

Survivor Series Count-Up – 1996 (2016 Redo):

Survivor Series 1996

Date: November 17, 1996

Location: Madison Square Garden, New York City, New York

Attendance: 18,647

Commentators: Jim Ross, Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

I had three options for an older redo this year (this one, 1988 and 1992) but this one had the most Survivor Series matches plus Steve Austin vs. Bret Hart, which was more than enough to sway me over. This is an interesting time for the company as they're just starting to get squashed by WCW but the future is here tonight. Let's get to it.

Free For All: Team Bart Gunn vs. Team Billy Gunn

Bart Gunn, Aldo Montoya, Bob Holly, Jesse James

Billy Gunn, Salvatore Sincere, Justin Bradshaw, The Sultan

This would be the Kickoff Show today. I've actually never reviewed this and there's a chance I've never even seen it before. The team names are pretty arbitrary as there's little rhyme or reason for these pairings, save for maybe the brothers, meaning no one is really a captain. James (Road Dogg of course) is a country singer here and the REAL Double J as part of a stupid angle with the departed Jeff Jarrett. Ok so I might have With My Baby Tonight (his self-performed theme song) on my iPod. At least the angle wasn't a total loss.

As the Sultan (Rikishi) and Aldo (Justin Credible as a Portuguese man with a jockstrap for a mask) start us off, JR mentions that Austin vs. Hart is a #1 contenders match, which really wasn't mentioned very often on the actual pay per view. Montoya actually does some damage to Sultan by dropkicking him out to the floor but a cover results in him being launched off. A bad looking piledriver

sets up the camel clutch and Montoya is eliminated in a hurry.

Holly comes in with a bulldog as we see Aldo walk up the ramp opposite the cameras (an MSG standard). Sultan grabs a chinlock and we take a break to come back with Sultan slamming Bart on the floor so Sincere (a flamboyant yet still generic Italian) can baseball slide him in the face. Back in and Bart grabs a side slam to get rid of Sincere and tie the match up.

Bradshaw (who JR says is going to be something special) comes in and kicks the freshly tagged Holly in the face. We go to a split screen to see Austin running Dok Hendrix out of his dressing room and come back to Bradshaw hitting the Clothesline From an Undisclosed Location to eliminate Holly.

Jesse immediately rolls Bradshaw up for the elimination (ignore Billy kicking Jesse and breaking up the pin at two while the referee keeps counting anyway), leaving us with Jesse and Bart vs. Billy and Sultan. A rollup gets rid of Sultan but the Fameasser (yet to be named) does the same to Jesse. We're down to a battle of the Gunns and Bart gets tied up in the ropes for some trash talking. Billy calls him an SOB, meaning he isn't likely to get a Christmas card from his own mother. Bart stands up for Mama Gunn and hits a running forearm for the pin.

Rating: C-. This is a good example of a match where you have to consider the purpose. They weren't trying to settle any big score here or blow the roof off the place. This was about getting the fans warmed up before we got to the real show and the fast pace did that well enough. Billy vs. Bart wasn't anything interesting but at least it was a little story to tie things together. Nothing good but it did its job well enough.

The opening video looks at the WWF taking over New York (including the Hall of Fame banquet at a hotel, which would be the last one for seven and a half years) before going into a look at the two major matches. You know you have a stacked card when you're getting hyped over two matches that don't even include Undertaker vs. Mankind or any of the show's namesake matches.

Team Furnas and Lafon vs. Team Owen Hart/British Bulldog

Doug Furnas, Phillip Lafon, Henry Godwinn, Phineas Godwinn

Owen Hart, British Bulldog, Marty Jannetty, Leif Cassidy

This is Furnas and Lafon's WWF debut as they were brought in to challenge Owen and Bulldog for the Tag Team Titles. Marty and Lafon (I can never remember which is Furnas and which is Lafon) start things off with a nice little acrobatics display, capped off by a hard shot to Marty's jaw. Leif comes in instead as the announcers talk about slander. The slow pace continues and it's off to Phineas for a headlock. JR: "You ever see Hilary Clinton do that?"

For some reason Leif thinks it's a good idea to slap Phineas in the face and spit on him. Well to be fair, given all the sweat and liquid on his overalls, it's not the worst idea in the world. Owen comes in to wake the crowd up and it's time to pick Phineas apart. The heels start working Phineas over as JR wants a third referee out here.

Marty hits a good looking back elbow to the jaw as the announcers start talking about Bret, though at least they tie it in to Owen. Today that would go off on a tangent and turn into ripping on Byron Saxton. I mean, he deserves it but it's still annoying. Marty goes up top so Phineas tries a superplex. JR: "Now how stupid was that?" Oh dang it I always forget how annoying heel JR is. Even heel Cole wasn't this bad.

Henry comes in, kicks Marty in the gut, and Slop Drops him for the first elimination. Not that it means much as Owen rolls Henry up to tie the score five seconds later. Phineas cleans house (has a fit, whatever) but Bulldog makes a blind tag and powerslams him to go up 3-2. Furnas comes in to speed things WAY up (and turn up the quality as well), only to miss a dropkick, which JR calls one of the best in the business. Like I said, heel JR wasn't the best.

Leif comes in to cover and the former powerlifter sends him flying on the kickout. The bad guys get smart with a blind tag and a springboard missile dropkick to wipe Furnas out in a great looking

visual. JR goes into yet another rant about the referees not catching the heels cheating, which is a really weird complaint for a heel to have.

Cassidy misses a charge and Furnas brings in Lafon for a snappy looking reverse superplex to get us down to two on two. The lack of a reaction to Leif being eliminated really shouldn't surprise anyone as he was just so out of place in this match. Owen comes in for a belly to belly and a middle rope elbow (both of those looked very smooth) for two. A low blow to Furnas has Vince freaking out but JR, the heel commentator here, lets it go right past him. Again: it was a bad character and you could sense he wasn't a fan of the whole thing.

It's back to Bulldog who is quickly sunset flipped for the elimination, which is a big deal as it means Furnas and Lafon can pin Owen and the Bulldog in a two on two match. Bulldog leaves Lafon with a parting gift of a chop block though and Owen follows it up with the Sharpshooter. Furnas is in for the save and hits that dropkick of his (basically a dropkick with a backflip), followed by a German suplex for the final pin.

Rating: B. This was more like it for the opener as they set up the next challengers for the Tag Team Titles, though the first part with the Godwinns really brings it down. It also doesn't help that the crowd didn't care for the most part, and can you really blame them? The good guys were people making their debuts and hog farmers. It's good wrestling but not the brightest idea.

Paul Bearer insists he WILL NOT get into the cage and be hung above the ring. Mankind will crush Undertaker like the cockroaches he used to eat for dinner.

Undertaker vs. Mankind

Bearer is in an individual cage above the ring and if Undertaker wins, Bearer is his for five minutes. The entrance is an important one as Undertaker descends from the rafters and debuts the sleeveless leather attire that would become his signature look for the next several years. It marks the evolution of the original

character to the newer, sleeker fighting machine that could hurt people at will.

It's a brawl to start (duh) with Undertaker using a drop toehold (?!?!?) followed by a fireman's carry into a cross armbreaker. Undertaker gets smart by working over Mankind's hand, which JR thinks is illegal. Mankind takes it into the crowd and is quickly backdropped right back to ringside but pops up for a cannonball off the apron. There's something to be said about someone launching their body at someone else.

Undertaker's comeback is cut off by a Texas piledriver and the Mandible Claw goes on. Undertaker is smart enough to send Mankind straight outside for the save and both guys are spent from the physicality. A kick to the chest sends Mankind flying hard into the barricade for a sick sounding THUD. You just can't fake that kind of brutality. Well you can but it's easier to believe it's real with Foley.

Old School is broken up so Undertaker opts to punch Mankind in the face multiple times. The chokeslam is countered with the Claw, only to be countered by a big chokeslam with the camera going wide for an awesome visual. Mankind is back up though (as always) and pulls out a spike to stab Undertaker a bit. Amazingly enough, Undertaker doesn't care to be stabbed and Tombstones Mankind for the pin instead.

Rating: B. This was a BIG change of pace for Undertaker as he was moving faster and acting like a much more well rounded wrestler, which he would be for a long time. These two were solid together as always as they just beat the heck out of each other for long stretches of time and that's always worth a watch. This is one of their lesser known matches but it's certainly entertaining.

Post match the cage is lowered and Undertaker goes right for Bearer, only to have the Executioner run out for the save, allowing Bearer to escape. That would be Undertaker's next match before he continued attempting to murder Bearer and Mankind.

Sunny comes out to replace Lawler on commentary. When you look at so

many of the women who would come after her, Sunny really is remarkable. She looks great but she's also dripping with charisma, which so few women (or men for that matter) have at this level.

Team Helmsley laughs off the idea of Team Marc Mero because they're a man down due to Mark Henry being injured.

Team Hunter Hearst Helmsley vs. Team Marc Mero

Hunter Hearst Helmsley, Jerry Lawler, Goldust, Crush

Marc Mero, The Stalker, Rocky Maivia, Jake Roberts

There's a lot to cover here. Helmsley is Intercontinental Champion, having stolen the title from Mero with the help of the now departed (to WCW) Mr. Perfect. The Stalker is Barry Windham who used to be a military themed guy but is now just Barry Windham with a big mustache. Roberts is Mark Henry's replacement as Lawler and Roberts are feuding over Jake's alcoholism.

Oh and it's Rocky's debut after weeks of videos talking about how amazing he is. The mind blowing part: they undersold what he would become. The commentary gets even more entertaining as Sunny goes nuts ripping on Sable, claiming to be all natural even down to her hair.

We hit the stall button to start with no contact for the first two minutes. After several tags, Goldust and Mero finally lock up as the announcers discuss Mr. Perfect without saying he's gone. Marc's armbar doesn't go anywhere so it's off to the Stalker as JR rips on Barry's attire. Helmsley comes in and immediately runs from Mero, meaning we get Crush vs. Rocky for his in ring debut. Thankfully that lasts all of ten seconds before it's off to Lawler for some great selling. Vince actually mentions the name Dwayne Johnson as Sunny suggests being able to take Rocky all the way to the top.

The heels start taking turns on Rocky until he backdrops Helmsley for a breather. Jake gets the hot tag to clean house despite looking a good bit out of shape and very pale. Lawler comes in and slowly hammers away while making alcohol jokes. The DDT scores out of nowhere and it's 4-3 in a hurry. The mustache with the Windham

attached suplexes Goldust for two but a shot from the apron sets up the Curtain Call to tie us up.

Both captains come in as the crowd stays mostly silent. Again though, is there any real reason to care? Crush isn't interesting, Roberts looks awful and no one knows who Rocky is yet. Helmsley grabs an abdominal stretch and Goldust pulls on the arm, sending heel JR into his second frenzy in an hour.

The referee finally catches Helmsley cheating to break the hold and it's a Merosault (moonsault pres) to get rid of Hunter. Crush comes in and gets dropkicked to the floor, only to avoid Mero's slingshot dive. As we're watching the replays, the announcers completely miss Crush giving Mero the heart punch (exactly what it sounds like) for the elimination. Jake gets the same thing and is eliminated ten seconds later.

So we're down to Rocky, meaning we get a closeup of his ridiculous looking hair. To his credit, even Rock has said he looked ridiculous at this point. Rocky slugs both guys down and does that stupid arm flailing thing of his. A crossbody puts both guys down and Crush heart punches Goldust by mistake. Rocky hits a second crossbody to get rid of Crush and a shoulder breaker ends Goldust for the win. The pin gets a nice pop, though it might just be because the match is finally over.

Rating: D. They accomplished the goal of giving Rocky a good rub to start (hence why you have goons like Crush around to take a fall like this) but this was WAY too long. You could probably cut out five to ten minutes here and do just about the same thing. Windham was worthless (as he was for most of the time after 1990 or so) and there were way too many stretches of boring non-action dragging it down.

Now it's time for the real main event as we recap Bret Hart vs. Steve Austin. I know Shawn vs. Sid is going on last but make no mistake about it: this was the most important and anticipated match of the night. Bret had been gone since losing the WWF World Title to Shawn at Wrestlemania XII and Austin has turned into a disrespectful

rebel who doesn't care about legacies or what anyone before him has done. You can see the fire in Austin's eyes and Bret is the only one that can stop him. Or slow him down at least because there may be no stopping Austin anymore.

Austin says he's ready and isn't worried.

Bret says this is about respect, which he'll receive from Austin no matter what.

Steve Austin vs. Bret Hart

The winner gets the title shot next month. Even Vince has to acknowledge the face pop Austin receives here in New York. Bret gets a great face reaction of his own but Austin really isn't impressed with the pyro. JR thinks this might come down to a submission, which might be some great foreshadowing for Wrestlemania. He goes even further by saying Bret isn't a clown or a trashman because he's a wrestler. Uh, Doink and Droese were wrestlers to Jim. We're still not ready to go as Vince possibly spoils the main event by saying the winner of this gets Sid.

Austin flips him off to start and we're ready to go. Feeling out process to start as JR goes back to that submission idea. Vince: "How ironic would it be if Steve Austin put the Sharpshooter on Bret Hart and made him submit?" They trade wristlocks to start and you can see some extra fire in Bret for this match.

Bret takes him down and stays on the arm with a hammerlock until a hard elbow to the jaw puts him down. Austin keeps slugging away until Bret pulls him into another armbar. Bret: "ASK HIM!" Did Jericho get that from Bret? Steve comes right back with a hot shot and starts choking on the bottom rope.

We hit the chinlock and JR goes back to that submission idea again. That's three times now and it's really not adding anything new. Back up and it's time for the slugout with Austin easily taking over as you would expect. Bret comes back with his usual offense but gets shoved chest first into the buckle, again as is his custom. Austin's superplex is broken up though and Bret goes all the way to the top

for the elbow.

They head outside with Austin driving the back into the post as the brawling continues to favor Austin while Bret wins the wrestling. Makes sense. Of course as soon as I say that, Bret throws him through (yes through) the barricade and Austin is suddenly reeling. Just because it's required, they fight over the announcers' table with Austin taking over (JR: "It seems that it always happens to the Spanish guys!") and dropping an elbow onto Bret. The table actually doesn't break though in a very rare sight.

Back in and we hit the abdominal stretch as Austin continues to know how to focus on a body part. The referee catches Austin holding the ropes (which doesn't add leverage but helps block a hiptoss counter) so it's time for a slugout, capped off by Bret hitting a Stun Gun for two. Austin is right back up with a top rope superplex but Bret does the lifting the legs spot (looked horrible here as they were both down for several seconds before going for it) for two.

The Stunner hits out of nowhere for two and JR makes a REALLY good save by saying Bret only kicked out because Austin rolled him away from the ropes. That protects the move, which is completely lost on today's product. Austin grabs a Texas Cloverleaf, followed by a Bow and Arrow of all things. Unfortunately Austin makes the mistake of trying to mat wrestle with Bret and has to grab the ropes to avoid a Sharpshooter. Back up and Austin grabs the Million Dollar Dream but Bret walks the turnbuckle and flips back onto Austin for the surprise pin.

Rating: A+. Like this would get anything else. I know most people (including myself) say that the I Quit match made Austin a star but he's not getting to that match without this one. Austin was always a great talent but this was the moment where you knew he was ready for the main event stage. Notice something important about the ending: Bret caught Austin for the pin rather than really decisively beating him. It shows that as great as Austin is, Bret was just that much better and used his experience to win.

Make no mistake about it though: this is a masterpiece and one of

the best matches of all time. Unfortunately there was a rematch that is somehow even better and this is a bit forgotten as a result. I've heard people say they like this one better and I really can't argue against that. It's a must see match and an incredible lesson in giving someone the rub of their career.

