

Monday Night Raw – December 22, 2003 (Best of 2003): How Do You Make This Boring?



IMG Credit: WWE

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 22, 2003

Hosts: Jonathan Coachman, Jerry Lawler

It's the end of the year and thankfully that means we're having a week off. This week it's a Best Of 2003 special, which could be a rather short show. Unfortunately this is just a Best Of Raw show, meaning you're going to be hearing a lot from HHH and a lot about the Eric Bischoff Era, which is still running strong. Let's get to it.

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

Of note: I'll be posting the full version of each match, even if the versions shown here are clipped.

Opening sequence.

Lawler threatens to kill the injured Coach if he makes one wrong move.

From Wrestlemania XIX.

Chris Jericho vs. Shawn Michaels

Shawn tries to fire some confetti cannons on the way to the ring but some of them fail to go off, prompting an “eh what are you going to do” look. Jericho on the other hand just looks down at him in disdain in the perfect response. Some early armdrags frustrate Jericho so Shawn lounges on the top rope.

Back up and Shawn kicks him away without too much effort as they’re still firmly in first gear. Jericho is ready for a leapfrog and slaps Shawn in the face, earning himself a right hand to the jaw and a trip to the floor. Back in and Jericho scores with a spinwheel kick but a bulldog is countered with a good crotching. We hit a random Figure Four but Jericho reverses pretty quickly.

They head outside again with Shawn hitting a nice plancha, only to get caught in the Walls in the aisle. The bad back is sent into the post as Jericho has a big target to work with now. Back in and Jericho yells about how he’s better than Shawn as he stays on the back in a variety of ways. We hit the chinlock with a knee in the back before Shawn grabs a DDT to get him out of trouble.

Jericho nips up and hits the forearm into Shawn’s pose, which you just don’t do at Wrestlemania. Shawn makes his comeback (with two nipups of his own) and we hit the pinfall reversal sequence (as required by a classic like this) for a couple of twos each. Jericho is Lionsault for two more before countering a hurricanrana into the Walls. Shawn grabs the rope so Jericho elbows him in the jaw and tunes up the band.

Sweet Chin Music puts Shawn down for two and the fans seemed to buy that as the finish. Shawn teases the Walls but goes with a catapult into the post for two instead. It’s Jericho up first with a belly to back superplex but Shawn reverses into a crossbody in mid-air for yet another near fall.

The top rope elbow gets the same but the real Sweet Chin Music is countered into the Walls again. Just like last time, Shawn grabs the ropes though this time he follows up with more Chin Music for a very delayed two. Both guys are spent so Jericho grabs a belly to back suplex,

only to have Shawn flip over and grab a rollup with his legs for the pin at 22:31.

Rating: A. Oh come on like this one needs an explanation. These two were both on fire here and just had an awesome match. It's the match that made it clear Shawn had more than just a few performances in him as he felt a lot more like the older version here, which is exactly what the match needed to be. Jericho being able to do every athletic thing Shawn could do but not be able to outsmart him is a perfect story in a similar vein to Shawn vs. Shelton Benjamin a few years later. Great match here and one of the best Shawn had in his comeback.

They hug post match but Jericho kicks him low like the heel he is.

Coach and King plug the Unscripted book and Shawn vs. HHH for the title next week in San Antonio.

From Raw, January 27.

Women's Title: Victoria vs. Trish Stratus

Victoria (looking especially good here in pink) is defending in a street fight and jumps Trish from behind with a pool cue. Trish is sent into the steps and Victoria stops to pose in the ring. A Chick Kick drops the champ and a clothesline gets two on the floor (street fights and hardcore matches aren't the same thing but you can't expect WWE to keep up with something like rules).

Back in and Victoria misses a charge into the post and gets two trashcan lids cracked around her head. Victoria is right back with a catapult into a trashcan in the corner but a Stratusphere gives Trish two. Steven Richards tries a fire extinguisher but hits Victoria by mistake. Richards comes in for the save so Trish kendo sticks him away. Stratusfaction is broken up and Trish is sent into the barricade...for the pin? What a lame ending.

Rating: C+. That ending really hurt things here as they were beating the heck out of each other and looking more polished as almost any hardcore match you would see from this company. It felt like they were actually

trying to hurt each other, which is far more than you can say about these matches most of the time. Just find a new challenger though as the feud is really starting to look stale.

Raw Retro package on the Tenth Anniversary Special. Egads what a wreck.

