

Monday Night Raw – May 3, 2004: The Desert Does Good Things



IMG Credit: WWE

Monday Night Raw

Date: May 3, 2004

Location: America West Arena, Phoenix, Arizona

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

It's a big night here with Chris Benoit defending the World Title against Shawn Michaels. HHH is still lurking around though because he doesn't know how to do anything else. Other than that we have the continuing adventures of Eugene, who has turned out to be quite the charming fellow, especially with William Regal as his handler. Let's get to it.

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

The opening video looks at Benoit vs. Michaels, billed as the Showdown in the Desert. I've heard of worse ideas.

Opening sequence.

JR welcomes us to Memphis.

Evolution vs. Tajiri/Shelton Benjamin/Edge

Flair is the odd man out here. HHH and Shelton start things off but Randy tags himself in before anything can start. Orton catches a kick to the ribs but is smart enough to not spin the leg around for the Dragon Whip. A clothesline drops Orton and it's Tajiri coming in, only to be taken into the Evolution corner. As he comes in, the fans remind HHH that he tapped out. Edge, now with a more stylish black cast, gets in as well and it's a rather nice looking staredown.

HHH eventually gets the better of it and brings Orton in for some choking in the corner. Evolution keeps taking turns on Edge with Batista slamming him down and HHH stomping away in the corner. The bad hand goes into the steps and HHH slugs away, followed by the facebuster for two. Edge scores with a spinwheel kick and it's off to Tajiri for some slightly better kicks. A tornado DDT gets two on HHH until Batista breaks up the handspring with a shot to the back.

We come back from a break with Tajiri still in trouble, including HHH elbowing him to the floor. Batista chokes a bit and HHH adds an elbow to the chest as the dominance continues. Lawler: "Is it true that if you turn an Oriental upside down, they become disoriented?" Orton even gets in some pounding of his own and grabs a long chinlock. Back up and Tajiri kicks the head out of Orton, allowing the hot tag off to Edge. Everything breaks down and Edge hits Orton with a top rope clothesline. Batista breaks up the spear attempt and HHH clotheslines Benjamin. Tajiri mists Batista though and the spear is enough to put Orton away.

Rating: B-. Good old fashioned six man tag (which we need a lot more of) here and that's exactly what this story needed. Evolution vs. a rotating cast of faces is a perfect way to book the show as you can do all kinds of combinations. The win should give Edge the inside track to an Intercontinental Title shot and there's nothing wrong with that. Good booking and fun action to start the show.

Jonathan Coachman and Garrison Cade are insulting the women of Phoenix (and promising two good looking midwest women, who better not be Moolah and Mae Young) when Vince McMahon comes in to say he's here for the big main event. That's a nice cameo and Vince put Benoit over very strong.

Smackdown ReBound.

Last night at a Smackdown show, Eddie Guerrero brought his family into the ring when “something” happened, possibly involving JBL. I don’t see this going well.

HHH rants to Bischoff about being in the World Title match. Batista wants Tajiri and Johnny Nitro tries to calm things down. HHH: “Take it easy Johnny Oversell.” For next week: Batista vs. Tajiri, Orton vs. Edge for the Intercontinental Title and HHH vs. Benjamin.

Hurricane vs. Rob Conway

They fight over a neckbreaker to start with Conway getting the better of it and hammering away. It’s off to a modified cravate to keep Hurricane in trouble but he pops up for a missed Shining Wizard. Conway is right back up with a hanging swinging neckbreaker for the clean pin.

Rating: D. Not enough time to mean anything here but at least they’re doing something to set up next week’s match. That’s been the norm as of late and that makes for some fun television: set up things for next week and keep giving the fans a reason to come back. Why is that so hard to grasp?

Post match Conway promises a special beating for Eugene.

Video on Kane’s renewed evil, including forcing a kiss on Lita last week. You know, in case you haven’t seen enough from Kane in recent months.

Kane vs. Steven Richards

Chokeslam in about thirty seconds.

It’s time for the Highlight Reel. Before the guest comes out, Jericho talks about tonight’s World Title match. What are his thoughts? It’s been far too long since he’s had a World Title match of his own so he wants the first shot at the winner (making sure to point out that it’s someone other than HHH challenging for a change in a nice touch).

As for the show though, his guest is Matt Hardy, who believes in karma

and is not afraid of pain. Jericho asks him about Kane and Lita but Matt gets right to the point: he wants Lita in the ring right now because he needs to ask her something. Lita shows up on the screen and says Matt has to listen to her. In what sounds like a forced statement, she says she never loved him and has found someone else. She never wants to see him again and needs him to stay away from her.

Lita finally snaps and says she can't do this before screaming that she's in the basement, revealing that Kane has her hostage. Matt runs out and Jericho says that's kind of an abrupt end to the show. Cue Christian, Trish Stratus (all in black and....well dang) and Tyson Tomko to chat a bit before coming in and laying Jericho out, including a low blow from Trish.

