

Thunder – January 6, 2000: It's Creeping Closer

Thunder

Date: January 6, 2000

Location: Civic Center, Florence, South Carolina

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Scott Hudson, Mike Tenay

It's a new year and please, for the love of all things good and not made of Russo, make it be a new Thunder. Almost the only stories coming out of Nitro are new Tag Team Champions....who had to run away so we could get to the NWO stuff, and the new commissioner....who was beaten up by the NWO to end the show. Heaven forbid WCW let anyone new (as new as Commissioner Terry Funk could be) get over. Let's get to it.

Clips from Nitro of the major stories.

The NWO drags Arn Anderson into the arena. Have they just had him held hostage for three days now? Why am I still surprised by these things?

Cruiserweight Title: Asya vs. Madusa

Well at least it's not more man vs. woman. Madusa is defending and has Spice in her corner as part of a pairing that has never actually been explained. The interference (and the stupid) start before the match as Oklahoma comes out to do commentary because we need a four man booth.

Madusa grabs the ropes to block a dropkick as Oklahoma is ripping on Madusa for holding a man's title when she should be at home cooking for her husband. So apparently Oklahoma will be portraying Jeff Jarrett in a feud that is nowhere near as interesting as Jarrett vs. Chyna. The Revolution distracts the referee so Saturn can jump Asya, allowing Madusa to hit the German suplex (Oklahoma: "A move originated by a man!") to retain.

Madusa yells at Oklahoma and the Powers That Be and gets a barbecue sauce bottle broken over her head. Well at least that's what the other

announcers say happen because we have to see the Filthy Animals run in to save Asya. Why they're saving Asya isn't clear as their teams were feuding, but it makes as much sense as anything else.

The announcers run down the card.

Juventud Guerrera and Psychosis come out with the former doing his Rock imitation and throwing Schiavone out of the commentary booth.

Here's Terry Funk to beat up the luchadors and give Tony his seat back. I'm so glad they wasted that minute on an angle (if that qualified as an angle) that was over as soon as it started. Funk says the NWO can do this the easy way by bringing Arn Anderson out here right now, or the hard way by making him deal with it himself. Jarrett comes out, swears a bit, and says they'll be out here in an hour.

Saturn tells the Filthy Animals to be, and I quote, "like a midget at a urinal: on their toes." Before they get much further, Juventud runs in and takes over the interview from Gene. So is Juvy just there to make Russo and Ferrara chuckle at this point?

The NWO beats up Arn Anderson. This angle would work so much better with Flair than Funk, but can you blame Flair for not wanting to get destroyed in the Carolinas all over again for the sake of putting over the NWO?

Gene brings out Booker T for a chat about Stevie Ray's actions. Booker brings up Stevie's injury and how he needed someone to watch his back. The only person that would was Midnight, and Stevie needs to accept that Midnight is going to be around. Stevie comes out and says Midnight isn't ready because she's cost him four matches. He wants a match with Midnight tonight, and if Stevie wins, Midnight is gone. If Midnight wins though, Harlem Heat is back together with Midnight as a member. You can see the other booking hands getting in on these stories as this, while not very interesting, is completely logical.

David Flair, Crowbar and Daffney are watching on a monitor as the NWO pours hot coffee on Anderson. At what point are these guys arrested? Flair looks concerned.

PG-13/Chavo Guerrero Jr. vs. 3 Count

That's quite the odd pairing. We're promised a 3 Count concert after the match. Well I'm sold. Shannon can't hit a Fameasser on Chavo to start so it's off to Shane and JC. Evan gets bored on the apron and springboards in with a dropkick before decking Chavo and diving onto Wolfie.

Everything breaks down and Chavo hits Shannon's tornado DDT, only to have Shane hit him with the green circle for the win. Nothing match, but what are you expecting from a minute and a half long six man tag?

We get the concert, making this by far and away the most entertaining show of the year so far.

David walks away from his partners.

Funk beats up security for not finding Arn. He's kind of got a point actually.

The Wall vs. Jerry Flynn

This is a shoot fight because that's what wrestling fans tune in to see: boring wrestlers pretending to shoot on each other. Tank Abbott comes out and to watch because he's still employed for reasons I don't understand. Wall dominates to start but Flynn comes back with his limited assortment of kicks. Jerry takes it outside and whips him into the barricade before slugging away back inside. Back in and Jerry strikes even more but stops to yell at Abbott, earning him a shot to the back of the head, giving Wall the pin. More worthless stuff as people with no business on TV get pushed.

