

Monday Night Raw – June 16, 1997: Austin Needs Help

Monday Night Raw

Date: June 16, 1997

Location: Olympic Center, Lake Placid, New York

Attendance: 2,773

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jim Ross

We've got three weeks before the next pay per view and Steve Austin needs four partners to take on the Hart Foundation in Calgary. After last week, it seems that he has his lineup ready with Ken Shamrock, the Legion of Doom and Mankind, but that Stunner to Shamrock to end last week's show might cause him some problems. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Vince and JR discuss the fight between Bret and Shawn before last week's show. Shawn has re-injured his knee and hurt his neck, so he's out 4-6 weeks. Bret has re-injured his knee and will be back soon. Since Shawn is out, the Tag Team Titles are vacant and therefore we'll be having an eight team tournament with the winners facing Austin and a partner of his choice for the titles.

Here's Austin to open the show. The lights are really low to hide how empty the arena is. Austin doesn't care who his partner is or that Shawn is injured because he'll fight anyone on his own. This brings Mankind to the screen, who says he felt a bond last week when Steve Austin flipped him off and that he knows they would be great partners. Austin: "You ain't got no ears." Austin didn't like Shawn out here dancing and wearing his hair long, but Mankind has both things covered. He'll let Austin think about it so have a nice day.

Vince shows a clip of the Foundation beating Austin down last week and Mankind coming out as a replacement. Then Shamrock came down to help after the match and got a Stunner. Austin rants about Pillman but here's Shamrock to interrupt. He came out here last week because he doesn't like

bullies, but he sees Austin as the same as the Hart Foundation. Shamrock promises violence and challenges Austin to a match, which finally knocks the smile off Austin's face. Shamrock is ready right now but Austin says he'll fight Pillman then beat up Ken for fun. Ken is still awful on the mic but it's a hair better than it used to be.

After a break, Pillman is shown a clip of Austin shoving his head in a toilet at King of the Ring. As for the Foundation being handcuffed to the posts during the match with Austin tonight, Shamrock has nothing to worry about because there won't be anything left of Austin after Pillman gets through with him.

Tag Team Tournament First Round: New Blackjacks vs. Owen Hart/British Bulldog

Both teams promise to win in some pre-recorded interviews. Windham clotheslines Owen down to start and puts on an armbar as JR ruins several children's lives by admitting that Owen was the Blue Blazer. Bulldog has some more success against Bradshaw with the pure power before handing it off to Owen for a missile dropkick. Bradshaw pops back up and cleans house with clotheslines of his own, followed by a powerslam for two on Bulldog. Bradshaw spends too much time loading up a powerbomb though, allowing Owen to spinwheel kick him down to give Bulldog the rollup pin.

Rating: C-. This could have been far worse and it was nice to see Owen and Bulldog fight a regular team instead of whatever makeshift combination of main eventers they had thrown at them. The division could use a tournament like this to go somewhere, as Owen and Bulldog cleaned the thing out for so long that no one has any real stature.

We recap the Nation crumbling last week. Faarooq has promised a new Nation tonight and will be debuting his newest member in a tag match against Undertaker/Ahmed Johnson.

Undertaker and Paul Bearer (now showing a huge gash on his face with the bandages removed) are in the back and Undertaker is told to be quiet when Vince asks him about teaming with Johnson tonight. Bearer says it's all about him and what he wants as long as the secret is over his head.

Shamrock says Austin made a huge mistake last week. Tonight, it's time for Austin to knuckle up. They're far better off keeping Shamrock's promos really short like this as it's more effective to keep it quick and let his fighting do the talking.

Hunter Hearst Helmsley vs. Phineas Godwinn

Mankind vs. Helmsley is confirmed for In Your House: Canadian Stampede, meaning Austin might be minus a partner. Well a potential partner at least. They head into the corner to start with Helmsley hammering away, which is exactly what Godwinn wants. A mule kick puts the king down but he's smart enough to go a bit more technical with his facebuster.

Phineas is sent outside so Chyna can get in a bit shot of her own, much to the delight of the HHH fan club in the first few rows. Back in and Phineas clotheslines him out of the air and loads up the Slop Drop, only to have Chyna offer a distraction. That's fine with Phineas who kisses Chyna, only to walk into the Pedigree for the pin.

Rating: D+. Nothing match, but Helmsley and Chyna are really starting to work well together. There's a chemistry there and that's not something you can fake. You can see the potential in him and it's a great example of someone growing up in front of our eyes. He couldn't pull this off a year ago but with the time and experience, this is working for him.