Stacy Keibler comes in to see Coach and King with Coach saying he's tired of Lawler drooling over the women every week. She'd pick King and it's a plug for a body spray.

From Raw, September 29.

Intercontinental Title: Christian vs. Rob Van Dam

Christian is defending in a ladder match. Rob easily wins a battle of kicks to start but Christian won't let him set up an early ladder. Instead it's Christian picking one up so Rob hits a flip dive over the top onto the ladder onto Christian. Well that was rather stupid. Since that did more damage to Rob than Christian, the champ bridges a ladder between the barricade and the steps. Christian is dropped ribs first onto the ladder and the spinning kick to the back makes things even worse.

There's a ladder set up in the corner so of course Van Dam is whipped hard into it for his efforts. A catapult sends Rob face first into the ladder but he's right back up with a delayed gorilla press onto the ladder. Rob has always been deceptively strong and the athleticism makes it even less noticeable. Christian gets knocked outside so Rob can make the first climb, only to be taken down by the reverse DDT off the ladder.

That's not enough to get the title though as Christian is sent into the ladder in the corner, followed by a Cannonball (called Rolling Thunder, which is close enough). Rob uses the ladder for a Van Daminator but the Five Star only hits ladder. A hard running shot with the ladder puts Van Dam on the floor again but he comes back in with a top rope kick to knock it over again. The double climb leads to a slugout with both guys falling, only to have Rob catch himself on the other ladder. A Five Star from that ladder is enough for Rob to go up and get the title for the win.

Rating: B. While it's no classic, this was the kind of match that Raw has been needing: hard hitting, a lot of fun and with a good guy winning in the end. Oh and a lack of HHH or Evolution helped too. This isn't the kind of match that anyone is going to remember as anything great, but it was what they should have done on this show, especially as the main event instead of the big tag match.

Clip of Goldberg debuting and spearing Rock the night after Wrestlemania.

From Backlash.

The Rock vs. Goldberg

The entrances take a long time and Rock hits the floor before the bell as they're hitting the stall button hard here. They stare each other down as the match hasn't actually started yet. We're finally ready to go after several minutes of killing time, which isn't what this show needed. Goldberg shoves him away off the lockup, which isn't that surprising as Rock isn't known as a power guy.

They do it again with Rock falling to the floor this time around. Back in and Rock slaps him in the face, only to get run over with a shoulder. Rock bails again as the announcers debate music. We hit another long stall until Rock snaps him throat first across the top. Goldberg grabs a Rock Bottom but takes way too long on the spear, allowing Rock to send him into the post. The Sharpshooter goes on for a bit before Rock goes with a low blow.

That means nothing either and it's a spear to cut Rock down. No Jackhammer though as Goldberg gets two off a slam instead. Good grief END THIS SHOW ALREADY. Rock hits a spear of his own (called a spinebuster by Coach, which isn't that far off actually) and the Rock Bottom gets two. Now the spinebuster actually connects and the People's Elbow gets two more. Goldberg pops up, hits a spear, ignores the GOLDBERG SUCKS chant, adds a second spear, and finishes with the Jackhammer.

Rating: D-. This was about as dumb as they could have gone with Goldberg doing the same kind of match that every WWE main eventer has with the multiple finishers and trading moves instead of doing the formula that

got him over in the first place. It was a completely terrible debut match with Rock's selling alone completely outshining everything Goldberg did.

Compare this Goldberg match to his recent return (true story: he wrestled more in this match than in a match, a Royal Rumble appearance, a title win and a title defense) and look at which got better reactions, more entertaining matches and just more success overall. It's not hard to figure out why one was better than the other and a lot of it has to do with booking Goldberg like Goldberg and not like any other star.

Another moment: Jericho kisses Trish.

Video on Eric Bischoff being given thirty days to turn Raw around by signing Steve Austin, including his time in Texas.

From No Way Out.

Eric Bischoff vs. Steve Austin

Bischoff, in his karate gear, begs for mercy and offers to help Austin make a fortune. That goes as well as you would expect as Austin, in jean shorts, takes him down and stomps away to quite the reaction. Austin takes off Bischoff's gloves, allowing Eric to rake the eyes. A kick to the chest has no effect, because former professional martial artists are worthless once they become authority figures. Austin takes him to the floor for another beating and hits three Stunners for the pin. JR, of course, loses it.