JR: "I don't think anyone, including Shawn Michaels or Sid, could have beaten Bret Hart in this ring on this night." Vince: "I totally disagree with that." No followup or anything and the tone was very heelish.

Sid says he'll win.

Faarooq/Vader/Razor Ramon/Diesel vs. Flash Funk/Savio Vega/Yokozuna/???

Here's another match with a bunch of notes. Faarooq debuts his traditional Nation look here, thankfully ditching the ridiculous blue gladiator gear. Flash Funk is also making his debut after years as the far better 2 Cold Scorpio. That would be fake Razor and Diesel (duh) with the former just looking horrible. Fake Diesel at least looks like the real thing if you look at him from the right angle. Again, the original idea here wasn't bad: it's the gimmicks that got them over instead of the people. Unfortunately that falls apart because Fake Razor looked horrible.

Jim Cornette (Vader's manager) sits in on commentary and JR says he's the same size as Yokozuna. Cornette sounds like he wants to cry when he sees Funk for the first time. JR: "I've never seen the yellow and red look so good here in the Garden." The mystery partner is Jimmy Snuka, which gets a mild reaction from the MSG fans and a groan from the audience at home who already saw a legend return with Roberts earlier.

Vader slugs Funk down to start but is quickly sent outside for a moonsault to the floor. You can hear the ECW chants before they even start. Back in and Vader gets tired of this flying nonsense and powerbomb Funk in half. Yokozuna comes in for the embarrassing fat man offense as JR rips on the refereeing again. It's off to Vega vs. Ramon as the crowd isn't sure what to care about here.

JR and Cornette argue about whether JR could manage a Wendy's. JR: "I could if you were in town." Razor screws up the fall away slam and thankfully it's off to Funk vs. Diesel so we can get something watchable. Vega comes back in and gets pummeled in the corner as this is already dragging horribly. Snuka get the tag to a pretty anemic pop and quickly runs into Diesel's knee. In a big surprise, Snuka actually slams Vader. Not bad for a guy who hasn't been around in forever.

Jimmy almost runs over for the tag back to Vega, who hits maybe 10% of a spinwheel kick on Diesel. Faarooq rams him into the post and the Jackknife ends Vega to hopefully start wrapping this up. The Superfly Splash ends Ramon less than a minute later and then the remaining six come in for the big brawl, resulting in a massive DQ and no winner.

Rating: F-. If there's a worse Survivor Series match not involving four clowns, my therapy must be working because I've completely blocked it from my mind. This was HORRIBLE with eight people that the crowd wasn't interested in seeing and a nothing ending that only made things worse. Absolutely terrible here as they couldn't even have Vader survive to give him a bit of a rub?

We recap the main event which is basically Shawn fighting another monster but this time it's someone he used to trust. Yeah this is hardly anything interesting and feels like a major letdown after Austin vs. Hart. Also, given how badly the ratings were doing around this time, there's almost no way Shawn is keeping the title here.

WWF World Title: Shawn Michaels vs. Sid

Shawn gets a John Cena style pop as a sign of the times. Sid is challenging of course and pounds Shawn down early on with JR getting right to the point: Sid isn't technically sound but he can hit you really hard, which is all he needs to do. Shawn speeds things up with some left jabs and a headlock takeover.

The threat of a powerbomb sends Shawn bailing to the outside and we have a breather. Back in and Shawn gets smart by going after the knee, including a Figure Four (actually done on the proper leg). The

hold is turned over and Sid sends him shoulder first into the post to take over. Shawn goes right back to the knee and the fans boo him out of the Garden. Thankfully they catch on to the idea and Sid blasts Shawn to the floor with a clothesline.

Back in and Sid gets in a few kicks to the face, followed by a big backbreaker for two. We hit a cobra clutch of all things (Sid would use that occasionally and it always looked weird for someone his size) before a chokeslam drops the champ. Shawn hits his flying forearm and is loudly booed, though the nipup draws a high pitched pop.

Sid grabs a camera and hits Shawn's manager Jose Lothario in the chest, followed by Sweet Chin Music to the giant. With Jose grabbing his chest, Shawn goes to check on him instead of retaining the title. Sid tries to throw Shawn back in and the referee gets bumped, allowing Sid to hit him with the camera. The powerbomb gives Sid the title (somehow the first title he ever won) to a BIG face pop.

Rating: B+. I don't like the ending with the camera thing but it's still a really well put together match. This was pretty much Ric Flair vs. Sid and since Shawn knows how to wrestle a Flair match as well as anyone ever (including Flair), there was almost no way this wasn't going to work. They let Shawn walk Sid through the match and that was all they ever needed to do.

Shawn checks on Jose as Sid poses to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. This is a hard one to grade as the Survivor Series matches were horrible but everything else ranges from very good to masterpiece. That's more than enough to say this is a great show and worth checking out. If nothing else there are so many debuts and repackages here that it's worth checking out for pure history. The MSG crowd helps provide so much energy and the show is just a lot of fun (save for the one horrible match, which only lasts about ten minutes). See this one at least once but watch Bret vs. Austin as many times as you can.

Ratings Comparison

Team Jesse James vs. Team Billy Gunn

Original: N/A

2012 Redo: N/A

2016 Redo: C-

Team Furnas and Lafon vs. Team Owen Hart/British Bulldog

Original: B-

2012 Redo: C+

2016 Redo: B

Undertaker vs. Mankind

Original: C+

2012 Redo: B

2016 Redo: B

Team Jerry Lawler vs. Team Jake Roberts

Original: D

2012 Redo: C+

2016 Redo: D

Steve Austin vs. Bret Hart

Original: A+

2012 Redo: A+

2016 Redo: A+

Team Vader vs. Team Yokozuna

Original: D-

2012 Redo: F

2016 Redo: F-

Shawn Michaels vs. Sycho Sid

Original: C-

2012 Redo: B

2016 Redo: B+

Overall Rating

Original: B-

2012 Redo: B+

2016 Redo: B

This was mostly the same as four years ago, save for me liking Rocky's debut a lot more back then. That smile must have made me go weak in the knees.

Here's the original review is you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/11/15/history-of-survivor-series-count-up-1996-bret-vs-austin-the-prequel-and-rock-debuts/>

And the 2012 Redo:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2015/11/04/survivor-series-count-up-1996-thats-blue-chip-right-there/>

Survivor Series Count-Up – 1995: They've Still Got It

Survivor Series 1995

Date: November 19, 1995

Location: USAir Arena, Landover, Maryland

Attendance: 14,500

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Mr. Perfect, Jim Ross

Aside from the main event, there really isn't much else to talk about. The rest of the show is dedicated to the midcard, save for the return of the Undertaker. He'll be captaining the Dark Side to face the Royals, led by King Mabel, who helped crush Undertaker's face a few months prior. Let's get to it.

We start with Razor Ramon, talking about being in the first Wild Card match. The idea here was to take faces and heels and mix them up. It was an interesting concept but like most Survivor Series

matches, it didn't mean anything and wasn't done again.

Mr. Perfect is introduced as a surprise commentator.

We actually get an opening video which is about Bret going A-Diesel hunting. The idea is old vs. new. It's no countout and No DQ tonight, basically meaning a street fight.

BodyDonnas vs. Underdogs

BodyDonnas: Skip, Rad Radford, Tom Prichard, 1-2-3 Kid

Underdogs: Barry Horowitz, Hakushi, Marty Jannetty, Bob Holly

The idea here is people that care about their looks vs. jobbers. Horowitz scored one of the biggest upsets ever over Skip (Chris Candido, a fitness guru. He would later be joined by Prichard under the name Zip. Their manager was the famous one though: Sunny). Jannetty needs no introduction as a jobber.

The Kid is a mystery partner who is freshly heel here. By freshly I mean this is his first match as a heel. Razor comes out to go after the Kid who screwed him over on Raw on Monday. Raw is finally a big deal at this point too. Razor is Intercontinental Champion of course. Radford is Louis Spicolli in a grunge gimmick. Holly is a racecar driver and Hakushi is a Japanese wrestler with tattoos all over his torso.

Prichard and Jannetty start things off and Marty has to fight out of the heel corner. The Kid holds him there but Prichard hits Kid with a knee by mistake. The BodyDonnas huddle on the floor until it's off to Radford vs. Marty. Radford is called a BodyDonna in training because he's pretty fat. Here's Holly to face Rad and he takes Radford over with a hurricanrana. Radford tries the same thing but gets powerbombed down.

Off to Hakushi who is pretty freshly face. He gets behind Radford but walks into a spinebuster. Off to the Kid who hits a top rope splash on Hakushi for two and it's time for Captain Skip. Hakushi escapes a belly to back superplex and it's back to Holly who speeds things up. Prichard comes in as the fans want Barry. A powerbomb counters a hurricanrana from Holly but Tom misses a moonsault. Holly hits a top rope cross body for the elimination. Skip immediately comes in and rolls up Holly to tie it back up.

Hakushi comes in again and trips up Skip before elbowing him in the face. A Vader Bomb hits knees though and Skip gets control back. A

shot to the chest takes Skip down so here's the Kid again. The fans want Barry but it's Hakushi taking over with a Muta Elbow in the corner. A top rope shoulder takes Kid down for two but Hakushi misses a springboard splash. Razor is watching in the back. Kid kicks Hakushi in the back of the head and Radford gets the easy pin. Barry comes in and gets pounded down and the fans almost explode. Naturally this match would be the end of his push because that's how it works in the WWF, though I don't think Horowitz had a long shelf life. Radford and the Kid double team Horowitz but he comes back with a jawbreaker to Rad. Skip tells Rad not to pin Barry yet because he wants to get the pin himself.

Radford hits a Hennig neck snap as Hennig is stunned at the reaction to Horowitz. Rad stops to exercise and gets cradled by Barry for the pin. It's Skip/The Kid vs. Barry/Marty. Horowitz gets distracted by a double team and the Kid dropkicks him in the back, setting up a legdrop for the elimination. So it's Marty down two on one but he avoids a charging Skip in the corner.

A sunset flip out of nowhere gets two for Marty and the Rocker Dropper (a fancy Fameasser) puts Skip down and Marty goes up. Sunny crotches him but Skip gets countered into a Superbomb (powerbomb off the top, which would be Skip's finisher in ECW) for the elimination. It's one on one now and a missile dropkick gets two for the Kid. A moonsault misses Marty though and they're both down. Jannetty dropkicks him down for two and here comes Sid (Kid's partner). A Rocker Dropper takes the Kid down for two but Sid guillotines Marty on the ropes and Kid steals the pin.

Rating: B. This was a good match to open things up with, especially since I don't think anyone would have been able to buy Barry Horowitz captaining anything but an opening match team. Other than that though, the action here was good and it set the Kid up as a somewhat big time heel which is what he needed so soon after a turn. Good opener.

Razor threw a fit in the back after the loss, throwing a monitor against the wall in the process.

Three members of I guess you would say the heel Wild Card team (Dean Douglas, Owen and Yokozuna) say that Razor needs to channel his energy into their match later, since he's their partner.

Team Bertha Faye vs. Team Alundra Blayze

Bertha Faye, Aja Kong, Tomoko Watanabe, Lioness Asuka

Alundra Blayze, Kyoko Inoue, Sakie Hasegawa, Chaparita Asari

Bertha is an overweight and not incredibly attractive woman and is Blayze's main rival for Blayze's Women's Title. She tells the fans to shut up in an attempt to get people interested in this match. The rest are Japanese wrestlers who didn't spend a lot of time in the WWF. Asari and Asuka start things off with Asuka taking her head off with a spinwheel kick. At least I think that's what happened because we're getting a wide shot of the arena for the opening bell. Asari, a member of the face team, stands about 4'9 and is a tiny thing whereas Asuka looks like a monster.

Off to Blayze who is more Asuka's size for a slam on the Lioness. Back to Asari who debuts the Sky Twister Press (a corkscrew moonsault) in America. Asuka doesn't sell it but you can't ask everything of her. Vince has no idea what to call it but JR is there to clean up for him. Blayze comes back in and hits a German suplex to eliminate Asuka. It makes the names easier to keep track of if nothing else.

Watanabe comes in but misses a dive. Blayze sends her to the floor and does hit her dive to take over. Hasegawa comes in and hits five rolling double underhook suplexes on Watanabe as Perfect makes sexist remarks. Watanabe hits a seated senton off the top for two as this selling thing is still an issue. Aja Kong, a total monster, comes in with no tag and is immediately kicked in the face and suplexed by Hasegawa. Another Rock Bottom suplex puts her down but Hasegawa jumps into a kick to the chest. Something like a belly to back suplex eliminates Hasegawa to make it 3-3.

Asari comes in and is quickly dispatched by a middle rope splash. If you can't see the ending of this match coming, you fail your exam. Blayze comes in but tags out almost immediately to Inoue. Inoue looks like a cross between a Rocker and the Ultimate Warrior. By the time I finish typing that, a seated senton eliminates her. Kong put out three girls in about 90 seconds.

So it's Blayze vs. Faye, Kong and Watanabe. All three get in the ring at once but Watanabe stays in. A snap suplex gets two for the champion and a slow motion piledriver gets the pin to make it 2-1. Faye comes in and after some basic shots in the corner, gets caught in a German suplex to make it one on one. Kong hits a superplex for

two and she crushes Blayze in the corner for a bit. Alundra hits a bad hurricanrana for two and a standing moonsault for the same. Blayze goes up but gets headbutted down and the spinning backfist gets the pin for Kong.

Rating: C+. The match was fun stuff considering it only had ten minutes to get through seven eliminations. Kong would have been a great challenger for Blayze, if the division had stayed around. Blayze would show up on Nitro in about a month and throw the WWF Women's Title (and her career for the most part) in the trash. Fun match but too rushed to mean anything.

A Bill Clinton impersonator is here. He says he's been watching Bam Bam Bigelow since Bigelow was a kid and playing with Pebbles.

Bam Bam Bigelow vs. Goldust

Goldust has been around about a month at this point. This is when Goldust was just a movie fanatic at this point and not, you know, trying to screw everyone on the roster. Bigelow is obsessed with fire here, which makes sense given his looks and attire. After about a four minute entrance, we're ready to go. Then we get some stalling to go with the long entrance.

Goldust tries to get in Bigelow's mind but gets knocked to the floor for his efforts. Back in and Bigelow slugs him down but charges into a boot in the corner. Goldust gets rammed into the post on the floor but he comes back with a clothesline to send Bigelow back to the floor. Back in and it's a front facelock as this match keeps dragging along. Bam Bam is thrown to the floor but comes back with a clothesline. A headbutt misses and Goldust rides Bigelow on the mat. Bam Bam comes back with an electric chair but gets taken down by a lariat. Bigelow makes a comeback, misses a charge, and gets bulldogged down for the pin.

Rating: F. This was an eight minute match. Look at the length of what I wrote and tell me how this match ran eight minutes. Goldust was all mystique and no substance for a year or so until he figured out how to wrestle a match as Goldust instead of as Dustin Rhodes in a funny outfit. This was Bigelow's last match in the company ever. Clinton wastes more of our time but now with Bob Backlund, who isn't a big fan.

We recap Mabel vs. Undertaker. Mabel was fat and won the King of the

Ring. Then he dropped some big fat legs on Undertaker, crushing his face. Tonight it's about revenge.

