

Smackdown – January 4, 2008: The Focused Group Show

Smackdown

Date: January 4, 2008

Location: Richmond Coliseum, Richmond, Virginia

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jonathan Coachman

It's the start of a new year and that means we are on the way to the Royal Rumble. This week will take a big step towards that show as we get to find out the new #1 contender to Edge's Smackdown World Title. It's Beat The Clock time, and that can make for a fun show. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Edge being rather grateful to Vickie Guerrero for winning the World Title. Last week she even saved the title, after Batista won a handicap match but didn't beat Edge, meaning the title didn't change hands. I'm still not sure I get why the match was restarted instead of Batista winning the match but not the title, but the post match beatdown made more sense.

Opening sequence.

Here is Vickie Guerrero, as pushed by Teddy Long, to welcome us to the new year on Smackdown. She gets right to the point: if Undertaker or Batista touch Edge, they have no chance to retain the title. In the spirit of competition, tonight is a Beat The Clock Challenge (which was announced last week) for a shot at Edge at the Royal Rumble. Participants include Finlay, Rey Mysterio, Batista and Undertaker. With that out of the way, Vickie brings out Jonathan Coachman to replace the departed JBL on commentary.

Beat The Clock Challenge: Finlay vs. MVP

Non-title and Hornswoggle is here with Finlay. Feeling out

process to start and they go to the mat for some early grappling. With that going nowhere, they get back up with MVP nailing a kick to the face. Finlay is fine enough to send him outside to start the brawling, only to be sent into the barricade as we take a break.

Back with Finlay working on the leg, which doesn't seem to be the brightest move. MVP punches his way out and gets Finlay on his back to drop some heavy right hands. The cravate keeps Finlay in trouble until he powers up and into the corner. That doesn't go well either as MVP knocks him down and hammers away again, only to get pulled into an armbar (as the bad thinking continues).

Back up and Finlay misses a charge into the post, setting up MVP's running boot to the face for another near fall. With nothing else working, Hornswoggle throws in a shillelagh, which MVP picks up. The referee will have none of that, allowing Finlay to use another one to knock MVP cold for the pin at 9:46.

Rating: C-. I expected a lot more logical style out of Finlay here, as it would make sense for him to go after as many pins as he could. As a match it worked well enough, but this was about one thing and they completely missed the point the whole way. Finlay winning is interesting, though I can't imagine this going anywhere as far as the US Title is concerned.

Post match Vince McMahon comes out to hug Hornswoggle and hand him his hat, though Finlay doesn't seem convinced.

Kenny Dykstra/Victoria vs. Michelle McCool/Chuck Palumbo

How are these two still a thing??? The guys start things off with Palumbo taking him down but getting hammered in the corner for his efforts. The women come in quickly and it's a basement dropkick to Victoria. Back up and Victoria sends her shoulder first into the post though and the villains take over.

A legdrop on the arm sets up an armbar but McCool is out without much trouble. It's already back to Palumbo, who powerslams Dykstra down but misses a big boot in the corner. Palumbo is fine enough to catch him on top with a superplex for a breather, meaning Michelle can come in to clothesline Victoria. Dykstra offers a distraction though, allowing Victoria to hit the Widow's Peak for the pin.

Rating: D+. They are taking their sweet time with wrapping up this Palumbo/McCool stuff and I'm really not sure why they're taking so long. It wasn't exactly an interesting story in the first place as it's just a biker with the blonde and the fact that it is designed to go somewhere with Palumbo makes it even worse. Bad match, as Dykstra and Victoria aren't exactly much better.

Post match Palumbo blames McCool for the loss and leaves without her.

Vickie Guerrero doesn't like the coffee that Teddy Long brought her. Teddy leaves and an angry Chavo Guerrero comes in. Chavo isn't happy with what Vickie is doing to the Guerrero name with her relationship with Edge. Her solution: put him in Beat The Clock, but he still wants something he can't have.

Beat The Clock Challenge: Chavo Guerrero vs. Funaki

The time is set at 9:46 and Chavo starts fast by stomping away in the corner. A slam gives Chavo two but Funaki is back with a running headscissors for two. Funaki small packages him for two but gets belly to back suplexed for the same. They trade some rollups for two each and Funaki gets the same off an enziguri. A middle rope crossbody gets two more but Chavo is back with a Gory Bomb for the pin, setting the new time at 6:02.

Rating: C. Now that's more like it, as it felt like they were trying to win the match instead of just having a regular match

which ended whenever. Chavo isn't going to get the title shot, but it is nice to have him show some anger towards Vickie, just for the sake of setting up something for the future. Funaki is another good hand and putting him in there meant the match was going to be ok at worst. The clock was what mattered here though and they cut it down to something more interesting by shaving off three and a half minutes.

Beat The Clock Challenge: Batista vs. Curt Hawkins

Hold on though, as Vickie Guerrero pops up to have Teddy Long change things a bit.

