

Smackdown – September 18, 2003 (2018 Redo): He Is Iron Man

Smackdown

Date: September 18, 2003

Location: RBC Center, Raleigh, North Carolina

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

It's a big show here with Brock Lesnar vs. Kurt Angle in a one hour Iron Man match. What else can you really ask for here? These two are capable of putting together any kind of match you want them to and here they'll have a chance to showcase whatever they want. The rest of the show....does it really matter? Let's get to it.

Vince welcomes us to the show and hypes up the main event. Undertaker comes in to say he won't interfere tonight but he's not going to forget Vince sending Brock out to interrupt his title match. Better than him wanting the next title match at least.

Opening sequence.

Cole calls this the season premiere of Smackdown. They did that with the Billy and Chuck wedding episode so I guess we have a tradition.

Rey Mysterio/Chris Benoit vs. Rhyno/Tajiri

Tajiri gets a Cruiserweight Title shot next week. Benoit shoulders Tajiri down to start and snaps off some of those loud chops. Tajiri is right back with the Tarantula and a non-existent tag brings in Rhyno for a spinebuster. A clothesline gets Benoit out of trouble though and the hot tag brings in Mysterio with the springboard seated senton. Everything breaks down and Mysterio rolls the German suplexes on Tajiri. Rey hits the 619 on Rhyno, setting up the springboard legdrop for the pin.

Rating: D+. This didn't have the time to go anywhere and it didn't really accomplish much as Rey and Tajiri didn't interact all that much. The

action was good while it lasted though, which isn't all that surprising given the four people involved. Thankfully it seems that Rhyno vs. Benoit is done though, which should be the case after last week.

Shaniqua vs. Torrie Wilson/Nidia

It's a double team to start with Shaniqua actually being knocked outside, which is a lot more success than I was expecting. Shaniqua remembers that she's fighting Torrie and Nidia though and it's a double clothesline to take them down in short order. Torrie gets thrown outside and a powerbomb ends Nidia in short order. Keeping this short was the only option they could have had.

Dawn Marie comes out to check on her friends and gets posted.

Stephanie is drawing a mustache on a picture of Sable when Vince, Big Show and Sable come in. Vince tries to get Stephanie to quit but she won't do it. In other words, nothing has changed since last week. Stephanie brings up the logical question: why doesn't Vince just fire her? He doesn't want to because he wants her to quit. Playing rough is mentioned and I don't want to know what Vince means by that.

Long recap of Brock vs. Angle. They're treating this like the big match that it should be.

Los Guerreros are ready to win the Tag Team Titles back. Tonight, they're doing it for GRANDMA!

Earlier today, John Cena was on top of a building and saying he underestimated Los Guerreros. Next week, he fulfills his destiny. No word on what that means.

Tag Team Titles: Los Guerreros vs. World's Greatest Tag Team

Charlie and Shelton are defending. Eddie starts with Benjamin but it's quickly off to Chavo for some forearms to the back. The fast tags continue but this time Eddie is driven into the champs' corner, followed by a hard whip. It's already back to Chavo though and unloading ensues, including a monkey flip to send Benjamin flying. Back to back dives take the champs down and we take a break.

We come back with Eddie poking Haas in the eye, which of course gets him cheered even more. Chavo comes back in as the challengers manage to keep control for a lot longer than you might have expected. Eddie's sunset flip gets two on Benjamin but a kick to Chavo's arm cuts off the offense. A hammerlock northern lights suplex gets two and it's back to Shelton for a keylock.

Chavo dives out of an arm hold and makes the hot tag...which doesn't count as Benjamin has the referee. Instead a running dive into Benjamin's arms is enough for the hot tag off to Eddie and it's time to speed things up. Everything breaks down and house is cleaned but Eddie's frog splash is broken up.

Eddie rolls through the second attempt and Charlie brings in a chair. Chavo dropkicks it into Shelton's knee though and Benjamin is down. Back up and Charlie gets double backdropped but stays on the Guerreros' back for some reason, crashing HARD onto his head. Apparently that gave him a concussion and that's not even slightly surprising. Eddie frog splashes Haas for the pin and the titles.