Post match Henry Godwinn, who had a broken neck like four weeks ago but isn't even in a collar here, comes out to yell at Phineas. For some reason he blames McMahon for the loss. Vince: "Everything is my fault these days."

Faarooq promises a bigger, badder and better Nation. So it's the Wrestlemania III version of the Nation? There will be two new members and the Nation will be blacker than ever.

Chris Candido vs. Brian Christopher

Sunny is guest ring announcer and Paul E. Dangerously is on commentary. This is ECW vs. USWA as Christopher (Grand Master Sexay) was a top heel down in Memphis. Thankfully Paul points out that Candido used to wrestle

in the WWF. Candido jumps him to start but Brian counters with an atomic drop and an enziguri.

A quick neckbreaker from Candido sets up a middle rope legdrop (bad one too) as Dangerously tries as hard as he can to make this serious. Vince gets on him for it so Paul goes into a rant about Christopher being Lawler's son ("his mother is probably 37 years old." Christopher would be 25 here), drawing out Jerry himself to slap Paul and throw Candido off the top for a DQ.

Tommy Dreamer runs in for the save with a chair. This feud is interesting when you look back at it, but most wrestling fans probably had no idea who these people were or why they were on Raw.

Ahmed Johnson is willing to be Undertaker's partner.

We get some house show ads, followed by clips from a Toronto house show where the Harts were just crazy over.

The Hart Foundation doesn't like the idea of being handcuffed to the posts tonight but they'll show that crime pays. Neidhart did the talking here, which is one of the best things he can do for the team.

Goldust vs. Jim Neidhart

Neidhart starts with the power shots to the back as you might have expected. Goldust comes back with his punches and chest rub in the corner but grabs Neidhart's beard instead of kissing him. The announcers talk about Dusty even more, which is odd as he wouldn't be on Raw again for years. Goldust gets in some stomps but here's British Bulldog to follow up on what happened last week. Marlena goes to slap him but Bulldog grabs her arm, earning him a right hand from Goldust. Neidhart gets in some cheap shots but ducks his head back inside, allowing Goldust to uppercut him for the pin, deemed an upset by Vince.

Rating: D. Seriously? An uppercut? And Goldust beating Neidhart is an upset? This match raised a lot of questions but that's about all it raised. There wasn't much to see here, but you can pretty much pencil Goldust in for a spot on Austin's team at the pay per view. That's fine

enough, as the interviews have given his character a new direction.

Austin says he has Pillman where he wants him. After that, Ken Shamrock wants him to enter his world? How about Austin rocks it instead?

First hour recap and hour number two opening sequence.

Steve Austin vs. Brian Pillman

Owen, Bulldog and Neidhart are handcuffed to a post. JR actually talks about the Hollywood Blonds to give us some background here. Austin is billed as a Tag Team Champion so I guess the belts aren't vacated until the tournament is over. Steve starts fast but makes the mistake of going after Bulldog, allowing Pillman to get in a cheap shot to take over. Some more right hands put Brian down so Owen starts pulling at his handcuff to no avail.

Brian offers a handshake from his knees but of course Austin is smart enough to kick him in the ribs and clothesline Pillman down. It's so nice to see a face who is smart for a change. Pillman tries to go up top but gets crotched onto the ropes. The referee checks on him so Austin goes to the floor to beat up Bulldog for fun. Brian's attempt at using a chair is easily broken up and Austin beats up the other handcuffed guys. Some choking with a cable finally puts Austin down and we take a break.

Back with Pillman (sporting a bloody nose) hammering on Austin but he comes back with a low blow. For some reason it doesn't have much effect though as Pillman grabs a sleeper, only to be taken down by a jawbreaker. Austin is tired of this wrestling stuff and sweeps the legs so he can hammer on Pillman's bloody nose. The referee doesn't like that so he gets a Stunner. With no referee, Pillman hits Austin low and knocks Austin cold with a foreign object (Canadian perhaps?) for two from a new referee. Pillman gets the key to the cuffs from the first referee though and Neidhart is quickly in for the DQ.

Rating: C+. This was good stuff when you consider the horrible condition Pillman was in at this point. He could barely move but was still able to have a totally watchable brawl before the DQ. Austin had to actually fight these guys at some point so having a match against Pillman was as

fine a place as any to start.

Mankind, Goldust and Shamrock run in for the save. With Mankind and Goldust gone, Austin tries to Stun Shamrock again but gets suplexed instead. It's rare to see someone get one over on Austin like that. Ever the fighter, Austin goes right after him but here's the Legion of Doom to break it up. Goldust comes out and grabs a mic to say that these are the best five in the WWF, so they'll go to Calgary to fight the Hart Foundation. Austin says he wants to fight alone but Monsoon won't let him, so it's going to be the five of them for one night only.