Abbott beats up Wall and Doug Dillinger post match.

David finds Funk.

US Title: Jeff Jarrett vs. Norman Smiley

Bunkhouse Brawl with Jeff defending. Smiley's Hardcore Title is off to the side for reasons unclear but it might have something to do with the shoulder pads he's wearing. He bails to the floor to start so Jeff throws a trashcan at his head to take over. Smiley is sent into a chair and

screams a lot but finally fights back with a trashcan lid and a kendo stick shot. Norman doesn't want to cover due to fear and a guitar shot sets up the Stroke to retain. Another two and a half minute gimmick match.

Post match David and Terry come out and choke Jarrett with the crowbar as Terry demands the NWO get out here. After a break, the NWO brings out Anderson and Nash has a challenge: a match with Funk at Souled Out with the Commissioner's job on the line. Funk agrees if it's a one on one hardcore match with the NWO banned from ringside.

On top of that, he wants a hardcore match against Bret for the title tonight, even though he cares more about hurting Bret than winning the belt. Notice how he worded that: he doesn't say the title is worthless like Goldberg did to Rick Steiner with the TV Title, but that there's something he wants more. Bret agrees and threatens to kill Funk tonight. That's so far outside something Bret would normally say and it doesn't work coming from him. Hart suggests a swap of Jarrett for Anderson, but Arn can't help but get in a shot at Jarrett, earning him a ball bat shot from Bret.

Disco sells his Rolex to pay off some of his debt to the Mafia.

Stevie Ray yells at Funk for no apparent reason.

Midnight vs. Stevie Ray

No Booker at ringside. After appearing in the ring, Midnight dropkicks Stevie into the corner and slugs away, only to eat a clothesline and some right hands. A slam and elbow get two on Midnight with Stevie pulling up off the cover. He does the same thing after a back elbow but stops to stare at the camera in an unintentionally (I think?) funny spot. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Stevie forearm's Midnight down again.

There's a side slam and Stevie loads up the slapjack, but Booker runs out to say this has to be a fair match. Stevie actually agrees and powerslams Midnight for no cover as he checks her arm instead. That's the mating call of a wacky finish though as Midnight rolls him up for the surprise pin.

Rating: D. The match had a goofy finish but at least it wasn't the most illogical thing in the world. Russo's booking gets annoying when you have stuff come out of nowhere and doesn't have any kind of foundation. Stevie letting her up time after time and then getting caught in his arrogance was set up over the course of the match and was paid off at the end. That's far better storytelling than almost anything else Russo does, which makes me think he isn't in charge of this story.

Kidman and Konnan introduce Okerlund to a good looking blonde, who I believe is Pamela Paulshock. She immediately gets on my nerves by calling Gene sexy. Gene Okerlund has never been sexy in his life. Stop these lies.

Back from a break with Gene calling out Page for a chat. Page denies Kimberly cheating with Buff but says Bagwell did hit on her. He'd like Bagwell out here right now but only gets him to the stage. We get sex jokes, gay jokes, and low testicular fortitude jokes, triggering a big brawl.

The Artist still won't record. This isn't going anywhere is it?

Juvy does the interview with Bam Bam Bigelow as Gene is talking to Paulshock. Before they get anywhere, Kanyon blasts Bigelow with a champagne bottle.

Kevin Nash vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

And never mind as Bigelow is down on the stage where Steiner and Jarrett get him into a wheelbarrow. Nash hits Bigelow with a ball bat and the match (yes this was a match) is over in 22 seconds. I guess the multiple matches on Monday were enough for Nash this week.

Tag Team Titles: Konnan/Kidman vs. Crowbar/David Flair

David/Crowbar won the titles on Monday in the ridiculous tournament. David comes out with his belt on backwards because he's crazy you see. Crowbar hammers on Kidman to start, meaning they're already wising up by keeping Flair on the apron. A back elbow to the jaw puts Kidman down but YOU STILL CAN'T POWERBOMB CROWBAR EVEN THOUGH PEOPLE HAVE DONE IT AND

THIS JOKE IS OLD. Off to David for a suplex as we get the old standard Schiavone hype for basic moves.

Crowbar comes in with a springboard missile dropkick and a guillotine legdrop for two with Konnan making the save. I had forgotten who Kidman's partner was until then. Kidman counters another powerbomb (oh come on now Crowbar. Even you aren't that crazy) but David breaks up the shooting star. Crowbar tries a top rope hurricanrana but Rey grabs Kidman's leg to make the save. Cue a limping Arn Anderson as Konnan comes in to clean house. In the melee, Anderson hits Konnan with the crowbar to give Flair the pin.