Royals vs. Dark Side

Royals: King Mabel, Jerry Lawler, Hunter Hearst Helmsley, Isaac Yankem

Dark Side: Undertaker, Fatu, Henry Godwin, Savio Vega

Mabel is on a throne carried by about five guys, all of whom look like they're about to have hernias. The idea here is you have King Mabel, King Lawler, the blue blood Helmsley, and the Royal Dentist Isaac Yankem. About two years later, Isaac would put on a mask and remember that he's Undertaker's brother Kane. What exactly is dark about Undertaker's partners isn't really clear. Fatu is MAKING A DIFFERENCE and is supposed to be some kind of hero for kids in the projects. Godwin is a hog farmer and Vega is a street fighter from Puerto Rico.

Undertaker's entrance is as huge as you would expect it to be. He has this skull looking mask on now which would eventually be purple and look very stupid. Fatu and Hunter start things off. The Dark Side even has matching t-shirts that say Rest In Peace. Fatu throws Helmsley around to start but we almost get a Pedigree, which is only broken up by a glare from Undertaker. Off to Godwin, who was feuding with Hunter at this point in the standard culture clash feud.

Off to Lawler who immediately tags in Yankem. A big hop toss puts Isaac down but he sends Henry into the corner to escape. Back to Helmsley, which I'm getting tired of typing. If only there was a shorter version of his name. Perfect: "You know Helmsley likes to be called Triple H." Thank you Mr. Perfect. Anyway, Godwin gorilla presses HHH, holding him up for a LONG time.

Lawler comes in and gets Savio, which is a clash of styles if I've ever heard of one. Vega pounds away on Jerry and Fatu does the same. Yankem gets in a knee to Fatu's back and the evil King takes over. The smaller evil king that is. Isaac comes in to slam Fatu and a legdrop follows. Mabel comes in but misses a splash in the corner. Vega pounds on Mabel in a rematch of the KOTR final. A side slam kills Vega but there's no cover.

Vega gets beaten on in the corner to fill in more time. Yankem is listed as 6'8 or 6'9 here, which means he would have grown about

three or four inches by the time he became the Big Red Machine. A HHH knee drop gets two on Vega as the crowd is silent because none of this means anything. This is all just filler until we get to the Undertaker tag when the place is going to erupt.

Lawler's piledriver on Vega gets two. Well it's not Memphis so it's understandable. Lawler knocks Vega into the corner...and here's Undertaker. Jerry gets thrown around by the throat and no one will tag him. Tombstone and pin on Lawler, tombstone and pin on Yankem, chokeslam and pin on Helmsley, and there's just Mabel left. He immediately belly to belly suplexes Undertaker down and drops the face crushing legdrop before dancing a bit. There's the situp and Mabel runs for the countout. The four eliminations took two minutes and two seconds.

Rating: D+. This whole match ran just under fifteen minutes and about two of those meant anything. Everything was waiting for Undertaker to come in and dominate, which he did quite well, but getting there was pretty dull stuff. This match is more fun for looking at what these people would become rather than what they are now. Undertaker would lose the mask soon enough thank goodness.

Bret is ready for Diesel and isn't looking forward to the defense he'd have at the next In Your House against British Bulldog. He talks about Wayne Gretzky and wonders if he himself is still the best ever. Today he'll find out.

Diesel isn't worried about Bulldog and he's going to take care of Bret tonight.

DiBiase and Cornette have a small argument before the next match. Shawn comes in and says chill.

Team Shawn Michaels vs. Team Yokozuna

Shawn Michaels, Ahmed Johnson, British Bulldog, Sycho Sid

Yokozuna, Owen Hart, Razor Ramon, Dean Douglas

This is the Wild Card match with all of the mixed up partners. It's also Ahmed's (a very large, muscular intimidating man) PPV debut. Sid is Shawn's other former bodyguard but they split after Wrestlemania XI, turning Shawn face in the process. Douglas is the original Damien Sandow, which is a ripoff of the Genius. We get going with Owen vs. Shawn which is of course very fast paced stuff. Shawn sends him to the floor and after ducking a tennis racket shot

from Cornette, taps Cornette's pants with said racket. Back inside and it's Douglas pounding away on Shawn and suplexing him down.

Shawn comes back with a forearm followed by a double ax off the top rope for two. Douglas misses a Vader Bomb so Shawn comes back with a moonsault press for two. It's off to Ahmed who gets to destroy everything in sight but he can't slam Yokozuna. After a big group beatdown, Dean is able to get a chinlock on Ahmed to take over. Razor gets in some cheap shots which is rather heelish of him.

Back to who walks into a powerslam but it's off to Shawn, who Ahmed launches into Dean for two. In a more normal act for Razor, he pops Dean in the face to give Shawn a rollup win. Off to Bulldog vs. Owen which should be a good pairing. Owen hits a sweet spinwheel kick for two and Bulldog is so mad that he tags out to Shawn.

Hart tags out to Razor and it's time for a rematch from Summerslam 95. JR: "I don't think they can wrestle each other without a ladder." They're tentative to start things off but Shawn throws Razor to the floor, followed by Razor taking Shawn's head off with a clothesline. They collide in mid-air but Shawn nips up. Razor is like forget that chico and hits the Razor's Edge out of nowhere. Ahmed makes the save and the fans aren't sure if they like that.

They collide again....and then they do it for a third time. Shawn tags in Sid who had his back to the ring for some reason. This is a rematch from a recent Raw and part of an ongoing feud. Razor can barely get up, allowing Sid to pound away at will. Yokozuna tries to get in a cheap shot on Sid but Sid kicks him away. Razor comes back with some right hands and they clothesline each other down. That's the fourth time something Razor has done something like that in five minutes.

For some reason, Sid goes up (well he is Sycho) and gets slammed back down for two. A one handed chokeslam (looked awesome) puts Razor down but Sid tags in Shawn instead of powerbombing him. Shawn accidentally superkicks Sid but Bulldog breaks up the pin. Not that it matters as Razor covers again a second later and gets the pin. Sid powerbombs Michaels, his own partner, before leaving. Bulldog and Razor are legal at the moment with Bulldog pounding away....or not as Bulldog was just having fun.

Razor and Shawn are both down but Ramon can only get two. Owen gets the tag to beat on Michaels and drops him with a backdrop. Off to

Yokozuna for the first time and he destroys Shawn in the corner. Shawn gets whipped upside down in the corner and it's off to the nerve hold by Yokozuna. It's not like Yokozuna is flexing or anything but it does look like a nice shoulder to lean on I guess.

Shawn gets up and is promptly elbowed back down. Off to Owen for a double headbutt to put Shawn down again. Owen misses a swan dive and Shawn makes the tag to Ahmed, who cleans house. The yet to be named Pearl River Plunge (Tiger Bomb) pins Owen and it's off to Razor vs. Ahmed, which would have been a very interesting feud. Razor bulldogs Johnson down and things break down again with Razor beating up all of his opponents.

Ahmed goes to the corner to pose, and he just happens to put himself in Razor's Edge position. With Ahmed down, Bulldog comes in sans tag. Here come Sid and the 1-2-3 Kid with DiBiase as Razor hits the fall away slam on Bulldog for two. Razor drills the Kid but walks into the powerslam for the elimination. It's Shawn/Bulldog/Johnson vs. Yokozuna now.

Shawn gets the fat man first but the right hands don't do much to Yokozuna, who slugs Shawn down with ease. Yokozuna hits the fat man legdrop but opts for the Banzai instead of covering. Shawn, fearing death, avoids the drop and makes the tag to Ahmed. There's the slam (for the second time) but Bulldog breaks up the pin by his own teammate. Bulldog gets dropped and Shawn superkicks Yokozuna down. A splash from Ahmed (with a SQUEAL) gets the pin and the victory.

Rating: C+. For a match with almost no point behind it and some wacky teams, this was pretty good stuff. The Shawn vs. Razor stuff was interesting as you knew they had chemistry but it was fun to see them without a gimmick. Ahmed looked good but not great here, which would be the right description of him for his entire run in the WWF. Fun match that was never tried again, which I can understand.

More Clinton stuff with Sunny sitting on his lap. Lucky guy.

Bret talks about his previous matches with Diesel, both of which rocked.

Diesel says he's Jackknifed Bret twice but he's not sure if he can beat him. Diesel won the first one by DQ and the second was a draw. They were both good matches so this should be good too.

Perfect picks Bret, JR picks Diesel.

WWF World Title: Bret Hart vs. Diesel

Diesel is defending and this is No DQ and no countout. Diesel immediately takes a buckle pad off, so Bret takes another one off to match him. Bret charges him into the corner and goes after the leg but Diesel pounds him over the back to take over. The champ knocks Hart to the floor and Bret is limping. Diesel follows him out and hits a HARD ax handle to put Bret down again. It's a slow start so far but they have a lot of time.

Hart gets sent into the barricade and goes back in but he bails to the floor immediately. Back in and Diesel wins a slugout, knocking Bret to the floor with a big right hand. Diesel whips him into the steps and keeps the pace slow. A theme of the promos had been wearing Bret tiring Diesel out so there's some good psychology going on here. Diesel puts Bret down with a hard chair shot to the back and Hart is reeling.

Back in and Diesel loads up the Jackknife but Bret keeps grabbing the leg to block it. Now he bites the champ's hands to escape. The fans are starting to get into this too. Bret goes for the knee and the champ is in trouble. They do the same opening sequence as Bret goes for the knee again but Diesel hits him in the back. This time though, Bret gets him down and cranks on the knee. See, THAT is storytelling.

Perfect says the line that always gets on my nerves: "They're all the same size on the mat." JR properly says "the size and power advantage are negated on the mat." What JR says is true: Diesel is still bigger than Bret on the mat or standing up. Anyway, Bret cannonballs down onto the knee and there's the Figure Four. Diesel makes the rope but Bret stays on the bad leg.

Hart tries the Sharpshooter but Diesel thumbs him in the eyes before kicking him into the exposed buckle. Bret picks the leg again and wraps it around the post before tying a cord of some kind around the post. He ties the other end of the cord to Diesel's leg, making the champion a sitting duck. Bret gets a chair but Diesel uses the free leg for a big boot. Diesel crawls for the chair but Bret gets to it first and wears out the knee with chair shots.

With the leg still attached, Bret pulls off the backbreaker. Bret takes the chair to the top but Diesel punches him down to crotch Bret. Hart gets slammed to the mat, giving Diesel the chance to

untie his ankle. Diesel chokes Bret with the cord and hits the side slam for two. Diesel sends Bret chest first into the exposed corner and puts him in 619 position for the running crotch attack, but he can't run because of the bad leg. Instead he jumps into the air and crashes down on Bret, which looks more painful than the running version.

Diesel can barely hit Snake Eyes onto a covered buckle and Bret is in trouble. He tries another one but Bret escapes and rams Diesel into the exposed buckle. A Hart Attack clothesline gets two on the champ and Bret starts his comeback. That would be his second comeback if you're keeping track. A middle rope clothesline gets two as does a Russian legsweep. Bret clotheslines Diesel to the floor and tries a plancha but Diesel just steps to the side and lets Bret crash.

Bret starts getting back to the apron but Diesel knocks him off, and for the first time ever, through the Spanish Announce Table. They head back inside and Diesel calls for the Jackknife but Bret falls onto his face from exhaustion. Diesel picks him up to try again but BRET IS GOLDBRICKING and rolls Diesel up for the title out of nowhere in a big surprise.

Rating: A. Outstanding match here with both guys looking awesome. It takes the right kind of opponent to get a great match out of Diesel, but when you put a smaller guy like Bret or Shawn in there, the results are almost a guarantee. These two had some classics against each other and this was one of the best ones. I had a blast with this and it worked really well with Bret getting more and more violent and sadistic before faking Diesel out and using a wrestling move to win the title. That's psychology people, and it's great.

Diesel snaps post match and lays out Bret and some officials. Bret takes two Jackknives and Diesel says I'M BACK to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. This was a pleasant surprise as with 1995 you often think of something disappointing but instead this was good almost throughout. The Goldust match was terrible but other than that and arguably the Undertaker match, the rest of this is all solid to quite good stuff. Throw in a new World Champion and there's not much you can call bad here. Very good show.

Ratings Comparison

BodyDonnas vs. Underdogs

Original: A-

Redo: B

Team Bertha Faye vs. Team Alundra Blayze

Original: D

Redo: C+

Goldust vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

Original: C

Redo: F

Dark Side vs. Royals

Original: B-

Redo: D+

Team Shawn Michaels vs. Team Yokozuna

Original: C+

Redo: C+

Bret Hart vs. Diesel

Original: C+

Redo: A

Overall Rating

Original: B-

Redo: B

As close as the previous show was to being the same, this one is almost entirely different, yet it leads to a very similar overall rating. That's a very interesting thing and one of my favorite things to see in doing this.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/11/14/history-of-survivor-series-count-up-1995-bret-slays-the-giant/>

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<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01LY6766K#nav-subnav>

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Smackdown – May 30, 2002: Brutality, Bald Men, and a Strange Edit

Smackdown

Date: May 30, 2002

Location: Saddledome, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're still in Canada and maybe we can find the next challenger to Undertaker for the WWE World Title. As much fun as it was to see him make Tommy Dreamer drink tobacco juice and then beat him up, I could go for an actual match with a challenger instead of just random attacks. Let's get to it.

We open with a long recap of Hulk Hogan's retirement from last week to set up what is likely our show long story. Vince McMahon isn't going to let Hogan retire as punishment for Hogan leaving him ten years ago. An explanation for what he means by that might be nice for the casual fans.

Tag Team Titles: Rikishi/Rico vs. Billy and Chuck

Rikishi and Rico are defending and Rico comes out to the challengers' music. Chuck gets sent into the corner for an early

Stinkface attempt but Rikishi has to deal with Rico. A double flapjack plants the big man but he comes right back with a double clothesline. Rico tags himself in as Rikishi sits on Chuck's chest, leaving the Samoan to superkick his partner right into the cover to retain the titles. If this is the best they can do with the Tag Team Titles, drop them already because this is an embarrassment.

Hogan arrives.

Torrie Wilson kisses Maven and sexual escapades are implied. Tajiri watches from behind a door. So in other words, Torrie and Maven are Booker and the NWO while Tajiri is Goldust, even down to sneaking around behind them to eavesdrop.

Christian vs. Maven

Maven knocks him outside to start and scores with a dive as the announcers plug Tough Enough 2. Back in and Maven's middle rope bulldog gets two but here's Tajiri to kick Maven in the head, setting up the Unprettier for the fast pin.

Vince is on the phone for some exposition about how Benoit is allowed to go to either show because he's injured. Since when was that written into the Draft charter? Dawn Marie Rinaldi (the last name was later dropped), a paralegal, comes in to give Vince something to sign. Chris Jericho interrupts them to complain about his match with Faarooq tonight. Vince doesn't think much about that as HHH has to face Test tonight as well. This is your "Still To Come" segment. The Canadian leaves and Vince gets comfortable with Dawn. I guess Stacy is off this week.

GET THE F OUT!

Chris Jericho vs. Faarooq

We start with the power game, including a clothesline to put Jericho on the floor. A hot shot onto the barricade has Jericho in even more trouble and Faarooq drops a knee for two. Jericho realizes he's only fighting Faarooq and gets in a middle rope dropkick to take over. With the wrestling not working, Jericho pulls off a turnbuckle pad followed by the bulldog. The Lionsault misses though and Faarooq

hits that always good looking spinebuster. Not that it matters as Jericho sends him into the exposed buckle for the pin.

Rating: D-. Less than two weeks ago, Chris Jericho was inside the Cell in a major match with HHH. In the last two weeks, he's had a match against Mark Henry and had to cheat against Faarooq. HHH fought Lance Storm and gets Test tonight, which isn't much better but they're almost guaranteed to be stronger matches. How does this stuff benefit anyone?

Lance Storm asks D-Von to take his confession....in the men's room. Storm's sin: being from western Canada. D-Von forgives him but isn't pleased with Storm's small donation to the building fund.

