

Monday Nitro – April 19, 1999: WCW Goes Off The Cliff

Monday Nitro #185

Date: April 19, 1999

Location: O'Connell Center, Gainesville, Florida

Attendance: 8,567

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Bobby Heenan

We're getting closer to Slamboree and the main event is set with Page defending against Nash. Other than that we have the further exploits of the NWO as things fall apart with Hogan nowhere in sight. Savage and Sting are still running around and feuding with Flair so it's hard to say what's coming tonight. Let's get to it.

We open with Goldberg arriving and carrying a briefcase. He says it's him vs. Page for the title tonight.

Ricki Rachman and DJ Ran do their thing.

Nitro Girls.

Scott Armstrong/Steve Armstrong vs. Dean Malenko/Chris Benoit

This should be good. Benoit and Scott get things going and of course Charles Robinson is referee. They speed things up to start with Scott ducking a chop but getting taken down with a very crisp armdrag. A quick tag brings in Steve who cleans house and stomps away on Benoit. The Horsemen get Steve out to the floor though and the triple teaming is on. Back in and Malenko nails a low dropkick to the side of Steve's head and the stomping continues.

Benoit takes his head off with a clothesline for two as a LOUD Goldberg chant starts up. Malenko comes back in and hammers away in the corner before Anderson helps with even more cheating. Robinson allows the Horsemen to change without a tag to Arn's approval. Benoit finally charges into a boot but still won't allow the tag off to Scott. Dean

comes back in but walks into a double clothesline, finally setting up the hot tag. Scott comes in and everything breaks down. Dean jumps over Scott in the corner and powerbombs him down into the Cloverleaf for the submission.

Rating: C+. This was the best opening match they've had in a good while. The Armstrongs are guys that can wrestle with anyone so if you give them a pair of technicians like Malenko and Benoit it's bound to be good. More importantly than that though, the brothers kept working the whole time they were getting squashed. It's so annoying to see someone just laying on the mat instead of trying to get the tag or doing anything other than just laying around.

Georgia, the woman that gave Flair papers that he signed without looking at them on Thunder, gives them to Piper. Roddy looks very pleased.

Opening sequence.

Savage and Gorgeous George arrive but Doug Dillinger won't let them in. Piper comes up and says he's the Commissioner so they need to be let in. Dillinger reluctantly agrees.

Gene brings out DDP for a chat. Page starts by wishing Hogan the best with his knee surgery. The fans are already chanting for Goldberg. Page says Goldberg needs to get focused like he's been. Both guys know what it's like to grab the brass ring because Page is World Champion right now.

Page sees a lot of Goldberg in himself and there's nothing he would like more than to put the title on the line tonight....but that's not going to happen. This brings out Goldberg who gets right in Page's face. Apparently Page agrees to put the title on the line tonight. Goldberg's music hit and he was out of the ring in less than a minute. So why did Page say no in the first place if he would agree that fast?

Piper is in the back with David Flair and says Ric needs help. They talk about him being put under observation for 72 hours and David agrees before signing the papers Piper was given earlier.

Page comes up to Gene in the back and confirms the title is on the line. Gene isn't done yet though and shows us the clip from Spring Stampede of Page injuring Hogan. We don't actually see Page's reaction to it or anything, but why would that be interesting?

Cruiserweight Title: Psychosis vs. Rey Mysterio Jr. vs. Kidman vs. Blitzkrieg

Mysterio is defending and this is one fall to a finish. The fans really don't seem to like Psychosis or Blitzkrieg. We cut to the front row and see a man all in black with a mohawk hair cut and jewelery on his fingers that look like claws. Tony recognizes him as Alex Wright, which is very impressive detective work on his part as Wright looks completely different and is wearing big sunglasses.