Beat The Clock Challenge: Batista vs. Curt Hawkins/Zack Ryder

The clock is set at 6:02 and Batista goes after both of them to start. Some double teaming in the corner doesn't do much to Batista, who clotheslines Hawkins and catapults Ryder back into the corner. The Batista Bomb is broken up with a high/low though and the double stomping is on. Batista gets taken outside where he punches his way out of trouble but gets taken down again back inside.

A legdrop sets up a Hennig necksnap as they do have a target. Another legdrop into a splash gives Ryder two so they load up a double DDT which is countered into...something that is so unclear that they try it again. This time Batista backdrops both of them down and starts the comeback, including a powerslam to Ryder and a spinebuster to Hawkins. The Batista Bomb is loaded up but time expires at 6:02.

Rating: C. This was angle advancement rather than a match as Hawkins and Ryder were trying to stretch the match out and hurt Batista where they could, but they were never trying to get a win. It wouldn't have made sense for them to do so either, so they had the logic right here. Edge clears a major hurdle and Vickie did the smart thing, so this went about as well as it could have.

Raw Rebound.

MVP isn't happy with his loss and is made even madder by the Raw Rebound being about Ric Flair's career continuing. He'll beat Flair to end his career and make himself feel better.

Rey Mysterio talks about how difficult a Beat The Clock Challenge can be as you don't know what you're doing and have to go as fast as you can. Lucky for him, that's his style. True actually.

Jimmy Wang Yang/Shannon Moore vs. Deuce N Domino

Cherry is here with Deuce N Domino and Yang/Moore have been having a snappy little feud with Miz and John Morrison on ECW. Deuce elbows Yang in the face to start but his hiptoss doesn't work so well. Instead Yang hits a jumping kick to the back of the head but Domino gets in a cheap shot to take over. The chinlock doesn't last long and it's off to Moore to clean house. A springboard spinning crossbody gets two (it might have helped that Domino was falling down before the contact), followed by a rollup to give Moore the fast pin.

Rating: C. They didn't have much time here (a theme tonight) but Moore and Yang continue their roll. I don't think they have much of a chance at winning the titles, but imagine this: taking two people with nothing to do, putting them together and seeing what happens. I'm still not sure why that isn't done more often, as it seemed to work just fine with these guys.

Beat The Clock Challenge: Undertaker vs. Matt Striker

The clock is set at 6:02...but hang on as Striker is in a referee shirt. It seems we have a replacement.

Beat The Clock Challenge: Undertaker vs. Mark Henry

The clock is set at 6:02 and Matt Striker is the guest referee. Undertaker's running shoulder doesn't work to start

so he hammers away in the corner instead. With that not working either, Henry runs him over with a shoulder but gets knocked outside to get to the required brawling.

Henry gets whipped hard into the steps and there's the apron legdrop to keep Henry in trouble. Back in and Undertaker switches gears by wrapping the arm around the top rope but Old School is broken up. The running DDT plants Henry for two but he's right back with the bearhug. That's broken up and Undertaker slugs away, setting up the chokeslam for...two as Striker won't count the three and then runs off as time expires.

Rating: C. The time is hurting some of these matches, but in this case it might have been better to have them get out of there so fast. Henry can only do so much with the extra time so going home quickly isn't a bad idea. Much like Batista, this was story advancement to clear one of Edge's big problems, but it also leaves a big spot open to add some...oh come on like they haven't made it obvious yet.

Post match Undertaker slams and chokeslams Henry.

In the back, Striker mocks Undertaker for failing to beat the clock and doesn't like being threatened. Big Daddy V pops in to add some menacing glares.

Royal Rumble rundown.

Beat The Clock Challenge: Rey Mysterio vs. Edge

Non-title, the Edgeheads are here with Edge and the clock is still set at 6:02 (with Cole getting in a good line by saying 619 is no good for Rey tonight). Edge gets smart by going straight to the ropes to start and then bails to the floor for a quick neck rub. Back in and Rey snaps off a hurricanrana, followed by a dropkick into the seated senton for two. Edge powers up and sends him to the floor but here is Batista to take out the Edgeheads.

That's enough for Rey to grab a cradle for two but Edge sends him face first into the buckle. Cue Undertaker to make the lights go out and when they come back, Edge is in 619 position. Rey hits said 619 and adds the springboard splash for the pin at 4:32 (despite Cole saying REY'S GONNA DO IT, which is usually a dead giveaway in the opposite direction).

Rating: C. You would think that Edge vs. Mysterio would be good no matter what but it turns out that a match getting less than five minutes and having four other people get involved was a bit much. This was certainly a different way to go for them but they did what they need to do. Rey has beaten Edge with help and now he gets the chance to do it again on the big stage.

Overall Rating: C+. The wrestling might not have been great but what mattered here was having the one concept going throughout the show. That made for a very fast paced show, even if there wasn't much of value until the very end. I can go for a show like this as it makes them focus, but it's a prime example of a show that doesn't need to be watched in full if a recap is available.

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