Rating: B. Nearly breaking Haas in half aside, this was a good match with both teams getting to show off what they can do. Los Guerreros are an awesome team and there's nothing wrong with putting the belts back on them. That US Title suggests that Eddie is in for bigger things so I don't think the titles are staying on them for very long. It's very nice to see another match on this show get some time though and the talent involved made sure that it was quality stuff.

Tazz has keys to victory for the main event. For Brock: a lot of F5's. For Angle, ankle locks. And this man is a professional.

Bets are being taken on the match.

Smackdown World Title: Brock Lesnar vs. Kurt Angle

Angle is defending in a sixty minute Iron Man match. Lesnar jumps him before the bell and stomps the champ down in the corner early on. Angle comes out of the corner with a hard clothesline and the first suplex sends Brock out to the floor. Back in and a trio of armdrags send Lesnar

outside again and we hit a long stall. We're five minutes in now as Lesnar gets back inside. The threat of a single leg takedown sends Lesnar running again, though not for quite as long this time.

Back in again and Brock pounds him down, only to be sent outside yet again. This time Kurt follows him out but gets posted to give Lesnar his first real advantage. Instead of following up by normal means, Brock chairs him down to give up the first fall at 8:42. There's a fifteen second rest period, after which Brock hits a great looking F5 to tie it up at 10:21. Brock talks a lot of trash and an ankle lock makes Angle tap at 12:08 to make it 2-1.

We take a break and come back with the same score and 44:00 to go. Brock hits a shoulder in the corner but a second attempt only hits post, allowing Angle to slug away. The rolling German suplexes have Lesnar reeling but he sends Angle outside for a breather. You can tell they're filling time and for once, that's completely understandable as there's only so much you can do in an hour long match. An F5 on the floor is good for a countout and Lesnar is up 3-1 with 40:03 to go.

We take another break and come back with 36:05 to go and Angle punching away. A hard shoulder puts Angle down but he's right back with an Angle Slam to make it 3-2 with 34:05 left. Some suplexes rock Lesnar and there go the straps! Both finishers are escaped and it's the ankle lock to put Lesnar in trouble. Lesnar rolls out in short order and the referee gets bumped, meaning there's no count off the Angle Slam. By the powers, what a coincidence.

A low blow takes Angle down again and Brock gets in a belt shot as we hit the halfway mark. Cole: "Now the true colors of Brock Lesnar are coming out!" Sweet goodness you've spent the better part of a month telling us how Brock is a monster after he BROKE GOWEN'S LEG THEN THREW HIM DOWN THE STEPS but a belt shot proves he's evil? Anyway said belt shot gives Brock another fall at 29:32 to go.

We take another break and come back with 25:00 left and Angle taking it to the floor for some right hands. A top rope ax handle to the floor keeps Lesnar in trouble, followed by a missile dropkick for another near

fall. Kurt misses the moonsault though and it's a double knockdown. A clothesline drops Angle again and a suplex gives Brock two. Angle slaps on a quick ankle lock but the counter sends him outside all over again. We're under twenty minutes to go as Lesnar grabs the steps, only to have Angle kick them into his face. That's only good for a pair of near falls and we take another break.

Back again with Lesnar up 5-2, having hit a superplex during the break to extend the lead even further. Angle is trying to get to his feet on the floor as we have 14:00 left. Brock follows him out but Angle F5's him knee first into the post, which excites Cole way too much. A half crab into the ankle lock doesn't work (probably because it was on the leg that didn't go into the post) as Lesnar makes the rope again. Lesnar's knee is fine enough to hit another F5 but that's only good for two.

Brock goes up for the sole purpose of being taken down with a belly to belly superplex as Angle gets a fall back with 9:52 to go. Kurt wins a slugout and pounds Brock down in the corner, followed by a suplex with 8:00 left. There go the straps again but Brock plants him with a DDT for two more. Lesnar snaps off a German suplex of his own and the time is being eaten up faster and faster. Even more German suplexes get us down to 6:00 left but Angle gets a series of his own.

Lesnar's next suplex is reversed into the ankle lock and it's a shortened version of the Summerslam ending with Brock grabbing two ropes but having to tap with 4:07 to go. I still don't get how that works but it's 5-4 Lesnar with 4:00 on the clock. They're both down for a good while until Kurt slaps the hold on again. This one is broken up in short order and we're down to 3:00.