Hogan is in the back for an interview but first let's stop to soak in some cheers. Hulk was all ready to retire last week but Vince wants to treat him like an indentured servant. Vince can stick that contract in a rather uncomfortable place and Hogan will follow it with his size fifteen. After winning the title, Hogan only has one thing left to do: fight Vince McMahon, one on one. Vince comes in for a staredown but Angle jumps Hogan from behind with a steel exercise bar. There's a big match at King of the Ring.

WWE Undisputed Title: Undertaker vs. Randy Orton

Here's a major feud three years from now. Before the match, Undertaker actually sucks up to the Calgary fans for reasons unclear. Orton accepts a handshake to start and is actually granted a clean break in the corner. Undertaker walks into an armdrag and backdrop before a clothesline puts him on the floor. A big dive follows and I'm stunned at Undertaker actually selling here.

The Oklahoma roll gets two on the champ and a surprised Undertaker clotheslines him down. We get the second exposed buckle of the night but Orton gets caught with some dropkicks. That earns him a running DDT though and it's time for Undertaker to get serious.

Unfortunately serious means being sent into the exposed buckle, allowing Orton to hit the Overdrive (or whatever it's called this week) for two.

I'm not sure why but there's a major edit there as Orton grabs the near leg for the cover but a camera cut shows the far leg being held on the kickout. On top of that, Undertaker loses his bandana in between camera cuts. No idea what that's about. That's enough for Undertaker though as it's Snake Eyes and a big boot for two, followed by Orton grabbing a rollup for his own near fall. A chokeslam retains the title.

Rating: C-. Not terrible here actually as Orton actually got in a lot instead of just getting squashed. I'm not sure what was up with Undertaker being nice at the beginning (just pure cockiness maybe) or the weird camera cut in the middle. At least Orton got a rub here because that's what they need more than anything else: young guys getting to look good. Also, it makes sense to see Orton's offense still being very basic. His big move is that Overdrive and the rest is all basic stuff. He's adding more stuff though and that's how he should be going.

Post match the rookie gets beaten up some more until HHH comes out to clean house. A challenge is issued but Undertaker is sent off by the Game's music. I can't imagine it was intentional, but you could look back at that as a sign that HHH thought something of Orton. Randy joined up with HHH in January so it's not like there's an unthinkable gap of time in there.

Hurricane/Kidman vs. Chavo Guerrero/Tajiri

Hurricane takes Tajiri to the floor to start and does the rocking horse move to send Tajiri's head into the bottom buckle over and over. Tazz: "Just like Maven and Torrie!" A superkick gets two on Tajiri and it's off to Kidman (who looks really weird in regular trunks) for the Sky High on Chavo.

Tajiri goes with the standard cheating by kicking Kidman from the apron and grabbing a Tarantula to take it a step further. That just makes him cocky though and it's time for Kidman to counter a powerbomb with the X Factor. Hurricane comes back in to clean house with the Overcast getting two.

A flip dive takes Tajiri out again, followed by Kidman busting out a

shooting star from the top to the floor onto both villains. Back in and Hurricane's music hits as a message pops up on screen, saying the reveal is next week. As a bonus we see a woman's hands on Hurricane's chest, meaning this is likely going to be ANOTHER love triangle story. Tajiri kicks the distracted Hurricane for the pin.

Rating: B. This is what I'm looking for with the cruiserweights, minus the angle that is. These guys know how to fly around the ring and make the division look like a lot of fun. That shooting star from Kidman looked awesome and is the kind of thing I want out of this division. There's no need for anything beyond basic characters because the action should be the driving force around here.

HHH vs. Test

Fallout from Test attacking HHH last week and I'm having flashbacks to 1999 when this meant something. Triple H knocks him into the corner and out to the floor for a good posting. Cue Lance Storm for a distraction so Test can get in a quick legdrop as HHH gets back inside. A good looking side slam gets two and Storm gets in a better looking superkick on the floor. Back in and HHH gets the spinebuster so Storm jumps on the apron like a good evil Canadian. Storm is finally thrown at Test and eats a big boot from his buddy. Cue the Undertaker for a distraction though and Test kicks HHH in the face for the pin.

Rating: D. Here's the thing: this really doesn't do anything for Test because it was all about HHH being dragged down by the overwhelming odds. Test really could have been anyone here and that's not doing anyone any good. Orton got in offense on Undertaker on his own and looked like he had potential. HHH beat the heck out of Test anytime it was one on one. That doesn't help Test, which makes this little more than time filler until Undertaker got there. The beatdown is on post match, including a chokeslam and a bunch of chair shots. Referees and suits finally break it up.

The cage is lowered.

Val Venis tells Edge to rip off Angle's wig. So Venis has gone from

an adult star to a censorship advocate to Edge's buddy. That's quite the character evolution.

Angle swears his hair is natural and threatens pain for anyone who tries to show footage of his haircut. Violence against Edge is promised.

The Hart Family, including Stu, is in the crowd.

Kurt Angle vs. Edge

They have a lot of time for this one and it's inside a cage with pins/submissions or escape as winning options. For some reason Edge tries to take it to the mat early on before opting to send Angle flying into the cage. A spear attempt hits cage though and we hit a front facelock. The rolling German suplexes get two on Edge and he gets thrown into the cage a few times to draw some Canadian blood.

Edge's half nelson faceplant has Angle staggered but it's time for a ref bump. You can tell this is going to get stupid now. A belly to back superplex cuts off Angle's escape attempt and Tazz is amazed that Kurt's hair is still on. Edge goes up and gets low blowed back down, setting up one heck of a super Angle Slam. It's always cool looking when someone goes flying through the air into a big crash.

Angle goes over the top and escapes but here's Hogan for revenge from earlier. Back from a break with another Angle Slam getting two. Edge hits his own Slam but gets caught in the ankle lock. Angle is sent into the cage so Edge puts on his own ankle lock (Angle LOVED that stealing finishers spot).

That's reversed as well and Angle goes over the top, only to have Edge kick the door open to crotch Angle back down. Back inside and Kurt tries to run the corner for a superplex but a top rope spear (more like a shoulder but the timing was hard to pull off) gives Edge the pin. So does that make it one fall apiece?

Rating: B+. Hogan really brings this one down as he feels so out of place. You have a match with Angle and Edge beating the heck out of each other but then you do a false finish (with Angle winning completely legally) for the sake of advancing Angle vs. Hogan. I

don't see a reason why you couldn't wait until after the cage match and then start the new feud as it's not like losing to Edge is going to take away all of Angle's heat. Hogan didn't help Edge get the win at the end but he was way too big of a factor in the match, which was excellent without him but just very, very good with him.

Post match Hogan goes after Angle but can't get the wig off. Hogan's music plays to end the show because that's how things work around here.

Overall Rating: C+. The first hour or so was dreadful but once you get to the meat of the show, this turned around in a hurry with some hard work and good wrestling. The holes are still there with stuff like HHH vs. Undertaker for the title (though there isn't another main eventer ready for the shot at the moment) and the mess that is the Tag Team Titles. The main event more than bails the show out though and is worth checking out if you have the time.

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<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01LY6766K#nav-subnav>

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**Smackdown – May 23, 2002:
Hogan, Hogan, Hogan,**

Hog... . Never Mind

Smackdown

Date: May 23, 2002

Location: BankcorpSouth Center, Tupelo, Mississippi

Attendance: 7,450

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We might be in for a major announcement this week as new WWE World Champion the Undertaker has suggested that Hulk Hogan will be retiring tonight. I know 2002 was a different time but does anyone believe that Hogan's retirement is coming on a regular Smackdown in Mississippi? Let's get to it.

We open with the same recap of the big pay per view matches from Raw.

Opening sequence.

Cole immediately tells us that Hogan will be retiring tonight and says this will be the resting place of Hulkamania.

HHH vs. Lance Storm

Cole thinks Vince, you know, the boss and lone authority figure on this show, had something to do with this match being made. In addition to that, the entrances are dedicated to talking about what Hogan has been telling his friends and family about tonight. Storm does his normal schtick and takes the running knee to the face for his efforts, which only hurts HHH's bad leg. A good looking dropkick puts HHH down and Storm does that weird hopping stomp of his. HHH's cut is opened up again and Storm gets two off a top rope clothesline.

Cole and Tazz get into their fifth discussion of Hogan's retirement (not an exaggeration and we're only ten minutes in) as HHH makes his comeback with right hands and a spinebuster. Storm's superkick (looks awesome as always) sets up the half crab on the bad leg for the logical submission attempt. A rope is grabbed so Storm heads up, only to have HHH shove the referee into the ropes for the crotching, followed by a Pedigree for the pin.

Rating: B-. For a five minute match to open a Smackdown, this was actually very good stuff. Storm looked like a threat to HHH (as big

of a threat as he could have been at least) and the half crab made perfect sense. HHH sold well too and made Storm seem like a bigger deal, which was exactly the point of this match.

Notice the difference between Raw and Smackdown: Raw has been using pretty much the same cast of characters since the Brand Split. Smackdown has at least turned guys like Storm and Val Venis into perfectly competent jobbers to the stars who also keep things feeling fresh. It's a small difference but very helpful.

Christian is talking to Kurt Angle (head not seen) about how Kurt is going to go out there and expose his bald head. For reasons of general stupidity, Christian starts a YOU'RE BALD chant.

Stacy Keibler comes up to Test and tells him Vince has given him Randy Orton tonight. Apparently Vince is mad that Stacy thinks Orton is good looking and wants Test to take him out. Test says ok and kisses Stacy, who doesn't seem to disapprove.

Here's Angle, now with a curly brown wig and amateur wrestling headgear. Angle: "It's amazing what hair supplements can do!" We get the required reference to Hogan's retirement but here's Maven to interrupt. Maven makes bald jokes and says Mississippi wants to see the real Angle. Kurt: "Do you work here or something?" The fight starts and Angle beats Maven up because one of them is Kurt Angle and the other is Maven. Cue Edge for the save but Christian comes out before the wig can be pulled off.

Test vs. Randy Orton

Before Test comes out, Stacy is on the table in a short skirt for her weekly dance. In addition to that, you can see her challenge for the Women's Title in a bra and panties match on the debut of Velocity. The current Superstars debuted with Undertaker vs. Matt Hardy and Main Event debuted with CM Punk vs. Sheamus (World Champion vs. World Champion). I'd say that's a point in the future's favor.

Test starts fast and hammers in the corner with the big power offense. The pumphandle powerslam gets two on Orton as it's not clear who Stacy wants to win. Test misses the big boot though and crotches himself on the ropes. Again, Stacy seems to like both guys in a nice shade of gray. A few rollups get two for Orton but the Test Drive (pick whatever name you like for the rolling cutter) gives Test the win.

Rating: C. For a four minute match, this actually had a story. Test, the powerful veteran, manhandled the rookie, who could only hit and run while looking for a quick win. I liked this way more than I was expecting and when you throw in several shots of a smiling Stacy, this was one of the best things on the show.

Undertaker doesn't think anyone is ready to face him and he shrugs off a package of his match with Rob Van Dam. Interviewer Mark Lloyd says some people say he lost the title due to getting pinned with his foot on the ropes. That's like saying he got pinned despite kicking out, mainly because Lloyd isn't that bright. Anyway, Undertaker wants to see Hogan retire because that's all that matters tonight.

Rico is admiring his Tag Team Title when Billy and Chuck come in. Apparently the title doesn't matter because it doesn't go with his clothes. That's what the Tag Team Titles now mean people.

Chris Jericho isn't in a good mood when he runs into Faarooq. Jericho: "Just the man I wanted to see." Faarooq: "Are you high? Or drunk?" Jericho wants to get out of his match but Faarooq turns down the offer of money because Jericho is facing Mark Henry.

Edge/Maven vs. Kurt Angle/Christian

Angle jumps Edge during his entrance (Canadians never pay attention.) but Edge gets in a quick sitout Edgecut. It's too early to get the wig off though and you can hear Angle's medals clanging together as he runs away. Was there ever a reason given for Angle having more than one medal when he only won one? It's a very simple heel idea to say he deserved more than one but you would think that would have been a joke once or twice.

As this is still waiting to get going, Torrie and Trish are shown watching in the back. Torrie is dating Maven and Trish is watching because.....I have no idea. WWE really had a thing for blondes around this point. Christian chops Maven in the corner but an Edge distraction lets the rookie get in a low blow. The hot tag brings in Edge to clean house and everything breaks down. The Angle Slam plants Edge but Maven gets in a missile dropkick for two on Christian. Angle and Edge fight to the floor and the Unprettier is countered into a rollup to give Maven the big upset pin.

Rating: D+. This wasn't much but again, they give someone a win for the sake of a rub. Christian giving up a fluke pin in a tag match

isn't going to hurt him long term but it could do a lot of good for Maven. It's a case of throwing something against the wall and seeing if it sticks and there's nothing wrong with that.

Rikishi vs. D-Von

D-Von now has the awesome "He's Called My Name" gospel theme. Rikishi doesn't think much of D-Von saying the thong is sinful but it's too early to sit on D-Von's chest. Cue Rico (with his title belt) as Rikishi gets in a belly to belly on D-Von. Now it's Billy and Chuck coming out to see Batista trip Rikishi to give D-Von a breather.

A DDT has no effect on the Samoan (I love stereotypes shining through) as Tazz uses this match to talk about Hogan, who feuded with Rikishi's cousin Yokozuna. That's the kind of stuff they've been doing all night and it got old an hour ago. The Stinkface is loaded up but a Batista distraction lets Rico hit Rikishi with the belt to give D-Von the pin.

Rating: D. This match ran 3:08 and had Batista, Rico, Billy and Chuck interfering, plus a belt shot and a Hogan vs. Yokozuna reference. Oh and the Tag Team Champions hate each other the same week they won the belts and somehow the division is already pining for the days of Al Snow/Maven vs. Billy and Chuck.

Chavo Guerrero is watching Eddie Guerrero attack Steve Austin on Raw when Gregory Helms comes in. Gregory wants to know if Chavo knows anything about someone stalking Hurricane. Chavo says he's going to take the Cruiserweight Title tonight and leaves. Before Helms leaves, he finds another clue: a bag of beef jerky. So wait: whoever is doing this is leaving notes and clues in someone else's locker room on the off chance that Hurricane's alter ego comes in and interviews them about who is leaving the notes?

HHH says there are no winners in the Cell but just survivors like him. Storm comes up to talk trash when Test jumps HHH from behind.

Cruiserweight Title: Hurricane vs. Chavo Guerrero Jr.

Hurricane is defending and catches Chavo with an early powerslam. With this match already going nowhere, it's time to talk about HULK HOGAN MOVIES. A dropkick knocks Hurricane off the top for two and it's off to a discussion of great Hogan feuds, including King Kong Bundy and Kamala. An Emerald Flowsion of all things gets two on the

champ but the Overcast (Blockbuster) retains the title. This was just background noise while the announcers squeezed in whatever new Hogan topic they could think of.

Vince isn't concerned about Stacy kissing Test because tonight he's getting rid of Hogan. Jericho comes in to yell about facing Henry but Vince tells him it's an opportunity.

Chris Jericho vs. Mark Henry

Henry throws him around to start and Chris' wounds are already opened up again. A Vader Bomb misses and Jericho dropkicks him in the face. Mark gets back up for a five rep gorilla press so Jericho grabs a chair. Henry has his own chair taken away so Jericho gets in a shot to the back for the pin.

Rating: D. So HHH has a match with a story of a bad leg and a leg submission hold while making Storm look good. Jericho has a match where Henry gets to do power stuff and there's a screwy ending. We'll chalk this up to a combination of Mark Henry not being very good and Jericho only being able to work a few miracles. Henry is so one dimensional that it's almost painful and even WWE seems to have given up on his push.