It's a big brawl to start with only Juvy and Psychosis left standing. Blitzkrieg avoids a charge to send Psychosis hard into the post. Juvy loads up a powerbomb on Psychosis for a springboard seated senton from Rey. Guerrero backdrops Mysterio out to the floor and holds up Blitzkrieg for a missile dropkick from Psychosis. Blitzkrieg escapes another powerbomb attempt and causes Juvy to accidentally hit a top rope Fameasser on Psychosis.

Rey is back in with a split legged moonsault to Juvy but Psychosis takes over and throw Guerrero into the air for a big crash. Blitzkrieg and Rey knock the other two to the floor before hitting a pair of Asai moonsaults. Back in and Blitzkrieg hits some standing flips onto Rey for two as Juvy and Psychosis are trying to get back in. Guerrero is back up first with a springboard missile dropkick to Blitzkrieg's back, leaving him alone with Rey.

A quick hurricanrana puts Guerrero down and a slingshot splash gets two. Psychosis and Rey take turns breaking up pins by hitting each other in the face. Things settle down with Juvy bulldogging Rey for two before calling for the Juvy Driver. Instead it's a kind of reverse DDT but Psychosis comes in with a top rope splash for two on the champion. Mysterio's top rope bulldog puts Psychosis down and we have to take a break.

Back with Juvy hitting a huge dive onto Blitzkrieg and Psychosis. Rey goes outside as well but Psychosis pops up and dives onto all three of them. Back in and Rey powerbombs Juvy for two but Psychosis makes a save. Blitzkrieg busts out a very quick Figure Four to Psychosis, only to have Juvy make the save and drop a guillotine legdrop on Psychosis for two. Juvy powerbombs Blitzkrieg but Rey gets the cover for two. Mysterio hurricanranas Juvy off the top and Psychosis steals two of his own.

Blitzkrieg can't get a jawbreaker on Juvy so Rey dropkicks Guerrera to the floor instead. Rey makes the mistake of posing instead of covering, allowing Juvy to try a powerbomb out of the corner. That's fine with Rey as he hurricanranas Guerrera again. Juvy pops back up and snaps Mysterio across the top for two more. Psychosis clotheslines Juvy to the floor but Blitzkrieg kicks him in the face.

A slam sets up the Phoenix Splash for two on Psychosis but this time it's Juvy making the save and Juvy Drivering Blitzkrieg for two. Rey comes back in and hurricanranas Guerrera out to the floor. Psychosis breaks up a Blitzkrieg superplex attempt and drops the guillotine legdrop for the pin and the title in a shocker.

Rating: B+. WHAT A MATCH! I don't ever remember a cruiserweight match going this long (over twenty one minutes) and there is something going on for the entirety of the time. Usually there's the period where things cool down but they never reached that point here. Psychosis winning is a big surprise and the match was very entertaining. Great stuff.

Gene brings out Flair for a chat. Ric, in a University of Florida shirt, seems very happy to be in Gainesville. He talks about students thinking they can out drink him and offers to buy each one of them a drink. Before he can get any further he's interrupted by Roddy Piper. Ric wants to know why Piper always has to ruin his good time but Piper cuts him off and says Flair is becoming the Dennis Rodman of WCW.

He brings up Flair signing papers and offering to buy kids drinks. Somehow this makes him insane and unfit to be President of WCW. Piper is treating this like something serious instead of over the top like it should be. Flair starts dancing and throws his shoes into the crowd.

Roddy brings up Flair handcuffing himself to the ropes to fight Bischoff from a few months back so Flair strips off his clothes to reveal Florida boxers.

Ric says his first crazy thing and says he's President of the United States. Robinson brings out Flair's robe as Piper has Gene read the papers. Basically they say Flair is nuts and that he's out of office pending a review of his competence. Flair fires Piper and gives Florida the National Championship from Tennessee.

It's time for more dancing so Piper says that the paper Flair signed last week made Flair vs. Nash (who went to the University of Tennessee in a nice touch) tonight. So he's crazy but allowed to wrestle? Anderson faints in the corner for a few seconds but Flair makes himself vs. Piper for the Presidency at Slamboree and if Piper loses he's fired.

