

Monday Night Raw – January 29, 2001: Even The Contract Signings Are Cool



IMG Credit: WWE

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 29, 2001

Location: Mellon Arena, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 13,449

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

So I just did the Smackdown from the week before so now we'll see the followup for the sake of continuity. We're coming off the Royal Rumble and on the way to No Way Out, meaning Steve Austin vs. HHH/Vince McMahon is currently the top story. That's not the worst place in the world to be and this is a pretty strong time for the company. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's hometown hero and WWF Champion Kurt Angle to open things up. Angle brags about being the most valuable sperm donor in town, Angle shows us a clip from last year where he declared himself Pittsburgh's hometown hero in this very arena. He even told Mario Lemieux to come back to the Pittsburgh Penguins, which Lemieux did in the year in between. You can imagine the gloating off that one, but Angle would rather talk about

tonight's fatal four way for a title shot this week on Smackdown.

Angle omits the Rock from the list of participants so here's Rock to interrupt. Rock didn't like being left out so he's here to set things straight. First of all, Rock doesn't quite agree with Angle taking credit for Lemieux return, leading to a string of various swearing and insults. With the mean things out of the way, Rock has some footage of his own, which suggests that Angle likes...pizza. Angle freaks out and Rock shows us a local pizza ad from a few years ago with Angle watching pizza toppings wrestle. Ok yeah it's goofy, but Rock was in a series of Chef Boyardee commercials in 1999 with the jingle Gettin Cheffy With It.

Back in the arena, Rock asks about Angle saying it doesn't matter who is in the four way, setting up the IT DOESN'T MATTER what doesn't matter line. Rock promises to win tonight and then take the title on Thursday but here's Big Show (also in the four way) to jump Rock from behind. Angle is very pleased as Show hits a big clothesline, but a point from Show makes the nerves go right back up.

The XFL is coming in five days. On my birthday no less.

Tag Team Titles: Dudley Boyz vs. Edge and Christian

The Dudleys are defending but Edge and Christian come out in street clothes. As I try to figure out what street they could possibly be from, Christian says Edge is sick with food poisoning he got last week at Smackdown. He even has a note from a "real professional doctor." They have replacements though.

Tag Team Titles: Dudley Boyz vs. Kaientai

The Dudleys are still defending and Kaientai promise to win by the power of Grayskull. Edge and Christian sit in on commentary (JR: "Oh goody. Hot dog.) as D-Von sends Funaki face first into the top turnbuckle. Bubba punches Taka in the face as we look at commentary for a rather annoying trope. D-Von drops his good looking legdrop for two on Funaki as Edge and Christian insist that they are NOT scared of the Dudleys.

The reverse inverted DDT slam gets two on Taka and it's off to Bubba to

clean house, despite the team being firmly in control before the tag. What's Up hits Funaki and it's an electric chair drop into a neckbreaker (that's a new one) to Taka. That's enough to draw Edge in for a spear on D-Von and the Canadians bail. Funaki gets the least intriguing near fall in a long time and it's the 3D to retain the titles.

Rating: D. Well they tried, though it wasn't the most thrilling match any way you looked at it. There is only so much you can do to make me believe that Kaientai is a real threat to the Dudleys and the titles so this was about as good as it was going to get. If nothing else, Edge and Christian vs. the Dudleys will be great, as always.

Vince promises a match tonight for the #1 contendership when HHH and Stephanie storm in with an attorney named Brian Gerwitz (ha). HHH is worried about the contract signing but Vince has it covered.

Rock left the medic's room earlier after refusing treatment.

Billy Gunn is worried about Chyna but wants her to get better and move forward with everything else going on in her life.

Val Venis vs. Steve Blackman

The Right To Censor is trying to get rid of Steve's weapons. Therefore, Blackman has a full bag of them. Blackman strikes away to start until a belly to back suplex gets Venis out of trouble. Steven Richards gets in a few cheap shots on the floor because that's what he's supposed to do in a match.