Kurt goes with something like an STF with Lesnar on his side but it doesn't last long. Lesnar rolls outside with 2:00 left so Kurt sends him head first into the steps. Back in and Kurt hits three straight German suplexes as we have less than a minute to go. A low blow behind the referee's back gets Brock out of trouble but Kurt is back with the grapevined ankle lock with 15 seconds left. Brock somehow hangs on to win the title back.

Rating: A-. This match falls into the same problem that so many Iron Man matches fall into: aside from a spot or two, the first fifteen to twenty minutes don't really add anything to the match. That makes sense as you have so much time to kill in a match like this, but it doesn't exactly make for the best TV experience. It's similar to a tournament: you know the drama is all going to be at the end and it makes a lot of the falls feel a little uninteresting.

Now that being said, this was a heck of a match with both guys beating the tar out of each other with all kinds of holds and suplexes. It was the match these two should have had and felt like a big deal. The ending had good drama which was set up by Lesnar tapping not too long before the final hold went on. The rest of the second half of the match is great and the whole thing is very good, but it's no Rock vs. HHH.

Overall Rating: A. Now that's more like it. This was all about the wrestling (save for the nothing women's match) and it was a great time watching the thing. This was supposed to be the pay per view style TV show since Smackdown didn't have a pay per view in September and it certainly delivered. Great main event, a really solid tag match and nothing stupid (aside from the stupid McMahons segment) make for a really outstanding show.

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Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XII: An Hour

Wrestlemania XII

Date: March 31, 1996

Location: Arrowhead Pond, Anaheim, California

Attendance: 18,853

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Vince McMahon

This is all about Shawn Michaels vs. Bret Hart. The main event is an hour long Iron Man Match with Bret defending against the absolutely on fire Shawn Michaels. Since returning last May, Shawn has hit a stride where he is without a doubt the best in the world. There's almost nothing else on the entire card other than Undertaker vs. Diesel as the Streak finally has a big match included. Let's get to it.

The opening video talks about the dream of the champion (to stay on top) and the challenger (to rise to the top of the mountain). They make the match feel like a very big deal which is the right idea. Good stuff.

Camp Cornette vs. Yokozuna/Jake Roberts/Ahmed Johnson

Camp Cornette is Vader/Owen Hart/British Bulldog and if they lose, Yoko gets five minutes alone with Cornette. Of all the music for the faces to come out to, they pick Yoko's? The monsters brawl to start and Yoko takes him down with a clothesline. Another one sends Vader to the floor and Ahmed hits a big dive over the top to take Vader down again. Back in and they slug it out some more before it's off to Owen. Yoko is so fat here it's amazing that he can move.

After Owen gets beaten up a bit it's back to Vader for more hard shots to the head. Vader pounds him down to the mat but Yoko is able to get over to Ahmed for a not hot tag. Johnston starts cleaning house on everyone until Vader gets in a shot from behind to take him down. A jumping senton

misses Ahmed though and a flying clothesline puts Vader down.

We settle down to Johnsn vs. Bulldog with Ahmed loading up the Pearl River Plunge (Tiger Bomb), only to have Hart hit a missile dropkick to break it up. Owen drags him back to the corner and here's more Vader. A splash crushes Johnson but there's still no cover. Back to Owen who is clotheslined down almost immediately and there's the real hot tag to Jake. Oh and Mr. Fuji is in the face corner with an American flag.

Owen avoids the DDT and Jake charges into a knee in the corner. Bulldog puts on the front facelock so the fans chant USA. At least most of the face team is made in America this time. Back to Vader for the hard clothesline and a slam, followed by a top rope elbow from Owen. That gets two so Owen cranks back on both of Jake's arms for a bit. Bulldog comes in but the powerslam only gets two as well. It was a clean knockout too which is pretty odd to see.

Vader comes in for a splash but THAT only gets two as well. The fans don't seem all that interested in this though. Bulldog tries a splash of his own but Roberts rolls away to buy himself some time. The other hot tag brings in Yoko to face Vader with the latter being punched down in the corner. Yoko cleans house on all three villains and crushes Bulldog with a belly to belly. The DDT hits Owen but Jake has to take out an interfering Cornette. Jake loads up the DDT on Cornette but Vader runs him over and the Vader Bomb is finally enough to pin Roberts.

