

Smackdown – December 23, 2004 (Tribute To The Troops): Exactly As Advertised



IMG Credit: WWE

Smackdown

Date: December 23, 2004

Location: Camp Speicher, Tikrit, Iraq

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

It worked the first time so let's do it again. This is the second annual Tribute to the Troops and since this is in the earlier years, it means they're actually going to put in a little more effort. The show is outside in Iraq, meaning it's going to be a bit warm. We even have a big match announced this time around with Undertaker vs. Heidenreich. Let's get to it.

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

Opening sequence.

Here's Vince McMahon to get things going. Vince talks about how the wrestlers have volunteered to come back for the volunteer military because they want to say thank you. They've come over here to boost the military's spirit but it's been the opposite because the soldiers are that inspiring.

Back home all you hear are all the negatives from Iraq and all the progress they've made around here. When he gets back to America, he'll be telling some of those negative media personalities where they can go. For now though, on with the show, including Lilian Garcia as the attractive Mrs. Claus style ring announcer. Vince: "TEN HUT! I've always wanted to say that."

Lilian sings the National Anthem, which she knocks out of the park as always.

Video on the roster arriving.

Rene Dupree vs. Booker T.

Expect to see a lot of America vs. foreigner matches tonight. The announcers are all over Dupree with the anti-French jokes because if you disagree with anything the military does, you're a horrible stupid person. Feeling out process to start as the announcers list off a bunch of military personnel who made this possible.

Booker hits some hiptosses and a clothesline to take over as the fans are very into the raise the roof pose. I mean, that's a few years old but points for trying at least. Dupree avoids a charge in the corner and drops an elbow setting up the French Tickler (Tazz: "IN IRAQ???"). The chinlock goes on for a few seconds with Booker popping up and hitting the flapjack. A Spinarooni into the ax kick gives Booker the pin.

Rating: D+. These matches are going to be on a sliding scale here as there is no point to suggest that the wrestling is what matters. Having the American beat the foreigner is as old hat as you can get on a show like this and that's perfectly fine. Booker is someone who can fire up a crowd so this was a good choice for the opener.

A solider talks about getting to go home to see her husband.

Wrestlers meet troops and think Iraq isn't as bad as it seems. They were even under fire at one point and we see a piece of a mortar that hit them. That's enough to make them honorary Steel Tigers and they get a coin.

Here's Santa Claus, who seems to be looking a little hardcore legendish this year. It might not be Christmas yet but he's making a special trip here. As luck would have it, he brings out some WWE Divas to help him. That would be Torrie Wilson, Dawn Marie and Jackie Gayda, who seem to be rather popular. Lilian joins them in the ring and they throw out presents to the crowd.

They include in some hugs as a bonus but Santa invites them back inside. He has a gift for all of them in the bag, which of course would be lingerie. Well actually Dawn gets a half empty bottle of Gatorade. Santa: "Santa developed quite a thirst and felt the need to quench it." The catfight is on and Dawn is sent outside. Torrie thinks something is up and realizes that Santa is in fact Mick Foley. The voice, the hunched walk, the being 6'4 and BEING SANTA CLAUS didn't give that away?

We see a soldier reenlisting.

A soldier misses her family.

Undertaker vs. Heidenreich

No Heyman here with Heidenreich and no hat/coat/slowness for Undertaker. The smoke does come up though, which is kind of a weird visual without everything else. Undertaker slugs away to start and takes over without too much trouble. Could it be because he's facing Heidenreich? Old School into a reverse DDT gives Undertaker two and it's already time for a breather. A slugout on the floor goes to Undertaker and there's the apron legdrop.

Back in and Snake Eyes connects but the big boot is countered with a swinging Boss Man Slam to give Heidenreich his own two. Heidenreich hammers away so Undertaker does the same, followed by the jumping clothesline for two more. Now Snake Eyes into the big boot connects and it's a legdrop to make things even worse for Heidenreich. The soldiers want a Tombstone but settle for a broken up chokeslam so Heidenreich can bail to the floor and take the countout.