Rating: D-. There's your Raw main event people and it was about what had to be expected. Austin looked good in a short burst like this but he wasn't very interesting when he left in the first place and that's not a good sign going forward. Austin vs. just about anyone on Raw at the moment doesn't sound too appealing (Austin vs. HHH would be their best option and that sounds rather boring) but maybe he's the shot in the arm that Raw needs, at least in the short term.

Austin hits another Stunner for good measure.

From Confidential, Gene Okerlund thinks Christmas From Iraq is a good idea.

Another moment: Kane unmask and goes coconuts.

From Survivor Series.

Shane McMahon vs. Kane

Ambulance match with Shane charging straight at him for a crossbody to the floor. Shane knocks him onto the announcers' table and hits him in the head with a monitor, setting up the big elbow to drive Kane through. That's enough at ringside though so they head to the back, including the camera cutting out. That means we hit the pretape and come back with Shane pounding him down with a kendo stick.

Shane puts him in a security shack and jumps into an SUV to run Kane over again. Finding a well placed walkie-talkie, Shane tells someone to SEND IT, which means it's time for an ambulance backstage. But is that the designated ambulance? That makes a difference you know. Instead of backing the ambulance up to the shack where Kane is down, Shane grabs a stretcher and wheels it twenty feet over, allowing Kane to grab him by the throat and slam Shane into a wall.

The camera goes out again and we pick it up with Kane knocking him back into the arena. Shane gets knocked into the front of the ambulance but manages to hit Kane in the face with the back door. What a sick sounding thud too. Kane is back up and sends Shane into the ambulance but another ram with the door gets Shane out of trouble. A tornado DDT on the floor plants Kane as they're now near the grave for the Buried Alive match.

Shane puts a trashcan (good thing one was nearby) and a crashpad (same as before) and hits the Coast to Coast off the top of the ambulance to smash Kane's face. That's still not enough to wrap things up as Kane pulls Shane into the ambulance with him for more brawling. It's Kane throwing Shane out though and then ramming him back first into the side. He javelins Shane's head into the other side (you have to watch you see) and a Tombstone on the floor is enough for the win.

Rating: D. This wasn't as long as I was expecting but again, this doesn't really do what they were likely shooting for with Kane. It makes two straight matches where Kane has had trouble beating up Shane McMahon. He

can destroy Rob Van Dam but Shane gives him trouble? It didn't work last time and it doesn't work here. Now that he's lost all of his heat though, you can pencil him in for a World Title match.

Another moment: Hurricane spies on the Rock and has one of the funniest segments of the year.

Video on the wrestlers who have passed away this year, including Stu Hart, Crash Holly, Miss Elizabeth, Hawk, Mr. Perfect and Freddie Blassie.

Another moment: Ric Flair wants HHH to bring it full blast for their match.

From Raw, May 19.

Raw World Title: HHH vs. Ric Flair

HHH is defending and has heavily taped ribs. He tells Flair to lay down but Flair just slicks backs his hair as we hit the opening bell. They WOO at each other until Flair pokes him in the eye to take over. HHH tries a suplex but the ribs give out, allowing Flair to send him outside in a heap. Ric can hit the suplex on the floor but walks into a spinebuster back inside.

The champ can't follow up though and Flair actually hits the top rope shot to the head. JR is selling the heck out of the chance Flair could win here and it's time to go after the leg. The Figure Four goes on for a good while until HHH makes the rope. The referee gets bumped though and HHH grabs the belt, only to get poked in the eye. A belt shot gives Flair a close two and you can feel the fans gasp. The Pedigree is countered with a backdrop so Flair tries one of his own, only to get countered into the Pedigree to retain the title.

Rating: C. They were starting to get going near the end but, alas, HHH needed to go over Flair in Flair Country for the sake of....I'm guessing his ego or something, even if it took away Flair's best reaction in at least a year. Throw in the fact that this was designed to help set up HHH vs. Nash II instead of what could have been a great HHH vs. Flair match in an interesting story and this is even sadder.

Another moment: Mae Young does various things to Eric Bischoff during the Redneck Triathlon from Bad Blood. Give me ANYTHING else please.

From Survivor Series.

Team Austin vs. Team Bischoff

Austin: Shawn Michaels, Dudley Boyz, Booker T., Rob Van Dam

Bischoff: Scott Steiner, Mark Henry, Christian, Chris Jericho, Randy Orton

Coach, Stacy Keibler and the two team captains are at ringside. The fans want tables to start but have to settle with D-Von and Christian instead. D-Von shoulders him down to start but gets slapped in the face, triggering a bunch of right hands to the head. That's not a nice response. Van Dam comes in for some forearms to the face and a kick to the jaw gets the same. It's off to Jericho for some more luck, followed by Steiner whipping Van Dam hard into the corner to set up some posing.