During the break, Matt went to save Lita but Kane was gone. Hugging ensues. Again: logical stuff there. There was no reason for Matt to wait until the break was over if it was that important, so just say it happened in real time and show it later.

Gail Kim vs. Victoria

Non-title and Molly, now with long, curly blonde hair, is with Gail. Before the match, Gail says no one feels sorry for Lita. Gail jumps her to start but gets half gorilla pressed up with Victoria dropping her part of the way through. The dancing moonsault gets two with Molly making the save and earning herself a stern lecture.

Back up and Gail clotheslines her into a chinlock, followed by a dragon sleeper. That works so well that Gail does the same sequence of moves again, this time causing Victoria to fight up and scream a bit. Three straight shot to the face have Gail knocked down (ignore Gail falling before the contact on at least one of them) but she's right back with the Black Widow....and actually gets the tap.

Rating: D. Pretty boring match here but Victoria does need a new challenger. I can't say fresh because we've seen every combination of these women for the better part of ever but at least we're getting somewhere different with these people. Gail isn't exactly polished at this point and hopefully we get to Trish instead of her instead.

William Regal is ready to train Eugene in what he calls a torture session. This might be his way to get out of this once and for all.

Vince is alone in a sky box to watch the main event.

It's time for the training session with Eugene, who is very excited by an armdrag because Ricky Steamboat did them. Regal does a bunch of moves but Eugene does them all (set to what would become his music) and then taunts him with toys and a HHH water bottle. Regal switches to chain wrestling (as Ride of Valkyries starts up)...and is almost immediately taken down into a Regal Stretch with Eugene making him tap.

That's EXACTLY how this character should work as he's a goon in over his head everywhere but the ring, where he's an idiot savant. That's a good character and something that plays to both WWE's creativity (which can exist) and Eugene's in-ring skills. Everyone wins and I'm looking forward to the match next week.

Preview for next week. Again: give them a reason to tune in because they want to see matches instead of asking them to tune in and find out that it's a good show. It also helps when you have the show planned that far in advance.

Before the main event, Bischoff makes Christian vs. Jericho in a cage for next week.

Raw World Title: Shawn Michaels vs. Chris Benoit

Shawn is challenging and they have a lot of time, as they should. An aggressive Benoit goes straight at Shawn in the corner but the referee makes a bit of a forced break. They do it again and now it's time to start slugging away for a few moments. A headlock doesn't keep Benoit down long as he's right back with a backdrop and a clothesline to put Shawn on the floor. The announcers talk about Shawn being born here, with JR pointing out that not many people are going to notice, or likely care.

Shawn gets in a neckbreaker, followed by the flying forearm into the nipup. Benoit can't get the Crossface in either of two attempts so Shawn hits him in the head again. Back from a very abrupt break with Shawn

holding an abdominal stretch, allowing Lawler to plug next week's matches again. One heck of a whip into the corner just wakes Benoit up as he rattles off some rollups for near falls.

Shawn atomic drops him down again, which Lawler thinks has the fans cheering because Shawn is from Phoenix. The top rope elbow connects but Sweet Chin Music is countered into the rolling German suplexes. Benoit hits four in a row but misses the Swan Dive to put them both down. Shawn goes up again, only to get caught with chops and some very angry stomps to put him in trouble.

Benoit loads up a suplex but gets suplexed out to the floor instead. The moonsault to the floor takes Benoit down again and Michaels' tights coming down far lower than they need to be. He's fine enough to whip Benoit knees first into the steps and head first into the post to bust him open as we take another break. Back again with Benoit fighting out of a sleeper and getting two off a bridging German suplex.

Shawn grabs the Walls of all things but Benoit makes a rope as we keep going (not a bad thing). The Crossface goes on and Shawn is in trouble until he gets his foot on the rope. With that not working, Benoit tries the Sharpshooter but gets kicked into the referee. Of course Sweet Chin Music connects a few seconds later but there's no one to count. Cue HHH (erg) for a Pedigree to Shawn (Benoit didn't see it) to give Benoit the retaining pin.

Rating: B+. Dang it they had me believing that HHH might actually stay out of the main event scene for a few weeks. This is either leading to HHH vs. Shawn (again) or Shawn wanting ONE MORE TITLE MATCH (again) because that's the only way the World Title scene seems to be able to go for Benoit. HHH and Shawn need to just stay far apart for a long time but that's not going to happen anytime soon, because they need to take over the show again and again.

HHH laughs to end the show.

Overall Rating: A-. What more can you ask for? The very good Eugene sequence, two very good to great matches and setting things up for later on. There's very little that they're not doing anything at the moment and

it's almost hard to believe that this is Raw. I'm not used to having a show where I can't make fun of that much but they're managing to do it as of late.

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