Rating: D+. Totally watchable match while Kidman and Crowbar were in there but it's clear that Flair just isn't all that good. The Anderson stuff is getting annoying as they're beating this story into our heads, but unfortunately they're wasting the Tag Team Titles on this. Maybe the Revolution and Filthy Animals could be fighting over the belts, but we need them on another team that doesn't deserve them so we can see David Flair in the ring.

The Revolution comes out and beats down the Animals again.

Terry Funk vs. Bret Hart

Non-title hardcore match. Bret is in shorts instead of ring gear and hammers Funk to the floor early on. Terry starts throwing in the chairs as is his customs but Bret throws him face first into one of them and nails Funk with the bat. They both head outside with Terry taking a chair to the head. All Bret so far. Back in and Funk gets in a few left hands and takes it right back outside for a chair to Bret's shoulder.

Terry sends him into the cart of weapons but misses the moonsault onto a trashcan onto Bret, allowing the champ to blast him in the head with another chair. Hart Pillmanizes the leg and knocks the referee down (why?), so let's cut to Arn Anderson putting on a referee's shirt. David Flair comes in and asks to take the spot instead, which Arn reluctantly allows. Cue the NWO with the bats to Funk and Nash decks David. Nash Jackknives Funk through the stage to end the show.

Rating: F+. A match? You think this was a match? I'll skip complaining about how horrible this was as you took Bret Hart and Terry Funk and put them in a street fight instead of anything resembling a wrestling match because ratings are going to plummet if you don't have some kind of violence right? Also, this is twice since Funk has debuted as commissioner that he's been beaten down to end the show. Flair had this one right all the way.

Overall Rating: F+. The wrestling still sucks, but they're moving tiny steps in the right direction. Look at the Harlem Heat story for example: there's finally some logic to it and you can tell what's going on without needing to take notes. The main event makes sense too, as poor as the wrestling has been. We're transitioning into the boring period instead of the crazy stuff, which makes me sigh and wonder what else is on instead of wanting to steal plutonium to go back in time and bash Russo's head in with a pipe wrench. They're moving in the right direction, but it's WAY too late to make things right at this point.

That's it for Thunder on Thursdays as it only took four months for Smackdown to run them out of their time slot.

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Monday Nitro – January 3, 2000: Taking the Wrestling Out of Wrestling

Monday Nitro #221

Date: January 3, 2000

Location: BiLo Center, Greenville, South Carolina

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Bobby Heenan, Tony Schiavone

It's a new year and in the best present WCW could give us, the show is back to two hours instead of the usual three. The big story this week is the rest of the Tag Team Title tournament with all the random and wacky teams and the rest of the field being filled out by regular teams who were "randomly" paired together. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week. Why must I be forced to think of that mess again?

A jet landed at the airport today. I'd assume a lot of those land every day but for some reason this is supposed to be interesting.

Tag Team Title Tournament Quarterfinals: Harris Brothers vs. Buzzkill/Mike Rotundo

Sullivan makes Leia Meow jump on a trampoline for obvious reasons. Rotundo goes after let's say Ron to start and eats a powerslam and clothesline for his efforts. Off to Buzzkill for a forearm, but Ron comes back with a big old side slam. It's big enough that it almost knocks Buzzkill's hair off. Don comes in to hammer away as Standards and Practices come out and get rid of Leia, drawing the Varsity Club out to the floor. The H Bomb ends Buzzkill in a short match.

We look back at the monster truck stuff last week which has damaged Sid's neck.

A motorcade is leaving the airport.

There's going to be a new commissioner tonight.

Nash thinks Tom Zenk is getting the job.

Bret arrives and gets beaten down by Sid, wearing a neck brace.

Diamond Dallas Page is ready for his match against Buff Bagwell but Curt Hennig comes up and tells him the Powers That Be want him in the ring tonight. PG-13 is in the ring right now and that's fine with Page.

Tag Team Title Tournament Quarterfinals: PG-13 vs. Scott Steiner/Kevin Nash

Steiner is Hall's official replacement because there are a lot of people named Scott in this company. PG-13 is in the ring doing their rap, so here's Page to lay them both out with Diamond Cutters. Here's the NWO with Nash dropping an elbow on Wolfie and pulling the tights for the pin. It's going to be one of those kind of shows, but at least it's two hours.