This segment was a mess and really doesn't make sense. The problem comes down to Flair not being insane until just now, and it's a stretch even at this point. Anderson and Heenan made it clear that Flair taking off his clothes and spending a fortune is Flair being himself. That's very true and we've seen him do exactly that for well over ten years.

Yeah Flair has been a bit out there with stuff like signing papers without looking, but going from that to having him committed in four days is a really big jump for this story. It makes the whole thing seem stupid and they could have gotten to the Piper vs. Flair match for control without it. The fact that this is setting up Roddy Piper vs. Ric Flair in a major match on PPV makes things even worse as you can almost hear the fans groan when Piper is mentioned anymore.

The Black and White tells Konnan they're looking for Nash but Konnan says he has nothing to do with Nash anymore. This earns him a beatdown. Konnan was scheduled to fight for the US Title later in the night.

DJ Ran and Nitro Girls.

The announcers hype up the World Title match and they actually have a graphic for it. The shot of the belt on Page's shoulder looks horrible as he's not even touching it.

Brian Knobbs vs. Hardcore Hak

This is a garbage can match or something like that. Brian hammers Hak with a can as he comes in but Chastity slides in some extra weapons for them to use. We get a Pit Stop for old times' sake and Hak is sent out to the floor. Hak sends him into the post and a cameraman goes down. It's already table time but Knobbs nails him in the back with a chair.

Hak comes back with a ladder as you can barely see the mat at this point. There's no wrestling in between these spots. Hak bulldogs him onto the ladder and sets up the table in the middle of the ring. He misses a Swanton though and mostly breaks the table to give Brian a two count. We get the Terry Funk spinning ladder spot to put Hak down but Chasitivity takes Knobbs' kendo stick away. Not that it matters as a pair of trashcan shots is enough to pin Hak.

Rating: D-. Remember the good tag match and the really good four way? This was nothing like those matches. As is usually the case with these things, the best part of it was it only ran about seven minutes. On the other hand, I could have spent those seven minutes doing something more constructive, like ripping my fingernails out with rusty pliers.

More DJ Ran because WCW doesn't understand wrestling fans.

Nitro Girls.

Randy Savage has a present for Gorgeous George: Madusa, who is here to train her for Slamboree.

Nash comes in to see the Black and White and ask about what happened with Konnan. Stevie says they know what Nash has been doing and won't be taking it anymore. Nash leaves, saying the team doesn't want this. They're going to send Norton to take care of Steiner tonight.

Buff Bagwell vs. Disco Inferno

Buff talks about how bad Scott Steiner thinks he is and rips off his catchphrases. Disco stomps him down in the corner to start but gets caught by a clothesline. Bagwell chokes Disco with his own shirt before working on a wristlock. A dropkick puts Inferno on the floor and Buff

does his strut.

Disco comes back in and is quickly hiptossed right back to the floor. He tries to get back in again and actually shows some intelligence by snapping Buff's throat across the top rope. Disco starts going after the neck as we stop to look at Alex Wright again. Bagwell avoids a middle rope elbow and makes his quick comeback, only to get crotched on the top. The Last Dance is countered and Buff tries (and fails) a running Blockbuster for the pin.

Rating: D+. This was another good win for Bagwell as they actually seem to be building up a young guy for a change. I can't imagine it's for anything more than feeding him to Steiner but it's nice while it lasts. Bagwell really needs to stick with the middle rope version of the Blockbuster though as it looks about 8000% better.

Here's Scott Steiner with a group of women because Godfather was a hot act around this time. After some catchphrases, Steiner gets right to it with talking down Bagwell and mentioning Buff's history as a male stripper. He goes on about it for awhile and says the NWO made Bagwell. The fans chant steroids and there's no Norton as promised by the Black and White. Not only are the boring and losers, but they can't tell the truth about their sneak attacks announced on national TV. What is the world coming to?

Video on Gorgeous George vs. Charles Robinson.

Nitro Girls.