Van Dam's comeback is cut off by a belly to belly superplex but he's able to get over to Booker for the hot tag. Things speed way up in a hurry and the scissors kick into the Spinarooni makes Bischoff face palm. Everything breaks down in a hurry and Steiner hits Booker low. The Recliner goes on but Stacy offers a distraction, setting up a reverse 3D. A Bookend is enough to get rid of Steiner and make it 5-4.

The World's Strongest Slam gets rid of Booker a few seconds later to tie it right back up. Bubba comes in to try his luck and is sent hard into the corner. D-Von's help doesn't make things much better as the Dudleys are rammed together. Mark misses a charge though and it's a 3D into the Five Star for the elimination. It's off to Orton for a hard clothesline on Van Dam but Rob scores with a kick. Another Five Star is loaded up but Jericho makes a save, setting up the RK0 to tie things up at three each. Jericho comes in and missile dropkicks D-Von down as JR and King wonder how things will go tomorrow night.

D-Von shoulders Jericho down for no count as Christian has the referee, setting up the sleeper drop for another elimination. This match is

already better paced than the opener and here's Shawn to pick things up all over again. Shawn pounds on Jericho in the corner and catches an invading Christian without much effort. Orton gets in a dropkick but stays down anyway as I guess he didn't hit all of it. A double tag brings in Christian and Bubba with a backdrop getting two on the Canadian.

Jericho runs Christian over by mistake but a low blow sets up the Unprettier to get rid of Bubba. We're down to Shawn vs.

Christian/Jericho/Orton and Austin is starting to see how much trouble he's in. Shawn punches away at Christian to start but some good old fashioned double teaming has Shawn in trouble again. Like there's any other way this should go. Shawn is taken outside and catapulted into the post (you can see him blade on the wide shot) to bust open a GUSHER.

That and a suplex are only good for two back inside and Christian even steals his pose. Jerry: "That was a creepy little pose right there." The Unprettier is broken up and a quick Sweet Chin Music gets rid of Christian. A frustrated Jericho comes in and gets two off a clothesline before handing it back to Orton. Shawn gets in a belly to back suplex but Jericho comes back in to take over again. As usual, JR is perfect at calling this kind of a story and Shawn getting two off a DDT has Jerry trying as hard as he can to believe in Shawn.

The Lionsault hits knees and Shawn pulls himself up but gets pulled into a Walls attempt. That's reversed into a quick small package to get rid of Jericho and make it one on one (Lawler: "I BELIEVE I BELIEVE!"). Jericho isn't gone yet though and caves Shawn's head in with a chair shot. Why that isn't a DQ on Orton isn't clear but Shawn is done as Orton comes back in.

That's only good for two and you can see the sigh of relief from Austin. Orton's high crossbody hits the referee and here's Bischoff to break up Sweet Chin Music. That's too much for Austin so it's a Stunner to Orton but he makes the mistake of beating on Bischoff a bit too much. They go up the aisle and here's Batista to powerbomb Shawn, giving Orton the final pin.

Rating: B+. I love this match and always have. It doesn't really pick up

until Shawn is on his own but that's what he's done best throughout his entire career. He knows how to play the underdog better than anyone I've ever seen and you really can get behind the Lawler mindset of trying to believe here. As usual, Shawn is great in this role and it's never too far to believe that he could pull this off (quick superkick, small package for two eliminations). Great stuff, but you might want to skip the first few minutes.

Austin is stunned at the loss because he placed his career in someone else's hands and was let down. The bloody Shawn can barely stand and Austin congratulates him for giving it everything he had. Austin grabs the mic and talks about starting here in Dallas and going out here as well. Coach comes out to laugh and gets beaten up one more time with security getting the same treatment. Beer is consumed as a final goodbye. You know, assuming you believe that he's gone for good this time.

We wrap it up with a video on last week's ending with Mick Foley walking out, even with Randy Orton spitting on him.

Overall Rating: D+. How can you make a Best Of show this boring? It's been a very rough year for Raw and this show didn't even focus on most of the HHH issues. There are some good things in here but for the most part nothing came off like it was important or even all that good. Weak show here, but at least I could watch it in a hurry.

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