Here's Hogan for the big segment that they've been building to ALL NIGHT LONG. After a long HOGAN chant, Hulk gives his life history, including talking about being born Terry Bollea in Augusta, Georgia. He's had the time of his life for the last twenty years and he's sad that his father isn't here to celebrate with the Hulkamaniacs.

One night he and his father were watching wrestling and his dad told him to go wrestle again and straighten out his career in the WWF. Hogan thanks his fans for having his back all these months (all three of them since he came back). However, Hogan has to know when it's time to leave (About nine years ago?) and wants the fans to live forever. Posing ensues (with Voodoo Child making a rare appearance on the Network version) but here's Vince to interrupt.

Vince finds it amusing that Hogan is retiring in a place like Tupelo (true) but Hulk isn't going to retire anytime soon (well duh) because Vince isn't letting 1993 happen all over again (he says ten years ago so 1993 is just an educated guess). If Hogan leaves, he'll get sued for everything he's got. Hogan isn't retiring until Vince has gotten every cent that he can out of him and that's that. Hulk punches him down but here's Undertaker, only to be dispatched in

short order.

Overall Rating: D+. The wrestling was better for the most part tonight but that main event segment did this show no favors. At the end of the day, this was ALL about Hogan and after setting up something on Monday and building it up all night, Vince basically just comes out and says “eh not really” and it looks like we’re setting up Undertaker vs. Hogan II. There’s a little good stuff here but the bad outweighs it and that’s not good. Get rid of Hogan and Vince (for the most part) and this show is much better in a hurry.

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Judgment Day 2002 (2016 Redo): Time Heals Some Wounds

Judgment Day 2002

Date: May 19, 2002

Location: Gaylord Entertainment Center, Nashville, Tennessee

Attendance: 14,521

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

The company is ice cold coming into this show and I can’t imagine this is going to make things any warmer. Raw has turned into a mess with the old guys doing whatever they want while Smackdown is about

Vince somehow failing to sleep with Stacy Keibler because he can't just get a room somewhere. Let's get to it.

The opening video is rather disturbing with a bunch of nooses and small children talking about death. What a great way to get me in a fun spirit for the show.

Intercontinental Title: Eddie Guerrero vs. Rob Van Dam

Van Dam is challenging in a rematch from last month's title change. They start fast as you would expect with Eddie being sent outside in early frustration. Back in and Eddie tries to duck a crossbody but gets head faked, allowing Van Dam to drop a split legged moonsault for two. A tilt-a-whirl backbreaker keeps Eddie in trouble and we hit a surfboard. Lawler: "That looks more like my dating strategy."

The announcers try their hands at Spanish as Eddie takes over with right hands in the corner. A monkey flip sends Eddie flying and stays on his back so Rolling Thunder can get two. It's too early for a Five Star though as Eddie crotches him on the top. A powerbomb can't set up Eddie's frog splash though as Eddie spends a bit too long dancing on top.

Van Dam still can't hit the Five Star though as Eddie moves away, leaving the announcers to wonder how to say RVD in Spanish. He can however hit a high crossbody for two (Lawler: "Mama Mia. Is that Spanish?"), followed by a backslide for the same. Ever the cheat though, Eddie grabs a backslide of his own and puts his feet on the ropes for the pin to retain.

Rating: B. Now why can't these two get this kind of time on Raw? I know you can't give a single match twenty minutes a week but would it kill them to have ten minutes on an episode of Raw and cut out one of the multiple matches that don't even get three minutes because they don't matter? Anyway, good stuff here, as you would expect from these two.

Reverend D-Von and Batista are with Vince and Stacy, the latter of whom they pray for before her match against Trish. Vince, who looks at Stacy while they're praying and tells D-Von to wrap it up, asks if Bubba is going to be here. D-Von doesn't think so, despite Vince saying Bubba would be here and Bubba being shown on the graphic.

GET THE F OUT! Did they only record that one gardening bit for the campaign?

Women's Title: Trish Stratus vs. Stacy Keibler

Trish is defending and Lawler freaks out over her shorts. D-Von, Batista and Bubba come out after the entrances, leaving me time to wonder how we went from Trish vs. Molly to Trish vs. Stacy. Maybe because Stacy is more willing to wear leather shorts and a tied off leather top? Stacy kicks Trish in the head for two to start but gets pulled down into a Boston crab and they're not even hiding what they're going for with the visuals.

Trish gets in a kick of her own to knock Stacy outside, allowing her to slap Bubba in the face. Batista uses the distraction to slam Trish and give Stacy a two count. That's finally enough for Trish as she baseball slides Stacy and hits a bulldog (more like the kind Jericho uses to set up the Lionsault) to retain. Stacy clearly had no business out there but to be fair they didn't try to act like she did and got them out of there fast.

Bubba and D-Von get in a fight post match with Batista helping put Bubba through a table.

Vince comes in to see Ric Flair and Arn Anderson and the bosses share their hatred of Austin. Remember like two months ago when the company was split in half because of their feud?

Hardy Boyz vs. Brock Lesnar/Paul Heyman

Thankfully Heyman is in full body workout gear. The brothers are smart enough to take out the monster for all of ten seconds but don't have Matt beat the tar out of Heyman or just roll him up while Jeff slows Lesnar down for reasons that aren't clear. Brock saves his buddy and starts beating on Matt as the fans chant for Goldberg. Please, don't make me think about that match.

The backbreaker has Matt reeling but he grabs a quick tornado DDT to scare Heyman half to death. Jeff gets the tag and everything breaks down with the brothers going after Heyman. Brock gets tired of these flies and throws Jeff into Matt, setting up the F5. Heyman comes in and grabs the pin like a chicken heel should.

Rating: D-. What were you expecting here? Lesnar really needs to move on to something else, though to be fair he squashed a great tag team more than once and they made him look like a monster. He needs to move way up the ladder in a hurry though because this sort of act is only going to work for so long.

Booker T. is now in an NWO shirt but cancels an interview to hit on a woman who just happens to be standing off camera. The woman has something in mind and gives Booker her hotel room key. I smell shenanigans.

We recap Steve Austin vs. Ric Flair/Big Show, which is just the latest Austin vs. McMahon clone. Flair and Austin have been fine on the talking but there's just no heat to this feud because everyone knows it's warmed over leftovers. They even show Austin vs. Vince clips in the build. Show is here because he's mad about not being on Wrestlemania, which is of course Austin's fault in wrestling logic.

Steve Austin vs. Ric Flair/Big Show

Based on the entrances, I'm pretty sure Flair isn't in the NWO. I'm also fairly sure that Show's low cut one piece women's swimsuit attire is some of the dumbest gear of all time. Just have him in shorts and a Big Show shirt. Austin slugs away at both guys to start but decides to try a Figure Four on Show. Instead he has to knock Ric out of the air first and put him in the hold.

Show misses an elbow drop and Austin wisely grabs a chair. The referee takes that away so Austin gets another one and has a seat. We finally get started with Austin punching Flair out to the floor, meaning it's time for beer. A tackle dropdown goes well for Austin and an exchange of chops give us a Flair Flop. Show comes in and because 2002 is a strange year, Austin isn't sure what to do. His decision: push-ups. Not a fan of exercise, Show chops him down and throws Austin into the corner, allowing a tag to Flair for a low blow.

Flair goes up and is slammed right back down (JR: "From no man's land to Parts Unknown!") but Show comes back in with a powerslam. The team starts taking turns on the knee as this isn't exactly thrilling. It's not a bad match or anything but it's just there. The idea of Flair taking someone's knee apart has worked for years but I don't buy the story behind the match and a match being just ok isn't enough to make up for that kind of a downside.

Flair gets the Figure Four until Austin turns it over, only to have Show break that up as well. Austin's back is fine enough for punches vs. chops, giving us WHAT vs. WOO in one of the more eye roll inducing chants. Austin starts in with the spinebusters as X-Pac comes out. Show no sells a Stunner for some reason but X-Pac's

missed superkick puts him down. Huh? The Stunner puts Flair away a few seconds later.

Rating: C+. The match was totally fine but it's really hard to buy Austin in this midcard role. I know it's one of the top stories on Raw but this is midcard level stuff at best. Austin vs. Flair isn't interesting and Austin beating up the NWO week to week is even worse. Big Show and Booker T. are the big names in the division and there's no reason either of them would be a real threat to Austin in the ring. What's interesting about seeing Austin fighting midcarders like X-Pac? The feud was dead from the start and it feels like they're wasting what Austin has left.

We recap Edge vs. Kurt Angle, which is over Edge messing with Angle's new shirt. For some reason this set up a hair vs. hair match.

Kurt Angle vs. Edge

They start fast with Edge getting an early rollup and getting stomped in the ribs for his efforts. That's fine with Edge who ties Angle up in the ropes for a spear, only to have Angle suplex him way over the top. Back in and a spinebuster gets two for Angle (not something you see him use that often) as the announcers discuss the shapes of the wrestlers' heads.

We hit the chinlock for a bit before Angle pulls him down by the hair. That's a nice little touch, albeit not the most subtle. Edge comes back with a belly to belly of his own (JR: "He ain't wearing a hat!") and an Edge-0-Matic gets the same. Angle is sent outside for a dive from Edge so it's time for more suplexes. JR: "That suplex was finer than frog hair split four ways."

An Edgecution gets no cover for no logical reason as Edge goes up top, allowing Angle to hit a great looking pop up superplex. Edge DDTs him out of the corner for two of his own but spears the referee by mistake. That means the spear only gets two on Kurt, who spears Edge right back. The Angle Slam looks to set up the ankle lock but Edge small packages him for the pin.

Rating: B. These two work really well together and it's a great way to make Edge look like a star as he pinned a former World Champion clean to win the feud. The company really needs some fresh stars in the main event scene and Edge makes as much sense as anyone else. As usual, Angle can make people look great and that's so valuable in

wrestling.

Angle goes after Edge but gets an Edgecution. It takes too long to get him to the chair though and Kurt escapes.

We go to the Marriott where Booker is in bed. The woman joins him and the lights go out...so Goldust can say he wants Booker to leave the NWO and come back to him. The lights come back on and Goldust is in bed with them. Booker runs off with his underwear hanging down. Goldust: "I bought this nightgown for nothing!" They mentioned that Goldust planned the whole thing but I could go for him just randomly appearing in the room with them. It suits him that way.

The Cell is lowered.

We recap HHH vs. Chris Jericho. These two have feuded since Wrestlemania with HHH winning almost all of the matches. HHH then went after Vince, who set this match up as punishment.

HHH vs. Chris Jericho

Even with a lower level match like this, it's cool to see the Cell in any form. HHH starts in with the knee and some right hands in the corner. They head outside so neither can be sent into the cage, followed by Jericho's flying forearm to take over. Jericho misses a charge into the post though and HHH takes him outside for a whip into the cage wall. Neither can keep an advantage again though as Jericho whips HHH over the corner for another crash to the floor. HHH comes right back with a whip to send Jericho's bloody arm into the steps. At least they're bringing the violence early on.

The Pedigree onto the steps is countered into a catapult into the cage wall. Since the Cell isn't enough, Jericho brings in a ladder to smash HHH in the face, drawing more blood. Jericho throws the ladder over the top at HHH in a spot that always looks good. I'm actually surprised by how much they're giving Jericho here. I know it's HHH in a big match against an opponent he owns but they're doing a really good job of making Jericho look strong here.

HHH's chair shot doesn't get him out of trouble but the drop toehold to send Jericho into the steps works a bit better. To make it a bit worse, HHH just throws the steps at Jericho for a painful sounding thud. Now we get to the bad part of the match as HHH whips Jericho into referee Tim White, knocking White off the apron and into the Cell. The bump badly hurt White's shoulder and basically ended his

in ring career.

Jericho beats White up even more (if he wasn't hurt before, he is now) and busts him open for a rare visual. Since White has the key, the other referees have to cut the door open to check on White. That's enough for HHH and it's time for a sledgehammer off Jericho's head. No referee of course though so Jericho crawls out of the Cell, continuing the running joke of THE CELL DOESN'T WORK.

They head to the announcers' table (of course) where Jericho loads up a Pedigree (of course) but HHH counters (of course) into a DDT through the table. HHH pulls out the barbed wire 2x4 and Jericho goes up the Cell wall with HHH following. For reasons of pure stupidity, HHH THROWS THE BARBED WIRE UP BOARD UP FIRST, allowing Jericho to take it away and hit HHH in the back.

With HHH's back busted open, we hit the Walls of Jericho on the roof, meaning a referee has to climb up. You know, because now falls count on top of the Cell. HHH kicks away and hits Jericho low, followed by a barbed wire shot. A Pedigree onto the roof (that was scary) finally ends Jericho.

Rating: B. That's probably the best HHH vs. Jericho match ever and it's really not great. They did a much better job of making me believe Jericho could pull it off, which is something these two have never been able to do. I mean, would you believe that this Jericho could beat HHH in a major match? That being said, this still felt like it was missing a big chunk in the middle. They did the Jericho beatdown but then they were on the outside for the final act. It's still good though and an acceptable blowoff, though it would have been fine as a regular cage match.

Angle runs from Edge in a goofy looking chase.

Get The F Out, set to Mark Henry's Sexual Chocolate theme and taking place in the back of a steamy car. At least that answers my question.

Maven and Torrie go on a date at WWF New York.

Tag Team Titles: Billy and Chuck vs. Rikishi/???

Welcome to the death slot. Billy and Chuck are defending and Rikishi's mystery partner is.....Rico. This is officially Vince's decision so he indeed likes the wacky partners. Billy's DDT has no effect on Rikishi to start but Rikishi's charges misses both champs.

Rico won't tag in though and the champs take over in the corner. Chuck gets a rather impressive overhead belly to belly for two as the fans aren't exactly caring, meaning the death slot is living up to its name. The big man fights back again with some Samoan drops before sitting on Chuck's chest for two. A HORRIBLE looking one man 3D (which JR calls a headbutt in mid air, which is probably closer than what Rikishi was going for) gets two on Billy but Rico kicks Chuck by mistake. Rikishi kicks Chuck as well and gets the pin for the titles. No reaction or anything, but he got the titles.

Rating: F. The story is tired, the result is predictable and the match sucked. I'm really not sure what else you were expecting here as Rikishi is somehow the old veteran on Smackdown. Hopefully this isn't a long reign and we can get ANYONE else as better champions sometime soon.

Angle attacks Edge (instead of LEAVING) and brings him back to the arena. Edge reverses into a sleeper and Angle gets the big haircut. Edge wants the new chant to be YOU'RE BALD and it sounds as bad as it seems.

We recap Hulk Hogan vs. Undertaker, which is a game of how bad can we really make this. Undertaker won a match last month to become #1 contender and they've messed with each others' motorcycles since. The question tonight is how embarrassing can Hogan actually be with Undertaker having to carry the match.

Undisputed Title: Hulk Hogan vs. Undertaker

Undertaker is challenging and has Hogan's weightlifting belt. As always, Hogan takes too long coming in and gets whipped over the back. Hogan no sells (duh) and hammers away before doing a little whipping of his own. We get the opening bell and it's time for Hogan do do his stuff while Undertaker does most of the selling, which is both the right call and a major stretch on Undertaker's part.

Undertaker is whipped into the steps and things are made even worse when Old School is broken up. I'll give them this: they're three minutes in and Hogan hasn't horribly botched anything yet, meaning we're going well so far. Hulk actually hits a superplex (biggest spot he's done in YEARS) for two before settling back in for some right hands.