Rating: D. Good grief how is this feud continuing??? Does WWE really think that much of Heidenreich that they need to keep going with him here? His matches are terrible and his promos are far from anything special, but we get to see these two fight AGAIN because WWE can't just let something go.

A soldier misses his newborn son. He gets to come home n Christmas Day though, which is a surprise to his wife.

Wrestlers talk about how awesome the trip has been.

More clips of the wrestlers doing military stuff. There isn't much to say on these things as they're just meeting troops and shots of events and equipment. The wrestlers want to come back.

Booker T. and some soldiers wish us a five time Merry Christmas.

Before the show, a General thanked the troops.

The same General thanked the wrestlers and gave them a special coin. Seeing Undertaker in street clothes is still bizarre.

Hardcore Holly vs. Kenzo Suzuki

I can't complain about the repetitive formula here. Suzuki is wrestling barefoot here and hits an early hiptoss. Holly isn't having that and chops Suzuki in the corner until a hot shot puts Holly in trouble. The chinlock doesn't last long as Holly fights up and hits the dropkick. Holly's top rope clothesline sets up the Alabama Slam for the fast pin.

Another soldier says hi and misses his family.

Video on the arena being set up. Some of the soldiers got to mess around in the ring for a bonus.

Here's JBL in the Hummer, now with longhorns. JBL however is in a hazmat suit because...well because he's a hard guy to figure out. After popping up the mask on the suit, he complains about the conditions here, including saying that the food has no exit strategy and the toilet paper is rather abrasive. JBL talks about how good things happens when he comes over here but he's getting tired of bringing the good luck. Oh and where is the booze? We could call this place Rehabistan.

He's happy to be our American hero and knows the fans want to chant his name. This time though, just whisper it so the enemy doesn't know where they are. JBL leaves, promising to see us when the next war starts somewhere else. Cue Big Show to say he doesn't like JBL making this all about himself. Show makes fun of the suit and knocks JBL to the floor with a right hand. As usual, when JBL is being over the top and goofy,

he's all kinds of fun.

Video on last year's Tribute to the Troops and the thought process in setting this up.

Wrestlers, troops, troops, wrestlers.

Kurt Angle/Luther Reigns vs. Eddie Guerrero/Rey Mysterio

Call me crazy, but having Kurt Angle, the American hero, as the face might not work on this show. Angle tries to explain why he doesn't such but Eddie cuts him off. Eddie and Rey drive out in a Hummer, with Tazz thinking Eddie stole it. Rey even has a camouflage mask. Rey and Angle start things off with Kurt easily taking him down and working on the arm. An armdrag into an armbar keeps Rey down for a bit and it's Reigns coming in for a backbreaker.

Angle's snap suplex gets two and Reigns hits another backbreaker for two of his own. Rey finally spins out and hits a tornado DDT to drop Reigns, setting up the hot tag to Eddie. The rope walk headscissors/wristdrag take the villains down but Angle reverses Three Amigos into the ankle lock. That's broken up in a hurry but Reigns breaks up the 619. Eddie takes Angle down and now the 619 hits Reigns. The frog splash gets two with Angle making the save so Eddie sends him outside. Rey Drops The Dime to finish Reigns.

Rating: C+. Not a bad main event here with the three best guys doing everything they could and Reigns getting in his stuff at the right times. Much like the rest of the show, the wrestling wasn't the point here but at least we got a good match out of it. That's pretty impressive when they only had six minutes.

One more video of the wrestlers with the troops wraps us up.

Overall Rating: C+. I'm not sure what to say on this one. The whole point was about making the troops feel important with some wrestling included. They did that to the letter but the wrestling was just there for the most part. To be fair though, that's exactly what you knew was coming. It's exactly what it's supposed to be and while it might not mean much, it was

a cool thing to do and the show flew by.

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