The Hart Foundation are ready to treat those five like the scum they are. Owen still can't get the name of the show right, calling it Calgary Stampede.

Bobby Fulton vs. Tommy Rogers

Well ok then. These two used to be known as the Fantastics and this is billed as a light heavyweight match. Sable is guest ring announcer and in some shorts, meaning we'll likely be seeing Marc Mero again. We hear a quick history of the Fantastics, despite the fact that almost no one is going to know them here as they were mostly a southern team. Fulton has one leg in trunks and the other in tights.

Tommy scores with a nice dropkick (he always had a good one) so Fulton runs to the corner. Bobby grabs a headlock as he's the heel here. A spinwheel kick drops Rogers as the fans are eerily silent here. Rogers gets sent to the apron for an elbow drop, followed by a baseball slide to knock him into the barricade. JR talks about a light heavyweight tournament coming soon. Fulton's rollup with his feet gets caught so Tommy hits a quick Tomikaze (Killswitch) for the pin. The crowd just did not care here but the match was fine.

Mero comes out to drag Sable to the back.

Tag Team Tournament First Round: Headbangers vs. Jerry Lawler/Rob Van Dam

This could be interesting. The Headbangers want the belts so they can hold up their skirts. Dangerously and Dreamer are in the crowd as Mosh

starts with Van Dam. Mosh takes over to start and dives at Van Dam in the corner before a double flapjack puts Rob down again. Thrasher gets two off a gutwrench powerbomb but gets monkey flipped over, setting up Van Dam's jumping kick to the face.

Lawler comes in and slowly punches Mosh to set up the Five Star for no cover. Jerry's middle rope punch misses though and Thrasher comes in to clean house. A quick piledriver plants Thrasher though but Lawler yells at Dangerously, allowing Sandman (an ECW mainstay) comes in to cane Jerry, allowing Thrasher to suplex Mosh onto Lawler for the pin.

Rating: D+. This was more storyline than anything else and there's nothing wrong with that. It's a nice idea to have the ECW guys come in and more fans would know them in New York, but I don't see how this story is going to take anyone anywhere. Still though, good enough match here and the right team won.

Ahmed says he and Undertaker are ready but Bearer says he's the leader around here. Johnson says Undertaker will have problems if Paul is the one calling the shots out there.

Undertaker/Ahmed Johnson vs. Faarooq/???

Faarooq has promised two new members of the Nation but only comes out with D'Lo Brown, who was already a member. Kama Mustafa, a former bodyguard of Ted DiBiase and better known as Papa Shango, is introduced as a new member though and takes the fight to Undertaker. Mustafa had been rumored to come back as Shango here but this might have been the better move.

A double clothesline drops Undertaker and Ahmed holds his arm out despite Undertaker being about ten feet from him. Undertaker busts out a Fameasser of all things to put Faarooq down but Kama prevents the tag. Brown gets in some shots on the floor and we take a break. Back with Undertaker scoring with a chokeslam on Faarooq but Kama is there for the save.

Vince and JR think the new member might be Mr. Hughes, Butch Reed (JR: "He has a link to Simmons.") or Abdullah the Butcher. Undertaker goes for

a tag but Ahmed is on the floor going after Bearer, allowing Kama to hit a Rock Bottom....for the PIN??? Yes the newcomer just pinned the WWF World Champion clean in the middle of the ring. For some reason Vince and JR don't seem to care.

Rating: D. Storyline advancement again here but there's no excuse for not getting excited over the Undertaker getting pinned here. Yeah he was basically in a handicap match but he got pinned in less than four minutes and it's treated with the same reaction as when Rogers pinned Fulton earlier tonight. Still thought, that's quite the debut for Mustafa.

Johnson chases the Nation off but never touches them. In case you're new at this wrestling thing, that's because Ahmed gives Undertaker the Pearl River Plunge and reveals himself as the newest member of the Nation. Above all else, this FINALLY ends the feud so there's a positive to be found. Also this Nation lineup should be a lot stronger as Savio and Crush always seemed like prototypes than the final group.

Overall Rating: C-. The lack of Bret and Shawn is still hurting this show but they've got a place to go in the main event scene now and Undertaker has a fresh challenger in Johnson. This was much more of a moving day episode than anything else as they're getting ready for the next pay per view, which is sneaking up on them rather quickly. This wasn't a great or even very good show, but it accomplished a lot in just two hours.

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