A chop block gives Undertaker a target though and it's time to

slowly work over the knee. That of course means a few kicks to the leg and laying on it in a leglock. Yeah it's boring but it's also one less thing they could horribly botch. Hogan fights up and hits the big boot but the legdrop is countered into a dreadful half crab. Some rights and lefts have Hogan in trouble, though I'm not sure what's scintillating about them.

Undertaker grabs him by the throat and Hogan barely moves, leaving Undertaker to loudly shout JUMP before hitting one of the worst chokeslams you'll ever see (This is COMPLETELY edited on the Network as Hogan not moving is edited out along with Undertaker shouting. It's also a different camera angle.).

That's enough for the Hulk Up and the usual gets two for the champ. The running DDT gets the same for Undertaker as this is actually picking up a bit. Cue Vince as Hogan kicks a chair into Undertaker's face and drops another leg for no cover. Instead Vince is dragged in for a legdrop of his own but Undertaker cracks Hogan with the chair. The chokeslam (better but still bad) is enough for the pin and the title.

Rating: D. The best thing they could have done here was keep this pretty short (about twelve and a half minutes) instead of having either guy out there for the marathons they had back at Backlash. Undertaker is a shell of his glory days at this point but he's WAY ahead of Hogan and isn't as likely to embarrass himself in the ring. Boring and familiar is much better than the nightmare that was watching a Hogan match so this was the only possible call in the options they had.

Vince is happy and Undertaker gets in some more chair shots for revenge to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. There's an important lesson to be learned here: as bad as WWE can be around this time, there is good stuff worth checking out. Van Dam vs. Guerrero, the Cell match, Austin vs. Flair/Show and Edge vs. Angle were all good to very good matches. That's half the card and a big chunk of the show that can be considered entertaining. Unfortunately there's everything else and that stuff starts at horrible and goes downhill from there. I don't think this changes much about TV going forward but at least we had a good two hour and forty minute show to enjoy.

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new book, KB's Complete 2014 Raw and Smackdown Reviews Part I at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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Smackdown – May 16, 2002: More Vince

Smackdown

Date: May 16, 2002

Location: Bell Centre, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

It's the go home show for Judgment Day and luckily hopefully we should get something competent this week. Smackdown may not be great but they're put together far better than Raw. At least this show has more than one top level good guy, which the red show certainly can't say at the moment. Let's get to it.

The opening video recaps Chris Jericho/Vince McMahon vs. HHH from last week, including the announcement of Sunday's Cell match.

Opening sequence.

Here's HHH for a chat because we haven't had that in a long time. See, Vince McMahon just doesn't get it. He thinks you can just send people out here and have Jericho hit him in the head and cut off everything that HHH has done. HHH is going to keep going no matter what because he's never going to stop. As for tonight though, how about Jericho comes out here right now for a preview of Sunday?

Instead HHH gets Edge, who was hit by HHH's sledgehammer last week. Edge says they're both good guys but he's got an itch to play the

game. The fight is actually on but here are Jericho and Kurt Angle to beat down the self-described good guys. Angle cuts some of Edge's hair off but HHH makes the save...of someone who punched him in the face a few minutes ago. Well they're both good guys so it's a rule. Stacy Keibler is about to give Vince a preview of her swimsuit for tonight's contest but Angle and Jericho run in to celebrate cutting Edge's hair. Tag match, main event, you know the drill.

Hardcore Holly/Lance Storm vs. Big Valbowski/Randy Orton

Orton charges in and gets chopped in the corner for his efforts. The dropkick puts Holly down and it's off to Val to clean house. Orton's high crossbody gets two on Storm with the Overdrive (that weird spinning Fameasser neckbreaker) getting the same. Storm gets in a superkick for two but gives a lazy cover, allowing Orton to roll him up for the fast pin.

Recap of Undertaker and Hulk Hogan's motorcycle hijinks.

Hogan is here.

Maven awkwardly hits on Torrie Wilson and actually gets a date out of it. Torrie leaves but D-Von and Batista come in to yell at him for thinking lustful thoughts. Well yeah. Al Snow comes in because Maven still needs protection.

Ace reporter Gregory Helms comes in to see Funaki and accuses him of being evil. Funaki asks what's wrong with him but has a note on his back. The note says Hurricane will be in for some pain if he wins the Cruiserweight Title tonight. This was amusing for pure goofiness.

Jericho promises to pull off his mask and show how evil he can be.

Reverend D-Von vs. Maven

D-Von beats on Maven like the rookie he is to start but misses the middle rope headbutt. Some rollups get two each for Maven but Batista gets on the apron, allowing D-Von to kick Maven low. Cole: "A shot to the kidneys!" No Cole, not exactly. The reverse inverted DDT (Saving Grace) puts Maven away.

Batista beats up Al Snow post match.

Stacy is on her way to the ring but stops to look in a mirror. A short person pops out from a cupboard and shills a new camera. Stacy is as confused as you would think.

It's time for the swimsuit contest with Tazz emceeing. Stacy and Torrie come out but Tajiri comes out to cover Torrie up, despite us seeing most of what's under her robe. Stacy doesn't want to disrobe but here's Trish Stratus (who can be on both shows since she won the Women's Title) in a robe of her own. What luck that she was here and brought a robe with her own logo on the back. Trish doesn't have a swimsuit but does have some red lingerie. Stacy swings a shoe but gets kicked to the floor, leaving Trish as the default winner.

Post break Stacy comes in to rant to Vince, who gives her a Women's Title shot on Sunday. D-Von and Batista are in Vince's office so Vince asks D-Von to provide protection. D-Von: "You want a reverend to buy CONDOMS?" Actually Vince means taking care of Bubba Ray Dudley, who will certainly be in Trish's corner. I'm certain that's not going to happen just because Vince suggests it either.

Rico vs. Rikishi

Rico jumps him from behind and gets launched into the air for a one man 3D (probably supposed to be a Samoan drop, as is Rikishi's custom). Billy and Chuck interfere to give Rico an opening but Billy dropkicks Chuck by mistake. The distraction allows Rico to get in a spinning kick to the face but Rikishi sits on his chest for the pin. Rikishi dances post match. Maybe he and Bubba Ray Dudley have a secret alliance?

Billy and Chuck and Rico interrupt Vince and Stacy (dude get a hotel already) to complain about losing to Rikishi. Vince says they'll be defending the titles on Sunday against Rikishi and a partner of Vince's choosing. It's going to be Rico.

HHH promises to destroy Jericho's career just like he did to Mick Foley. Edge comes in and says he'd love to continue their fight from earlier. HHH isn't interested until Edge wins a few more World Titles. Maybe Edge can use HHH's methods and marry the boss' daughter and sleep his way to the top (which Edge would eventually do with Vickie Guerrero). That was a better burn when it hadn't turned into a running joke.

Cruiserweight Title: Hurricane vs. Billy Kidman vs. Tajiri

Tajiri is defending and jumps Kidman during the entrance. Hurricane runs out and the champ gets double teamed until Kidman is smart enough to knock Hurricane outside. Kidman dropkicks Hurricane off

the top and hits the shooting star for two on the champ with Hurricane making a last second save. A chokeslam gives Hurricane the title in less than three minutes. It's not like the title means anything anyway so put it on the entertaining Hurricane. It isn't likely to make a difference either way.

We run down Sunday's card.

Here's a limping Hogan, who actually has the nerve to sell that stupid motorcycle schtick from Monday. After a full three minute long ovation, Hogan praises the fans for having his back so many times. We pause for more cheering before Hogan talks about being in his own fantasy world every time he comes out here. Cue Vince to say he hates Hulkamania and enjoyed Monday night. See, Hulkamania has a terminal illness called cancer.

This Sunday, Undertaker is going to stuff Hulkamania in a cardboard box and bury it once and for all. The fans start singing the Goodbye Song, which I guess is aimed at Vince, even though it doesn't make a ton of sense. Then again neither does cheering for Hogan. Vince says the red is for the blood Undertaker will spill on Sunday and the yellow is the streak up Hogan's back. The boss slaps him in the face so Hogan punches him a few times. The big legs wraps up this very unnecessarily long segment.

Chris Jericho/Kurt Angle vs. Edge/HHH

Edge is stupid enough to charge in before HHH gets out to the ring and earns the double teaming from Angle and Jericho. A flapjack puts Jericho down and the good guys (their official name remember) take over. Jericho offers a distraction though and Angle belly to belly superplexes Edge off the top. A regular belly to belly sets up a missed Lionsault but Edge is too slow to make the tag. Instead Jericho comes in with Three Amigos so Edge gets in a middle rope dropkick for a breather.

The hot (work with me here) tag to HHH allows house to be cleaned. The double teaming doesn't last long and it's back to Edge for a double clothesline. Edge spears a chair out of Jericho's hands, leaving HHH to Pedigree Angle for two with Chris making the save. HHH and Jericho fight into the crowd, leaving Angle to chair Edge in the head so the Angle Slam can give him the pin.

Rating: C-. I was bored with most of this as they were just going through the motions to set up both big matches at once. Edge vs.

Angle is going to be fine and Jericho vs. HHH will be long yet watchable. The match was fine but there's only so much you can do when you're trying to fulfill a pretty simple goal.

Overall Rating: D. This show needed a lot more wrestling and a lot less Vince. Most of the show was built around Vince doing whatever he needed to advance stories or try to sleep with Stacy this week. The problem here though is only the main event was long enough to rate. I really need more than a bunch of two and a half minute matches and then a dull main event. Sunday's show isn't interesting for the most part and this show didn't help anything.

Smackdown – May 9, 2002: The Rookies Unleashed

Smackdown

Date: May 9, 2002

Location: Harbor Yard Arena, Bridgeport, Connecticut

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

As horrible as Raw has been in recent weeks, Smackdown is really starting to find a groove. They've hit that perfect balance of wrestling, storyline and entertainment to make two hours go by very quickly. The shows aren't great but they're easy to sit through and you actually get some good wrestling. Let's get to it.

Get the F Out gardening video.

Here's Stacy Keibler looking GREAT in a black dress. After a bit of dancing, she brings out Vince to kill most of the buzz. Vince gets right to the point: HHH is a bad employee who may not have physically interfered last week, but he certainly knew what he was doing. Therefore HHH needs to get out here right now and apologize like a model employee or things are going to get bad in a hurry.

HHH comes out and immediately defies Vince's orders to stay at least ten feet away. The gears quickly shift to HHH suggesting that Vince can't keep her satisfied all night long, though HHH certainly could because he's HHH and therefore all manly and such. More size jokes are made and HHH says Stacy is like Anna Nicole Smith, waiting on Vince to die so she can collect the cash. Uh, Trips, she's just an employee sleeping with the boss. Pull it back a bit.

Vince teases fighting but here are Christian/Lance Storm/D-Von/Hardcore Holly/Test to go after HHH in shifts because wrestling villains don't get the idea of attacking at the same time. With HHH finally taken down, Chris Jericho comes out for a few chair shots to bust him open.

The second HOGAN chant goes nowhere as Jericho puts on the Walls, with HHH actually tapping. Vince gets in HHH's face and announces Jericho vs. HHH in the Cell. It's a cool idea but I'm not sure this match warrants such a big feud. Especially not when there's no doubt who wins the thing. It's not like HHH is going to lay down for Jericho in a big match setting.

Cruiserweight Title: Tajiri vs. Hurricane

Tajiri is defending and starts fast with the kicks to the face as Cole is already on his second explanation for how badly Tajiri treats Torrie. I know he's bad about it today but back then it was excruciating to listen to him hammer in plot points. Hurricane comes back with a DDT and neckbreaker for two but gets caught by the handspring elbow (which Cole refers to as a big spot).

Hurricane knocks him outside and Torrie's help is shoved away. That's fine with Hurricane who hits a running flip dive, only to get kicked down again. Torrie FINALLY has enough and gets on the announcers' table to strip off the geisha outfit and reveal some blue lingerie. The distraction is enough to get Tajiri counted out.

Rating: C-. Not much to the match but the angle advancement was the important thing here. Also, unless Tajiri is holding the title for a lot longer, I don't get why you wouldn't change the title here. It's not a stretch to have him get humiliated and walk into a chokeslam

for the title but at least they finally did the split with Torrie. Hurricane chokeslams Tajiri to make it even worse.

Jericho is with Vince and Stacy to brag about what happened earlier. Vince wants to give HHH a match tonight but doesn't know who he could face. Cue D-Von and HHH has an opponent. Vince specially asks if he's here and D-Von says he's always here.

Hurricane and Al Snow discuss Spider-Man in what has to be a paid advertisement. Hurricane wants to ask Spider-Man what's with that so Snow suggests medication. Someone has left Hurricane a note, saying they know who he is. Hurricane flies off and Snow says he thought it was weird talking to a head. Somehow, these two both appeared on TNA TV fourteen years after this.

Test vs. Mark Henry

Please let this be the blowoff. The challenge of a test of strength gets Henry in trouble and Test hits some running clotheslines in the corner. Henry comes back with clotheslines of his own (oh this isn't going to be easy) before a powerslam gets two. Test gets gorilla pressed (with a nice assist by shoving off Henry's shoulders but a bad ending as Henry doesn't get him all the way up) for two more but he shoves Henry off the top. A flying elbow (one of the few things Test could make look good) gives Test another two but he has to low blow his way out of a full nelson. The big boot ends Henry a few seconds later.

Rating: D-. And so much for Henry going anywhere. See, if you have his whole character be based around power, it might help to have him actually win the matches. I've always liked Test but there's only so much you can do with a guy whose main appeal is...somebody help me out here. Why is Test getting this push again?

Christian brags about beating HHH to Kurt Angle but Kurt gives Jericho the credit. Angle promises to make Edge bald tonight.

We recap Billy and Chuck losing their trunks and Rico getting a Stinkface. Rico says he's coming out in style, meaning he's wrestling tonight.

HHH vs. Reverend D-Von

The big moment here (other than HHH slumming it like this) is the debut of D-Von's new lackey: Deacon BATISTA. D-Von introduces him to the crowd and tells him to watch the ring while he beats the sin out of HHH. It might be easier to beat the blood out of him since HHH has a big bandage on his head. A backdrop and spinebuster give HHH an early two but D-Von sends him into the buckle to take over. At least D-Von is smart enough to take the bandage off and go after the cut.

Batista sends HHH into the steps and hits a big clothesline. Who in the world would guess that would be Wrestlemania XXI? Back in and D-Von gets two off a middle rope forearm to the head, only to miss the headbutt. For some reason HHH goes to grab a chair but gets decked by Batista again. Batista misses a charge into the post though, meaning he looks great and has power but he isn't that bright. It's Pedigree time but Jericho runs in and hits HHH with the metal money box to give D-Von the big upset.

Rating: D+. It's a big win for D-Von though I can't imagine this is going to wind up meaning anything for him. In other words it's part of a HHH story instead of anything else, though I don't think anyone thought Reverend D-Von was going to go anywhere. At least we now have Batista as the Class of 2002 continues to grow.

Here's Kurt Angle to explain the concept of a hair vs. hair match. Angle makes it even more clear by showing us a shot of Edge with no hair. Kurt: "MR. CLEAN LIVES!" He's got a second picture but this time it's Angle with no hair. Angle demands it's taken away but it's replaced by a YOU SUCK graphic. Edge's presence is demanded but here's Hulk Hogan instead because someone has to stand up for the bald guys. Seriously.

Hogan mentions names like Billy Graham, Steve Austin and of course himself, which pretty much ends the list of great bald champions. Angle promises to take the title from Hogan if Undertaker doesn't because he's the only REAL American around here. A big boot knocks Angle to the floor because Hogan is a secret Communist spy. Kurt

bails but walks into a spear from Edge with very little reaction from the announcers.