DJ Ran for the third or so time tonight.

Recap of the Flair/Piper stuff from earlier.

Kidman vs. Raven

Raven starts off aggressively but gets taken down by a headscissors. He pops back up and suddenly feels like trying a powerbomb. Kidman is lucky that his opponents always want to use that move even though they never do otherwise. After the faceplant, Raven sends Kidman out to the floor and throws in a chair. The drop toehold sends Kidman face first into the

steel and Raven drops a leg onto the chair onto Kidman's head for good measure. Kidman shoves Raven off the top but the Shooting Star hits the chair. The Horsemen come in for the DQ, even though Raven matches are supposed to be non-title.

Mysterio makes the save for his partner and the Horsemen run. Saturn decks Mysterio but gets sent down with a headscissors. Rey gets superkicked but Kidman powerbombs Saturn down. Raven Evenflows Kidman but the Horsemen run back in for the big beatdown.

More of Piper/Flair.

US Title: Scott Steiner vs. Scott Norton

So apparently the Black and White can just make US Title matches at their whim. Steiner is defending of course. After the champion finishes posing, the battle of clubbing forearms begin. Norton runs the champ down with some shoulders and a big clothesline sends him outside. More stalling ensues until Norton drags him back into the ring for some right hands in the corner. Steiner finally sends him to the floor and then into the barricade.

Back in and Steiner gets his required steroids chant. Steiner charges into a boot in the corner and Norton hammers away before getting two off a side slam. Norton loads up the shoulder breaker but the referee gets bumped. A low blow and belly to belly suplex retain Steiner's title. Steiner's feet on the ropes helped too.

Rating: D. I had a feeling this wasn't going to be much of a power brawl. Norton was wrestling like a face here and it worked on a kind of weird level. Steiner's mega push continues as his in ring ability continues to deteriorate every single week. Granted putting him in there with a one dimensional guy like Norton wasn't the best idea.

DJ Ran AGAIN. We get it already.

Kevin Nash vs. Ric Flair

Before the match, Nash promises to get revenge on Page for Hogan. Naturally Robinson, with what looks like a Horsemen sticker on his shirt,

is refereeing. Nash shoves Flair down before the bell and Flair is ready to go. Flair tries some shoulder blocks to as much success as you would expect. Back up and Nash knees him into the corner and nails the backdrop. Nash even mocks Flair slicking back his hair as Ric bails to the floor.

Naitch slows things down a bit so Nash busts out a headlock of all things. They trade shots in the corner and there's another backdrop to Flair. A big shot in the corner gives us the Flair Flop and there's the framed elbow. Anderson finally gets involved by tripping up Nash and helping Flair crotch him against the post. Back in and Anderson just gets in the ring to help Flair double team. We get the old "how much time" bit from Flair and Nash goes down to a low blow.

Flair hammers away in the corner while calling Nash Tennessee. Anderson interferes again but Nash comes back with a right hand and the side slam. Flair heads to the apron and gets clotheslined out to the floor. For some reason he tries to come back in off the top and you know what's coming. Anderson tries to come in but gets kicked in the face for his efforts. There go the straps and Flair gets powerbombed, sending Robinson to the floor instead of counting. Gorgeous George comes out and takes his referee shirt to count the pin on Flair. Because that's how WCW works anymore.

Rating: C-. It was Flair vs. Nash so you knew it was going to be at least watchable. The overbooking made sense here and Robinson just walking out was a nice touch. The ending on the other hand was stupid but exactly what you would expect from WCW at this point: someone just deciding they're a referee and having their pin count. I mean, people can make US Title matches so why not this?

Post match Flair is taken out on a stretcher by people in white coats. Yep, they're really doing this. Piper shows up to talk some trash as Flair is loaded into the van. Somehow Anderson doesn't get what's going on.

Dusty Rhodes joins commentary for no apparent reason.

