time wise. They got as close to perfection as they could have with the two big matches here and that's exactly what they should have gone for. Check those two matches out.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the paperback edition of KB's Complete 2003 Monday Night Raw Reviews (also available as an e-book) from Amazon. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2018/09/07/new-book-kbs-complete-smackdown-2003-reviews/>

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

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