Post break Angle storms into Vince's office and is put into a tag match against Edge and Hogan with Jericho as his partner.

Billy and Chuck/Rico vs. Rikishi/Al Snow/Maven

What happened to Albert vs. Rikishi? If you're going to set that stuff up, at least pay it off. Chuck and Snow start things off and Cole ignores the dull action to talk about upcoming house shows. Snow's trapping headbutts have Chuck in trouble and it's off to Rikishi for the fat man offense.

A quick poke to the eye cuts that off though and we get the first in ring appearance of Rico. Billy has to make a very quick save so Rikishi knocks him down as well. For some reason Maven gets a loud reaction off the tag but Rico kicks him from behind to give the bad guys control. Rico's kicks have Maven in more trouble but Chuck comes back in and eats a DDT.

Snow comes in off the ice cold tag (because this story needed to end a long time ago) and everything breaks down. A Samoan drop to Chuck is completely no sold but a superkick that missed by a few inches knocks him outside. Go figure. Rico is knocked into position for a Stinkface but Chuck makes another save, allowing Billy to get in a Fameasser for the pin on Snow.

Rating: D. This show hasn't been kind with the wrestling but can you blame them with this group of people? There's no reason for Snow/Maven to keep going after the Tag Team Titles at this point, aside from a lack of anyone else to do it. Did they really split up the Dudley Boyz for the sake of these lame singles runs? Again: it would be nice if they thought this stuff through.

Randy Orton isn't worried about his issues with Hardcore Holly but Lance Storm interrupts. Storm isn't pleased with being relegated to taking bets on Mark Henry's displays of strength so tonight he'll show his skills against Orton.

We look back at Hogan destroying Undertaker's motorcycle on Raw. The

edited version takes it up from one of the worst segments of all time to just one of the worst of the year.

GET THE F OUT!

Lance Storm vs. Randy Orton

There's no referee but as luck would have it, Hardcore Holly strolls out wearing a referee shirt. Cole: "I bet Mr. McMahon had something to do with this." Thankfully Tazz is all over him for saying something that stupid. Storm starts fast with forearms to the back and a spinwheel kick before taking Orton down with a cravate. Randy comes back with exactly what you would expect but Holly won't count a cover. A powerslam gets a very slow two and Orton hits the high crossbody for an equally slow two. Surrounded by unfairness, Orton gets pulled into the half crab with Holly pushing the ropes away to force the tap.

Rating: D+. Very basic match here but I'm glad it's giving Storm something to do. He might not be the most entertaining wrestler in the world but there's value in someone with that level of technical skills. Orton needs to get out of this Holly feud but at least he hasn't lost to him yet.

Storm and Holly put the boots to Orton until Val Venis makes the save to get even with Storm for screwing him over last week. I can always go for logical week to week booking.

Edge goes into Hogan's locker room and puts on his gear for the Hogan required Hulk impression until the real thing shows up to give his partner a pep talk. Edge: "He called me brother!"

Edge/Hulk Hogan vs. Kurt Angle/Chris Jericho

Hogan and Angle start things off and Kurt's right hands have no effect. A quick forearm gets two for Hulk, which is actually a rare sight. How often do you see Hogan cover off anything but a finisher? Edge comes in and gets thrown with a belly to belly before Jericho offers his hard chops. The half nelson facebuster drops Jericho and Edge cleans house while Hogan stays on the apron. I think that's best for everyone involved.

Chris snaps the throat across the top to take over and it's time to choke with some tape. We hit the chinlock on Edge for a bit before they both hit cross bodies. The hot tag brings in Hogan to clean house (exactly what he should be used for) and the usual looks to finish Jericho until Angle pulls the referee. Jericho grabs the Walls on Hogan but here's HHH with the sledgehammer for the DQ.

Rating: C-. This was the best Hogan match since Wrestlemania and it's not even close. Hogan still has value as long as he doesn't overstay his welcome in any given match. Here he started things off, threw some punches, stood on the apron to play cheerleader while Edge got beaten down and then came in for the house cleaning.

The fans are going to love that stuff because it's what Hogan does best. What isn't going to work is having Hogan out there for fifteen minutes, which he rarely did in his prime. Let the young guys go out there and do the hard work and let non-champion Hogan come in and do his thing. That could last for months if not a year or two.

Vince comes out and offers to let HHH hit him with the hammer, though it's going to cost him his career. HHH swings but Vince drops to the floor, allowing Jericho to get in a chair shot to end the show. This is really feeling like a modern Cell match as I can barely remember why HHH is mad at Vince in the first place. None of that matters though as HHH and Jericho are going into the Cell and that's all that matters.

Overall Rating: D+. The wrestling was really weak here but the storytelling makes up for some of that. They clearly have plans week to week here and it makes the shows so much easier to sit through. Couple that with a lack of anything horrible like the NWO or the motorcycle segment from Raw and it's no surprise that Smackdown is miles ahead of Raw at the moment. Fix up the wrestling and the show would be a highlight instead of just better than the horrible one.

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Smackdown – May 2, 2002: The Expiration Date For Nostalgia

Smackdown

Date: May 2, 2002

Location: Mellon Arena, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 10,000

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We've got a big match scheduled for tonight as WWF World Champion Hulk Hogan is defending against Chris Jericho. I'm sure we'll get an explanation for why Smackdown can have a #1 contender when it's been established that the shows trade possession of that status. Maybe Jericho can carry Hogan to passable tonight too but I wouldn't bet on either. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Undertaker costing HHH the title shot last week and busting Hogan open on Raw the next week.

Opening sequence.

Tag Team Titles: Rikishi/Hurricane vs. Billy and Chuck

Rikishi and Hurricane, who have no previous association, are challenging. Billy slugs away at Rikishi's head to start. You would think a veteran would know better than that but Billy has never been the brightest guy. Hurricane sunset flips Chuck for two as Tazz tries to figure out a connection between the challengers. Well at least he's trying to do something. The champs take over on Hurricane until a DDT gets him out of trouble. Rikishi comes in to clean house

but Rico comes in to kick Hurricane down and give Chuck the retaining pin.

Rating: D. The only good thing here was starting the show with a match. You would think they could come up with some better teams than “here are two guys with no connection at all” but that’s how the division is likely to work for a good while because they didn’t think this Brand Split all the way through.

Hurricane chokeslams Rico to blow off some steam and Rikishi adds a Stinkface.

Lance Storm and Val Venis are in the back when Kurt Angle comes in. Kurt says neither of them have done anything on Smackdown so he offers them the chance to model his real shirt. Venis says no but Storm seems interested. He does however point out that there might be some risks involved. Angle isn’t worried about fans chanting YOU SUCK. I mean, this is Angle’s town. They would never chant YOU SUCK at him. Angle makes fun of Mario Lemieux and that’s about it.

Here are Angle and Storm for the shirt reveal, mere minutes after he showed it to the camera. Angle defends Storm despite his bad case of being Canadian and reads off all the accomplishments on the back of the shirt. See, it’s only available in XXL or larger because he’s done so many things. That explains why the thing is so baggy on Storm.

Here’s Edge to interrupt of course, complete with Venis in the YOU SUCK shirt. You know, shouldn’t that say I SUCK? It doesn’t fit for the chants but it makes sense on the shirt. Angle another match with Edge at Judgment Day but Storm whispers a suggestion to Angle, who thinks we should make it a hair vs. hair match. Edge agrees as the stipulations are getting fast tracked around here. Angle isn’t sure about putting his own hair up but Val suggest giving him a YOU SUCK if you want to see the match. That’s enough for Kurt to agree and Edge promises to make him red, white and bald.

Earlier today, Randy Orton was working out when Stacy Keibler came up to hit on him some more. This seems to annoy him, which should probably make him a heel.

Hardcore Holly vs. Randy Orton

Rematch from last week. Orton’s headlock doesn’t get him anywhere so Holly goes with the hard chops that he uses on rookies. The Oklahoma

roll only gets two on Holly this week and it's time for more chops. Orton gets in a high crossbody for two and that's enough to make Holly hit him low for the DQ.

Rating: D. Nothing to see here and I'm sure we'll get to see more nothing in a week or so when Orton can get another clean win because the first one didn't matter. There's some value in having Orton get a first win here but having the two of them feud for a few weeks isn't going to go anywhere as it's still Hardcore Holly.

Holly gives him an Alabama Slam on the stage to keep this going.

Faarooq tries to give Mark Henry some of the money he's won betting on Mark's strength in the last few weeks. D-Von comes in to say that money can go in his donation box. Henry says no so D-Von threatens violence.

Vince talks about wanting to kiss Stacy's belly button (seriously) when Chris Jericho interrupts. After Vince freaks out over the interruption (fair), Jericho talks his way into making tonight a No DQ match and getting everyone barred from ringside. Jericho has a seat but Vince throws him out so Stacy can get some more attention. Vince to Stacy: "What do you say we get busy?" This is another one of those segments designed to do nothing more than set up stuff for later.

Tributes to Wahoo McDaniel and Lou Thesz. That makes me feel better after they didn't even mention Thesz's passing on Monday.

Lance Storm/Kurt Angle vs. Edge/Big Valbowski

Angle slugs Edge into the corner to start so it's off to Val for an elbow to Kurt's jaw. Amazingly enough, Val can't keep up with Angle and gets beaten down in the bad corner. Storm comes in and gets slammed down, setting up something like an Octopus Hold on the mat. The fast tagging continues and it's right back to Angle suplexing Edge to take over.

Storm rips at Edge's hair, which isn't often a body part that's worked over. Edge powerslams Storm out of the air and it's Val getting the hot tag to clean house. Everything breaks down and Angle starts throwing suplexes until Edge spears him down. Val's Money Shot is broken up as Angle runs the corner for the superplex and Storm superkicks Val into a rollup for the pin.

Rating: B. Now THIS is how you keep a feud going while also giving

someone else some ring time. Bringing in two talented guys with nothing else to do is a great way to keep Edge and Angle's story going without having them burn through matches. The match was really good too, which helps set Smackdown apart from Raw. There's your tagline: The wrestling doesn't suck!

Here's Jericho for a talk to hype up the main event. Jericho proclaims himself the king of the world because he beat HHH last week and is about to beat Hollywood Has-Been to become champion again. Tonight Jericho is going to drive a stake through the heart of Hulkamania, as so many others have tried over the years.

This brings out HHH, who is out here AGAINST VINCE'S ORDERS. If HHH touches Jericho, his career is over. Well you know what that means. Jericho goes into a rant about how HHH can't do anything to him and gets right in HHH's face to talk about it. This is the cool HHH though so he just smiles. HHH knows something Jericho doesn't: he won't win the title tonight. That's quite the bombshell Trips.

Mark Henry/Faarooq vs. Christian/Test

Henry clotheslines the Canadians down to start and gorilla presses Christian onto Faarooq's knee. The bad guys start beating on Faarooq as D-Von comes through the crowd for a collection. Henry gets annoyed and throws the money into the crowd. That leads to a chase and Christian hits the reverse DDT for the pin on Faarooq. Too much time was spent on D-Von to rate it but this was the match you would expect here.

Cruiserweight Title: Tajiri vs. Billy Kidman

Kidman is challenging in the same match we've been watching for over a month now. Tajiri starts in on the leg and Kidman is in very early trouble. An enziguri gives Kidman a breather and we actually get a Kidman chant. The Tajiri handspring is broken up by a dropkick to the back because it takes so long to set up. Kidman stays on him by breaking up the Tarantula but Tajiri shoves Torrie into the path of a charging Kidman, setting up the Buzzsaw Kick to retain the title.

Rating: C. If there's a point to this feud, I've yet to see it. These two are just going back and forth with nothing really changing and a match not even lasting four minutes isn't going to make it any better. This isn't a division and the matches aren't exciting enough to make me want to see them again. In other words, it's the same problems we're seeing today.

Vince and Stacy are putting their clothes back on (her makeup is still perfect of course) when Vince tells her to send HHH in. That's quite the followup. After a break, Vince tells HHH that he has to stay out of the main event. That's the third time we've established that tonight but at least we got to see Vince after fun time with Stacy.

WWF World Title: Hulk Hogan vs. Chris Jericho

Jericho is challenging and gets shoved down to set up some posing to start. They're going to be much better off if Hogan stands in the middle of the ring and does as little as possible here. Jericho gets in a shoulder and steals the bandana because there's no shame in Canada.

Hogan pops up and fires down right hands in the corner until Jericho gets in a low blow. The fans get behind Hogan (though not enough to actually watch the shows) and he sends Jericho outside for a breather. Jericho gets in a few shots and comes off the top with an ax handle as an "I'm With Meltzer" sign can be seen.

Back in and Hogan scores with right hands but misses the big.....elbow? The announcers are as confused as I am and there's the Lionsault but HHH comes out for a distraction. HHH sits in on commentary because Jericho doesn't think to cover Hogan in the minute and a half he's watched HHH slowly walk around. As soon as you see HHH on the ramp, why not cover Hogan because HHH can't run down there in time?

Hogan Hulks Up but the legdrop is countered into the Walls. Amazingly enough, a Boston crab isn't enough to make Hogan give up. Jericho pops Hogan in the back with a chair as HHH suggests that Undertaker is here. On cue, Undertaker's music kicks on but no one comes out. It serves its purpose though as the distraction lets Hogan grab a rollup to retain.

Rating: D. They can't get the title off of Hogan fast enough at this point. The problem with nostalgia acts is simple: people like them in small doses and Hogan's was over a long time ago. It's one thing to have him do his old schtick at Wrestlemania in front of 65,000 people but there's nothing special about something like this. If he could still have perfectly watchable matches like Flair at this point it would be one thing, but Hogan is standing there while everyone else does the work because he's too old and broken down.

Overall Rating: D+. The main difference between Raw and Smackdown is

this show has something to look forward to. At least on here they're setting up some fresh stuff (Edge getting a big push with the Angle feud, Orton looking to have potential) and you get at least one good match with some time every week. Over on Raw you get good talking from Flair and Austin but at some point that has to lead to a good match. I'll take the good matches leading to something unknown over the good talking leading to a bad match any day and that's what you get with Smackdown over Raw at the moment.

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Smackdown – April 25, 2002: Help Is On The Way

Smackdown

Date: April 25, 2002

Location: Peoria Civic Center, Peoria, Illinois

Attendance: 8,350

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're in a new era now as HHH is a full time Smackdown wrestler, which I'm sure will last for at least a few weeks. After all you can't expect the biggest star in the company to be on the B show for very long. Other than that we're going to get more of the Hulk Hogan nostalgia tour, which wasn't the most interesting thing in the world earlier this week. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here's Hogan for his big talk, but only after a long ovation. I guess the nostalgic stuff does indeed play in Peoria. Hogan isn't sure if he could have beaten HHH without Undertaker interfering so maybe tonight HHH should get his rematch. Cole: "What a first class champion!" Here's HHH and Cole also names him a first class champion. Is that their buzzword of the week?

HHH talks about Hogan earning his respect and a handshake at Backlash (Cole: "What a moment that was." No Cole, it wasn't.) but tonight he's earned it again by offering that rematch. The fans chant for Hogan and HHH FINALLY gets to the point: when he wins that title that he loves, will Hogan be man enough to shake his hand? Instead here's Vince to cut them both off (thank goodness) and say that he's the co-owner of the WWE so he makes the matches.

Vince polls the fans on Hogan vs. HHH but says no because HHH is a criminal who doesn't deserve a rematch. Fair enough and it's nice to see one of those arrests actually be brought up for once. Instead, Hogan can defend the title next week against the winner of tonight's main event: HHH vs. Chris Jericho. Makes sense: you want to torture HHH so put him in a #1 contenders match against the guy he always beats. Oh and if the bosses can make #1 contenders matches all the time, what was the point in having Undertaker vs. Austin at Backlash? I'm over thinking this one aren't I?