WCW World Title: Diamond Dallas Page vs. Goldberg

Page is defending of course. The referee gets shoved down and we're ready to go. Page charges at Goldberg and gets shoved down as well. Back up and Page is thrown to the floor where he stops to take a breather. He gets back in and tries the Diamond Cutter but is quickly sent back to the floor. A leg trip doesn't even get one on Goldberg who hits a kind of AA into a cross armbreaker, sending Page into the ropes.

Page's shoulder block has no effect and the spear connects out of nowhere. He goes to pick Page up for the Jackhammer but the champ sends him face first into the middle buckle instead. A swinging neckbreaker gets two for Page and a belly to belly suplex gets the same. Goldberg gets caught in a front facelock but he powers up into a kind of powerslam for two. Another Diamond Cutter attempt is countered into another powerslam and Goldberg is getting frustrated.

Page neckbreakers him for two but misses the discus lariat. A superkick puts Page into the corner and Goldberg loads up the spear but the champ is smart enough to just stay right where he is. Goldberg tries the spear anyway and hits the buckle. The Diamond Cutter connects but Goldberg kicks him off hard enough to send him onto the referee. Page loads up a foreign object but stops to use the referee as a shield for the spear.

The Jackhammer connects but there's no referee. Page gets up and nails Goldberg with the foreign object to knock him out to the floor. He loads up the steps next to Goldberg and crushes the ankle with a chair. The referee wakes up and tries to stop Page, earning him a right hand to the face. Page loads up the Figure Four around the post but Nash makes the save for no apparent reason other than the script says so. He helps Goldberg into the ring but Page nails Nash with the belt to end the show.

Rating: C+. This was actually a good match until the screwy ending. These two have some solid chemistry together and can put on a good match with the right amount of time. Goldberg kicking out of the Diamond Cutter as strong as he did was a surprise and the ending was....well I'll get back to that. The match was good though.

Overall Rating: C+. You know if you just go by the wrestling, this was one of the best Nitros in a very long time. The Cruiserweight Title match

was outstanding and the main event was solid too. You couple that with some other good to watchable stuff in between and write off the non-wrestling that was Hak vs. Knobbs and you have one heck of a show.

Unfortunately this heck of a show has an 800lb gorilla right in the middle of it and a 300lb orangutan at the end. We'll start with the slightly better one first. Page and Nash's double turn is acceptable as Nash has basically been a face for months now and Page...yeah it really doesn't work. Much like the Flair stuff, it was just setting down its roots when they jumped it forward to the end goal.

One of WCW's biggest problems at the moment is its lack of top faces. There's Sting, Nash, Piper (oh joy) and in theory Savage, though he's just a glorified manager right now. Nash becoming the top guy is fine enough, but it brings up the obvious question: if he wins the title, why should I believe he's going to hang onto it? It may sound like a stupid question but the Fingerpoke was less than four months prior to this. It's not out of the question.

That leaves us with the big problem with this show: Ric Flair, the fourteen time World Heavyweight Champion and the President of WCW was put in a white van and taken away to a mental hospital after apparently thinking he was President of the United States due to what could easily be written off as a slip of the tongue. Aside from what was just mentioned, the fact that it sets up Piper vs. Flair in 1999, how out of character it is for Flair and how much of a stretch this is, it's not even a well told story.

From what we can tell, David Flair and Piper decided to have Flair institutionalized because he signed a single contract for a match without looking at it. Yeah it's stupid but it's not really grounds for being institutionalized. Just writing that and reading it back makes me realize it's even worse. Ric Flair is being put in a mental hospital. Let it sink in for a second. This is a really bad idea and unfortunately it's the first step off a cliff for WCW. Things were getting stupid before, but now they're flying into the abyss.

Somehow though, the show was actually good for the most part. The

Flair/Piper stuff is horrible but it's only a part of what is otherwise a really good show. That's what makes WCW so frustrating: they have the tools and ability to have a good product, but they do things like have a DJ in the arena (because I guess a professional wrestling show just isn't entertaining enough) and the hardcore nonsense drags all the good stuff down.

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