There's a whip into the steps to make it worse for Blackman as this is almost one sided so far. Back in and we hit the chinlock with Ivory shouting that violence is unacceptable. Blackman fights up and kicks him in the ribs, setting up a snap suplex for a breather. The comeback is shortlived though as Richards gets in a cheap shot from the floor, allowing Venis to get a rollup for the pin.

Rating: D. There's an idea to the Right To Censor but at the same time there was only so much that could be done when their biggest star was either the Godfather or Venis. Struggling to beat Steve Blackman isn't a

good sign either and the lack of a top star was a reason why the team never went anywhere. That and the fact that they weren't supposed to.

Post match Blackman clotheslines Venis and beats up Richards. Bull Buchanan runs in for the save but Hardcore Holly makes the real save with some weapons. He throws Blackman some nunchucks and the beatdown is on in a hurry. Holly and Blackman tease a fight but agree to settle it over a warm cup of tea instead.

Tough Enough video submissions, including Josh Lomberger (Matthews).

Vince is on the phone with someone who is recovering and suggests massages. William Regal comes in with a cup of tea because it can relieve Vince's stress. Vince seems pleasantly surprised.

Video on HHH vs. Steve Austin. HHH was revealed as the mastermind behind Austin being run over by a car back in 1999 and then cost him the WWF Title. Austin cost him the title at the Royal Rumble and then won the Rumble later in the night. They need one more match, and they'll do that at No Way Out.

HHH rants about how he can't trust anyone in this.

Austin says he'll sign and he'll even do it first.

Here's Vince to emcee the contract signing. Vince talks about the hatred between the two and says the stipulations for the match are to be determined. However, there can be no violence between the two of them until No Way Out, unless it is in a sanctioned match. If HHH attacks Austin, he is suspended for six months. If Austin attacks HHH, he loses his WWF Title match at Wrestlemania.

HHH (with Stephanie and attorney) and Austin both come out and sit down as the fans are rather mean to Stephanie. Hold on though as Austin needs some beer. They stare each other down and Austin signs without saying anything. HHH's attorney has to read the contract again and there's something that HHH doesn't like. We pause for some reading and Austin isn't happy.

HHH signs...and hits Austin in the head with the metal briefcase. The

beatdown is on as everyone is freaking out about the suspension. The Pedigree lays Austin out and Vince tells HHH that he's been suspended for six months. Actually that's not true...because HHH didn't actually sign. NOW he signs and gets in a gem with "Paragraph 3:16 says you can't touch me." I've always liked this segment.

The XFL is coming in five days.

Post break, here's what you just saw before the break.

HHH and Stephanie left during the break but did make sure to pop out of the sunroof for some bragging.

APA vs. Hardy Boyz vs. Right To Censor

The winners get a title shot on Smackdown and that would be Buchanan and Goodfather for the RTC. It's a brawl to start before the RTC even gets here with Jacqueline and Lita fighting on the ramp. With that broken up, the RTC comes in and it's Buchanan attacking Matt to start. Everything breaks down in a hurry with Jeff missing the Whisper in the Wind. Bradshaw Clotheslines Buchanan with Goodfather making a save. That's enough to allow Jeff to drop the Swanton for the pin and the title shot in a hurry.

Rock confirms that he will be in the four way because all Show did was tick him off. Payback is guaranteed.

Big Show laughs.

Hardcore Title: Raven vs. Crash

Crash is challenging and has Molly Holly in his corner. Raven brings his shopping cart full of weapons and uses it to knock Crash off the ramp. A tricycle toss misses Crash and they're already in the crowd. Crash dives off the balcony with an ax handle and catapults Raven into a sign. They head into the concourse with JR and King using the time to plug the XFL. Raven throws a mop bucket at him and gets sent into a wall for his efforts.

Some kind of cart crushes Raven against the wall and Crash dives through

the cart to take him down again. They head outside for a bulldog onto a park bench but Raven kicks Molly away before she can crotch him against a tree. Crash does it on his own but a masked woman jumps out of a car and saves Raven. Molly goes after her and gets thrown down, allowing the masked woman to hit Crash in the back so Raven can steal the pin.