Here's the NWO to complain about now getting any respect and having to be attacked by Sid. Jarrett: "Slappy New Year!" Jeff isn't worried about Triple Threat Theater with Benoit and doesn't have much to say about it. Nash warns the new commissioner that the NWO is going to keep breaking the rules as they always have. Steiner jokes about his retirement and thinks all his fans are Wall Street types. This actually wasn't that bad.

The motorcade arrives.

Tag Team Title Tournament Quarterfinals: David Flair/Crowbar vs. Lash Leroux/Midnight

Lash does a cross sign at Daffney in a funny bit. The bad night continues for Lash as Midnight appearing in the ring freaks him out even more. David and Lash get things going with Stevie Ray sitting in on commentary. Flair is easily knocked around the ring because he's just not that good. It's off to Crowbar who eats a drop toehold to send him to the floor, only to have him slide back inside where he accidentally baseball slides David.

Stevie tells Lash to tag Midnight in and gets what he deserves, thereby

lowering Lash's sucka levels for the rest of the match. Midnight throws Lash onto Crowbar and nails a nice dropkick, only to have Stevie pull Midnight out to the floor. Cue Disco, Tony Marinara and Disco as we now have more people interfering than in the match. Booker yells at his brother and takes a Slapjack to the head as Leroux hits Whiplash on Crowbar. As the referee yells at Harlem Heat, Vito and Johnny come in and lay out Lash, giving Crowbar the pin.

Rating: D-. Here's a spoiler for the rest of the show: this match, which ran 5:15, is the longest match on the entire show. Also, in a match just over five minutes long, six people interfered, giving us three stories (Mafia vs. Lash, Harlem Heat splitting, the match itself) in one match. I know we get on Russo for overbooking but come on man. Calm down for like a minute please.

Lash yells at Disco in the back but Disco says he has to deal with the Family, who come in and attack Lash as Disco has to look on.

Here's Luger Luger, still dressed as Sting and yes, this is really WCW's best idea to fight Raw. Luger talks about Sting being afraid of him and wants the no name wrestler to come out here and face him.

Total Package vs. Tank Abbott

Stalling by Luger leads into the mace from Liz for the DQ in less than a minute. But remember, Luger is a veteran and therefore still a draw.

Jerry Flynn comes out and beats up Abbott with less than no one caring.

The NWO takes their ball bats to the limo.

Rob Garner of the WCW front office comes out to talk about the "writers" "swerving" WCW and how Sting and Goldberg are currently out of commission. Therefore, let's bring in someone new to help fight the NWO. That brings us to the new commissioner: Terry Funk. Yes, the big solution to the NWO is to bring in a guy who first retired about sixteen years earlier.

Now don't get me wrong: Terry Funk is awesome and one of the best wrestlers and performers of all time, but this is not the right move in

this spot. This needed to be someone young who could be a future for WCW, not another legend who shows up, basically in the same role as Piper.

Anyway, Funk says he loves wrestling and wants to get rid of these fat hogs at the trough. To do this, he needs an enforcer, and who better than Arn Anderson? Anderson gives his usual great speech about putting the heart back in wrestling, but the WE WANT FLAIR chants almost drown him out. Cue the NWO so Hart can offer Funk a spot on the team. Terry shrugs it off and makes some new stipulations for Hart vs. Goldberg. Wait didn't they officially cancel that last week? It wouldn't be the first time they lied about a match they had coming up so why not do it here too?

The match will have Arn as guest referee and the title can change hands on a DQ. As for tonight, it's Jeff defending the US Title against Sid in a powerbomb match. Oh and Nash and Steiner will indeed get screwed in their matches tonight. Nash threatens David Flair and we're done here.

Tag Team Title Tournament Quarterfinals: Buff Bagwell/Chris Kanyon vs. Norman Smiley/Asya

Buff and Kanyon argue over how awesome this town is because Kanyon thinks it's not Hollywood. Kanyon offers him some champagne so Buff, the hero that he is, breaks the bottle over Kanyon's head. That's a great way to advance in a title tournament Buff. Norman is dressed as a mascot of the local baseball team, complete with a three foot long tail, which is shaken in Buff's general direction.

Buff doesn't take kindly to Norman mocking his strut and nails him with a clothesline, only to have Asya knee him in the back. We get the spanking dance from Norman before it's off to Asya, who is quickly suplexed down by Bagwell. Everything breaks down and Asya hits Buff low, only to have Norman accidentally hit her with the mascot head. A Blockbuster sends Buff on his own (presumably) to the semifinals.