Rico critiques Chuck's massage technique when Tajiri comes in. Japanese stereotypes ensue and Rico doesn't think much of Torrie's look. The solution is a bandana but Tajiri steals it instead. This screams "stuff that only makes Vince laugh".

Maven/Al Snow/Billy Kidman vs. Billy and Chuck/Tajiri

For the sake of clarity, I'll only refer to Billy Gunn as Billy. Kidman and Chuck start things off with a belly to belly sending Kidman flying. It's off to Maven, who eats a hard clothesline from Billy but Snow comes in to save his student. Tajiri stops to yell at Torrie, leaving Kidman to tornado DDT Billy for no cover. To throw away whatever we had going here, Maven and Snow rip off Billy and Chuck's trunks, sending them running up the aisle. Torrie pulls Rico's down, leaving Kidman to counter Tajiri's powerbomb. The shooting star press puts Tajiri away.

Rating: D. I was starting to dig this one and then it went flying

out the window with more "comedy". Are we really still on Maven/Snow vs. Billy and Chuck after they lost their nothing pay per view title match? Torrie finally turning on Tajiri will be fun enough and it's going to make her even more popular than she already was. Tajiri on the other hand has already gotten pinned four days after winning the title back to set the Brand Split record.

Kurt Angle calls a security guard fat and brags about his new t-shirt reveal later tonight. The shirt is going to list all of his accomplishments so the smallest size available is XXL. If the security guard plays his cards right, he might get one at half price. I could watch this Angle for days.

Stacy Keibler massages Vince's temples until he's interrupted by some newcomer. Vince: "Oh that's right. You're uh, you're Randy Orton." The boss leaves and Stacy likes the black sweatshirt and basketball shorts look. After admiring his hands (I don't get it either), she offers to critique his holds by putting his hands on her hips. Vince comes back in and she claims he stripped for no reason. That earns him a match with Hardcore Holly.

This week's power challenge: Mark Henry bending a frying pan. That goes fine so Test pulls out a steel rod. Why does he have a steel rod you ask? Well doesn't every Canadian carry a steel rod? That's bent as well so Christian, the guy who introduced the frying pan, jumps Henry like a moron.

Randy Orton vs. Hardcore Holly

It's so strange to see Orton only having about six tattoos. They hit the mat for some chain wrestling to start until Orton gets a quick near fall off something like a bulldog. Holly isn't about to get beaten up by a rookie though and gets in the kick to the very low abdomen. We get some shots to the chest in the vein of Sheamus' forearms until Orton comes back with a dropkick. Orton's high crossbody sets up an Oklahoma roll for the surprise pin. Nothing to the match, other than the debut of one of the biggest stars of all time.

Angle talks to a photographer about how big his shirt reveal is going to be but Edge is seen replacing it. For some reason the photographer is told to get the shirt in the ring.

Here's Angle for the reveal, though he has to wait on the YOU SUCK WHAT chants. After insulting the town a bit, Angle explains the

concept of having his accomplishments listed on the back of his shirt. I'm hoping the fans in the arena didn't see that segment earlier or they're going to be bored and do something stupid like chant WHAT to everything Angle says.

Before we get the reveal, here's Edge to interrupt. Edge congratulates him on winning at Backlash and wants to see the new shirt. Every the knucklehead, Angle buys into it and the shirt is revealed. I'll give you one guess what two words are printed on it and Angle's reaction when he sees it.

Recap of HHH invading Raw and attacking Undertaker.

Mark Henry vs. Christian

Christian comes in and is thrown over the top with one arm. Back in and Henry runs him over, followed by a headbutt for two. A low blow gets Christian out of a claw hold but Henry grabs a bearhug for the win. This one note character stuff is why Henry never went anywhere for years and this run isn't changing anything.

Jericho is ready to win tonight because he wants to beat HHH once and for all. See, he only lost at Wrestlemania because of a high fever.

Rikishi/Edge vs. Kurt Angle/Albert

It's two feuds in one but my goodness those are two odd sounding teams. They pair off with Edge and Angle fighting in the ring to start. Angle throws him over with a belly to belly and brings in Albert for all of five seconds before it's back to Kurt. Rikishi gets to clean house off the hot tag because you pick RIKISHI for that spot over Edge. A running seated senton crushes Albert with Kurt making the save. An Angle Slam takes Rikishi down but Edge spears Angle before he can cover. The Baldo Bomb puts Rikishi away as Edge stomps on Angle outside.

Rating: D+. If you can find a way around the time issues, the better move here would have been to do two singles matches instead of a tag. We already did the double feud tag match earlier tonight and when you consider we already had two massage segments, it doesn't exactly make Smackdown look like the most creative show in the world.

D-Von takes up another collection but someone steals the money. That earns him a horrible beating, which is supposed to make D-Von look

evil but what would you do if some goon tried to steal your money? Especially if you're a wrestler and he's a plant.

Angle yells at the security guard, who is now wearing a YOU SUCK shirt.

Chris Jericho vs. HHH

Winner gets a title shot next week. Jericho bails to the floor to start but the chase goes to HHH, who sends Jericho shoulder first into the post twice in a row. A spinwheel kick has HHH in trouble and but a sleeper is just boring. HHH comes back with a shot to the face and does the falling low blow headbutt. With both guys down we cut to the back to see Undertaker coming into Vince's office.

Back with Jericho hitting the Breakdown (Skull Crushing Finale) for two as Cole freaks out over Undertaker showing up. Then again, it would be more amazing for Cole not to freak out over something. A neckbreaker and spinebuster give HHH two but Jericho gets the same off a missile dropkick.

The Pedigree is countered into a backslide for two more and we get the usual Walls/rope grab combo. Jericho grabs a chair (because that's worked so well for him) and gets DDT'd for two. Cue Undertaker for a distraction though and Jericho grabs a rollup with trunks for the pin and the title shot.

Rating: B. It's so nice to have a long match that doesn't involve Austin and/or the NWO. On top of that, Jericho actually beat HHH in a match that means something. Just by setting that up you prevent these matches from feeling like a waste of time until you get to the only possible ending.

Undertaker and Jericho beat on HHH until Hogan makes the save and punches Undertaker into the crowd to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. The main event helped this show a lot but there was too much bad in the first hour and forty minutes for the main event to save it. They really need to elevate someone new to the main event already because HHH and Jericho are the best possible combination and that's going to get old quickly. The rest of the card is in trouble too but that's really more boring than bad, which can be even worse.

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Monday Night Raw – April 22, 2002 (2016 Redo): Shades of WCW

Monday Night Raw

Date: April 22, 2002

Location: Savvis Center, St. Louis, Missouri

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

It's the night after Backlash and due to reasons of pure nostalgia, Hulk Hogan is the Undisputed WWF World Champion. That means he's gearing up for a title defense against Undertaker at the next pay per view, which leaves Steve Austin to feud with Ric Flair because Austin feuds with authority figures. Let's get to it.

Recap of Hogan winning the title.

Opening sequence.

Matt Hardy vs. Brock Lesnar

Fallout from last week with Paul Heyman stealing Lita's underwear. Matt is smart enough to run through the crowd to go after Brock but gets pulled into an early spinebuster. The backbreakers have Matt's bad ribs in even more trouble and it's off to a bearhug like a rag doll. Lesnar misses a charge into the post though and a Ricochet has Brock in some trouble. A guillotine legdrop looks to set up the Twist of Fate but Matt gets muscled into the F5. The helicopter bomb

finishes Matt for good. Well good for Brock, bad for Matt.

Rating: D. There's not much you can say about a squash but at least Brock is smashing people like he's supposed to do. I can see one more match against the Hardys with Brock going over to really make the point clear but then it's time for him to move on to something else. Brock is a real monster though and probably the best newcomer in a very long time.

The production guys won't talk to Flair because production guys care about in ring results. Undertaker comes up to thank Ric and says he did the right thing.

Here's Undertaker in the ring for the first big chat of the week. Undertaker compliments Flair on a job well done but make no mistake about it: the referee didn't matter last night. He's all over this Hogan nostalgia run and knows that at Judgment Day, he'll be judge, jury and executioner (Hogan used that line a lot back in the Saturday Night's Main Event days, saying that same thing at least three times on that same series.). We cut to HHH in the back despite him being exclusive to Smackdown. Naturally his music is tuned up and the fight is on with HHH tackling him down and taking the fight over the announcers' table.

A bunch of monitor shots to the head have Undertaker rocked until the dreaded referees come out for the save. Undertaker gets up and tries to leave but HHH punches the referees down and goes after Undertaker again. They fight to the back with HHH getting his sledgehammer out of his car (Presumably his car at least. Either that or he should be arrested.) but security comes up to handcuff him. This went on too long and basically only existed to make HHH look awesome. In other words, it's something you'll get used to. However, having it come after a match actually helped a lot. Do that instead.

Flair meets William Regal at catering. Regal approves of last night's refereeing job but Flair keeps proclaiming his innocence.

And now, Booker T. and Goldust review the Scorpion King. Goldust brings up Fellini but Booker says just roll the footage. Booker gives it two thumbs up but thinks he would be better as the star because Rock can't act (to be fair, he was fairly horrible in that movie). We get another clip with Booker in the same role (in wrestling gear). Booker: "Not only am I the Scorpion King but I'm

the five time WCW Champion AND I GOT A SWORD TOO!" Goldust does the same and Booker says that would make it the Scorpion Queen. This is edited out of the Network version for obvious reasons.

Mr. Perfect vs. Rob Van Dam

Eddie Guerrero is on commentary. Van Dam yells at Eddie on the floor and gets jumped from behind as the fans chant for Rob. A kick to the face sends Perfect to the floor but he comes back in with the necksnap. Van Dam comes back with the usual and Rolling Thunder gets two, followed by the Five Star for the pin.

Rating: C. As is so often the case, there's only so much that can be done in a match this short. It was watchable enough and Van Dam going got the point across but what are they supposed to do in three minutes? This would also be Perfect's last match on Raw and that's really noteworthy. He was really just there for months and someone older fans would remember. That doesn't mean he's interesting and his wrestling was only average in the limited time he was given.

Post match Eddie attacks but misses the frog splash.

Trish Stratus/Jacqueline vs. Molly Holly/Jazz

Jackie armdrags Molly to start and it's off to Trish vs. Jazz. Trish avoids a splash and Jackie comes back in already as there's no flow to this at all. Everything breaks down and Jazz sends Trish into the steps. Jazz gets in a belt shot on Jackie, setting up a clothesline to give Molly the pin. This was nothing.

Trish fights the winners off.

Flair is still upset but Arn Anderson tells him to go make it right in the ring. Dang it Arn this show was going along just fine (ok not really) until that BRILLIANT idea.

Here's Flair in the arena to say he screwed up again in case you haven't gotten the point yet. Flair thinks the crowd in a city like St. Louis would take him at his word but he shows us the footage from last night again, including an alternate angle that shows Undertaker blocking Flair's view. We get a big official apology but here's Austin to interrupt.

After way too many WHAT'S, Austin doesn't accept the apology. It turns into an argument over how many titles Flair has won and that's too far for Ric. The boss says he's not Vince but Austin wishes he was so he could just stab Austin in the back already. Austin flips

him off (because they're in the Show Me state and he's showing Flair something) but Flair makes it better by putting Austin in a match: with Bradshaw against the NWO. Sweet goodness end this stupid feud already. It wasn't even this heavy handed when Vince said they were going to do Austin vs. McMahon II.

Goldust/Booker T. vs. Bubba Ray Dudley/Spike Dudley

Bubba throws Spike onto the two of them to start fast before chopping Goldust in the chest over and over. It's off to Spike for a headbutt to the ribs but Goldust sends him outside as the crowd isn't exactly thrilled with this one. Booker comes in and hammers away, including the flapjack with Spike selling it as only he can. There's something about him just crashing down in a heap like that. Goldust grabs a sleeper for a bit before the hot tag brings in Bubba for all his trash talking and punching. Everything breaks down and Spike gets two off a top rope seated senton. Spike tells Bubba to get the tables but Goldust jumps Bubba from behind. Booker gets in a quick ax kick for the pin on Spike.

Rating: D. They were trying and it's very nice to see some new teams forming but this was boring. Spike can bump like few others but they would have been much better off just leaving Bubba and D-Von together. I know he's the more talented (certainly more charismatic) but Bubba isn't doing nearly as much for me on his own as D-Von right now. At least the preacher gimmick is something fresh and new for them while Bubba is just...Bubba.

Steven Richards tries to win the Hardcore Title and gets powerbombed through a table. That's better than they usually do.

Earlier today, Planet Stasiak was interrupted by Tommy Dreamer and his Slurpee. Rhyming ensues (the voices in his head affect his choices) but Regal comes in and asks if Stasiak has lost it. Regal: "Have you gone crackers lad?" Stasiak: "Don't get silly Willy." A match is made for later.

William Regal vs. Shawn Stasiak

Stasiak charges into the ring, gets hit with the Power of the Punch and gets pinned before the opening bell. I know it's stupid but the referee not even caring made me chuckle for some reason.

Bradshaw has been attacked. Flair: "I think I know who did it!" Lawler: "I think I know who did it too!" Since this is wrestling,

they don't bother to actually SAY A NAME as we go to a break.

Back with Flair accusing the NWO, who are rather worried. Flair promises that Austin will have a replacement partner. Kevin Nash comes in after Flair leaves but he catches Nash anyway. Flair gives Austin the Big Show as his partner.

Here's Hogan (after a string of Hogan Flashbacks to various title wins all night) for his big victory speech. First things first: his man, HHH, deserves a rematch. Dang it I was hoping he meant his main man the Butcher. Hulkamania was reborn last night because he became the Undisputed Champion again. He laughs at Vince for the boss' comments on Smackdown because the reality is that he's got the title one more time. Hogan thanks the fans and asks Undertaker what he's going to do to wrap up this filler interview.

Steve Austin/Big Show vs. NWO

Just put the shirt on Big Show already and save us the time. Show tosses X-Pac to start so it's off to Hall for the toothpick toss. That earns him a trip to the mat with JR saying Hall was thrown down like a cheeseburger. I don't even want to know what that means. Austin comes in before Show does much (not a good sign) and cleans a few rooms of the house with spinebusters. The NWO is sent into the corner for a double mudhole stomping because the NWO is so worthless that Austin is barely breaking a sweat on them.

X-Pac finally gets in a clothesline for a breather and the bad double teaming begins. The worst looking Thesz press I've ever seen Austin use takes Hall down but it's not enough for the tag. An abdominal stretch keeps Austin in trouble despite the lack of stretching of the abdominals. Hall's sleeper is broken up with a jawbreaker and there's the hot tag to Big Show, who does what anyone who watched WCW knew what he would do for the no contest to end the show.

Rating: D-. Do I even need to explain the NWO problems anymore? They needed a third man (there might be something to that) so the company picked the worst idea they could go with this side of....I don't know, Booker T maybe? The NWO is a disaster and they need to pull the plug but that might admit being wrong and we can't have that.

Overall Rating: D-. This show is reaching WCW levels of the main event dragging everything down. At the moment, the three top stories are Hulk Hogan vs. Undertaker in a rematch from 1991 when Hogan

already looked old, the NWO vs. reality and Steve Austin vs. Ric Flair in a feud that they haven't even bothered to warm over. Those feuds are probably eating up half of any given show and Raw gets worse and worse every single week. The rest of the show isn't much better but anything is an upgrade over this stuff. Get rid of Austin, Hogan and the NWO and let anyone replace them already because this is awful.

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