Rating: C. This was pretty entertaining for a hardcore match as they were trying out there. You can only get so far in a match like this if you just hit each other with stuff so going out of the ring and trying something new is the way to go. The tree part was funny and the kind of thing you need some creativity to do and it worked out well here.

Raven and the woman (never revealed but I believe it was going to be Tori) drive off.

Chris Benoit isn't worried about the four way.

Undertaker vs. Haku

Kane and Rikishi are here as seconds. They waste no time in slugging it out with Undertaker hitting a big boot into the legdrop for two. Old School already connects but Undertaker goes outside to beat up Rikishi. The distraction lets Haku get in a few shots and "slam" Undertaker down by the head (Haku seemed to lose the grip and Undertaker fell by himself). Back up and the jumping clothesline puts Haku down again and the jumping DDT has more effect than you might expect. Rikishi and Kane get in a fight on the floor to break up the Tombstone...so Undertaker hits a chokeslam to win a few seconds later instead.

Rating: D. Just a bunch of hitting each other until the finish here, which isn't the most thrilling match in the world. Then again, the Brothers of Destruction against Rikishi and Haku isn't the most interesting match either. Rikishi isn't an imposing main eventer and Undertaker just beat Haku in four minutes. Where is the threat here?

Post match Rikishi chairs Undertaker in the head to bust him open but he's right back up to clear the ring with Kane's help.

Post break Undertaker thinks there is too much talking going on so now

it's time to fight. Let's have a First Blood match on Smackdown.

Undertaker: "I like to bleed. It turns me on!"

Dean Malenko, a real ladies' man, is at WWF New York and can't stand being away from Lita much longer. They'll be back together real soon and the Hardys won't come between them again.

Lita vs. Jacqueline

Ivory is on commentary as the winner faces her on Smackdown. They start fast with a Cactus Clothesline putting them both on the floor as Ivory accuses JR of fantasizing about him. Apparently big JR fans, Jacqueline and Lita dive onto Ivory and the match is thrown out in a hurry. Lita's music plays but she didn't seem to win.

We look at the contract signing again, with HHH apparently only signing one H before attacking Austin. That might be stretching the legal definition of not signing. One thing I always appreciate: they keep saying February 25 as the date of the show. Not "four weeks from now" or "at No Way Out". It's a definitive date so you know when the show is taking place. Why is that so much to ask?

Chris Jericho vs. Chris Benoit vs. Big Show vs. The Rock

The winner gets Angle, on commentary here, on Thursday. During his entrance, we see the pizza commercial again for a funny bit. Before the match, Jericho mocks Angle's commercial, saying it has made him hungry for the title. Benoit and Jericho slug it out before the other two come to the ring, interrupting Lilian Garcia in the process. Show breaks it up so here's Rock...who charges into a one armed chokeslam.

Benoit breaks up the cover but Show is right there to beat up everyone else. Jericho's high crossbody is pulled out of the air but Benoit comes in to cut Show down. Rock comes back in for his clotheslines and Show gets tossed outside. That's fine with Benoit, who snaps off a German suplex to Rock. The Swan Dive only hits mat and Rock's Samoan drop gets two.

Show comes back in and gets DDTed but Rock has to go outside to deal with

Jericho. Rock comes back in to break up the Crossface and the Lionsault hits Benoit for two. Jericho tries the Walls on Rock but Show grabs him by the throat. Benoit kicks Show low and the Canadians send Show outside, leaving Rock to Rock Bottom Benoit for the pin and the title shot.

Rating: B. That was a very fast match but they packed a lot into it and didn't bother wasting time. Why bother doing anything more than exactly what the fans want to see here? There's no need to build it up as anything more than what it was: four people giving it all they had to become the #1 contender, which is what you should be trying to do almost all the time.

Angle tells Rock to bring it to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. It continues to amaze me how much easier these old shows are to watch. There's an energy to them and they get through things so quickly without having the show drag. That and there's not a ton of comedy to them. Not everything needs to have some kind of a joke included and they realized that here. It's an entertaining show that made me want to see more, with the contract signing even having a good twist included. Well done, and it wasn't even that great of a show.

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