Rating: D-. Comedy ladies and gentlemen! This is what you get when you have no reason for these teams to be fighting and you just throw them together and have no chemistry or time to go anywhere. It doesn't help that neither team even tried to do more than comedy spots to get to the ending. Couple that with Kanyon not even being in the match and what were

you expecting here?

The Revolution comes in to beat up Buff, drawing down Duggan for a failed save attempt. The Filthy Animals come out for the real save.

The old guys and the NWO look for David.

Funk and Anderson find Daffney in the boiler room.

Tag Team Title Tournament Semifinals: Kevin Nash/Scott Steiner vs. Harris Brothers

You know, in a decent company, this could be a watchable power match. Again Steiner sits in on commentary and lets Nash do the match himself. The twins double team Nash until he gets a ball bat. They obviously run away from the combined force of the bat and the hair, only to have the Varsity Club come in and chair them down. Sullivan throws Don back in and Nash pins him in less than a minute and a half.

Jarrett kidnaps Daffney.

Tag Team Title Tournament Semifinals: Buff Bagwell/Chris Kanyon vs. David Flair/Crowbar

Kanyon comes out for no logical reason, only to get jumped by Bam Bam Bigelow and slammed off the stage. This brings out Vampiro, who is apparently going to be Buff's partner whether Bagwell likes it or not. Vampiro starts with some spinning kicks to put Crowbar down but Buff tags himself in. Cue Anderson and Funk to talk to David because he's not doing anything important right now.

Vampiro superplexes Crowbar down and Buff tells Vampiro to stay in for the finish. There's a Ligerbomb to Crowbar but Vampiro stops to argue with Anderson because it's the least logical thing possible right now. Funk punches Vampiro in the face and Buff adds a Blockbuster to his partner, again for no apparent reason, allowing David to get the pin to go to the finals.

Rating: F. This was a circus with the partners basically saying screw the tag belts because we want to do stupid stuff instead. I've completely

lost track of what's going on with Bagwell (feuding with Page I believe), Vampiro (feuding with no one that I know of) and almost everyone else in this company. The sad part: I really don't care what they're doing either.

The NWO drags Daffney out so Steiner can call her ugly.

Flair and Crowbar can't find Daffney.

US Title: Jeff Jarrett vs. Sid Vicious

Powerbomb match and Sid is in a neck brace. He shoves Jeff away to start and kicks away, only to have Jarrett go right for the neck. A backdrop puts the big guy on the floor and Jeff rams him into the barricade. Back in and a high cross body gets two for Jeff but Sid powers out and nails a big boot, followed by the chokeslam. The champ shoves the referee down of course and Sid hits the powerbomb, only to have Bret come in with the ball bat for the DQ.

Standard beatdown and spray painting follows.

Tag Team Titles: Kevin Nash/Scott Steiner vs. David Flair/Crowbar

Steiner and Nash clean house to start and I have no idea who to cheer for here. There's no referee to start and Steiner sits in on commentary to say the opponents suck. Nash slams Crowbar off the top and pokes him in the eye as this has been completely one sided so far. A double noggin knocker puts Flair and Crowbar down again but here come Terry Funk and Arn Anderson in a referee shirt. Crowbar gets jackknifed as security and Funk yell at Steiner. The distraction lets Crowbar hit Nash with a crowbar, giving David the pin and the titles.

Rating: F. It's the slip on the banana peel ending as this was just a beating until the wacky ending. In other words, Russo probably thought it was great and the wrestlers loved it too as they didn't have to do much. This wasn't a match and that really shouldn't surprise me at this point.

Post match Jeff Jarrett drags Daffney to the ring as David hits Anderson with the crowbar. The new champs stumble away and the NWO swarms Funk. Bret and Jeff kidnap Anderson and throw him in the trunk of a car to end

the show. The new champs were complete afterthoughts here.

Overall Rating: F. So tonight we had seven tournament matches. Those matches combined to run less than nineteen minutes, for an average of about two minutes and forty seconds each. If you take away the marathon match that ran over five minutes, you're looking at six matches taking less than fifteen minutes combined. There were two other matches on this show: Tank Abbott in a match with literally no wrestling and a two minute powerbomb match which ended in a DQ. They've taken the wrestling out of this show and now I'm really not sure what Nitro is supposed to be. At least it's shorter now I guess.

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