Rating: C. Nice tag match here but the crowd doesn't seem interested in the show so far. Hopefully they're just saving it up for the main event which is the only match that matters on the entire show. Johnson looked good and would get pushed to the Intercontinental Title soon after this. The other guys all looked like themselves.

We recap Piper vs. Goldust which was supposed to be Razor vs. Goldust but Razor got in trouble for drugs. The idea is that Goldust is in lust with Piper but the REAL MAN Piper will have none of this gay stuff. The result is a Hollywood Backlot Brawl which is exactly what it sounds like: stupid.

Goldust vs. Roddy Piper

This was taped earlier in the day. Goldust shows up in a gold Cadillac while Piper has a ball bat in hands. Naturally he puts that down and sprays the car with a fire hose. When the power of WATER doesn't stop a large car, Roddy breaks through the windows with the bat. Piper beats up Goldust with the bat and some stiff looking shots with fists and various metal objects.

Goldust gets sprayed with the hose and rammed into the hood of the car. There's a knee drop from Piper which mainly hits car followed by a LOUD punch. A low blow stops Piper so Goldie gets in the car and runs over a stuntman in a Piper costume. Goldust drives away so Piper steals a white Ford Bronco and we get a car chase which we'll return to later. I'll save the rating for the end of part two later on.

Steve Austin vs. Savio Vega

Austin debuted late last year and is the Million Dollar Champion at this point. Savio was Austin's first feud in the WWF, which says a lot about how far Stone Cold would jump up the card in just a year. Savio says he's ready. Vega pounds away to start and they brawl to the floor. Back in and Austin gets in a shot to the face before sending Savio's shoulder into the post. This is back when Austin could MOVE as he didn't have a bad neck so the offense is very different. He's also ripped with well defined abs.

Austin cranks on the arm but Savio backflips out and hits a superkick for two. Roddy calls in and says he's not letting it end this way. Savio goes shoulder first into the post again and we lose Piper. What a shame. We hit the armbar as Austin is in full control. There's a hammerlock slam as Piper is back on the phone and talking about beating Goldust up in Tijuana. Vega comes back with a fast cross body for two but Austin comes back with the Thesz Press which doesn't mean anything for him yet.

We go split screen to show "Piper" chasing Goldust in the Cadillac. This is from the air because clearly a helicopter is available in 10 minutes' notice. This is supposed to be a parody of the O.J. Simpson car chase, which was only two years earlier. Austin goes up top (I told you he was different) but jumps into a boot. There's a clothesline to put Austin

down but a spinwheel kick hits the referee by mistake. DiBiase slides in the Million Dollar Belt and Vega is KO'd. Another shot to the back of the head and a chinlock of all things are enough for Austin to get the win.

Rating: C+. Bad Piper references aside, this was pretty solid stuff. Austin was AWESOME back in the day before he had to basically invent the brawling style that he made famous. Vega wasn't much out there, but at least he was good enough to make Austin look solid. This was a fun match, but again no one cared because the main event and one other match are all that matter.

More car chase stuff. Vince: "This footage looks awfully familiar."

We recap the Undertaker's mind games with Diesel lately that set up the other big match tonight. Diesel says Undertaker is a big obstacle but he doesn't sweat the big things.

More car chase stuff.

Hunter Hearst Helmsley vs. Ultimate Warrior

HHH debuts Sable as his latest good looking valet. This is Warrior's latest return and the story was he might weigh 400lbs and be bald. Warrior of course is fine and the fans go nuts for him. Warrior's entrance is far longer than the match. HHH jumps Warrior before he takes his coat off and actually hits the Pedigree. That goes nowhere though as Warrior is on his feet at the same time HHH is. Clotheslines, shoulder blocks, press slam and splash mean we're done. The match didn't even last two minutes.

We go to the back and meet the debuting Marc Mero. He talks about being glad to be here when HHH comes up (with Mero's real life wife Sable) and a brawl erupts.

Piper is on his way back to the arena.

Diesel vs. Undertaker

So Diesel cost Undertaker a title match so Undertaker pulled Diesel through the ring during a cage match for the title against Bret. Then

Taker did his usual mind games against Diesel, setting up this battle of the titans. Diesel jumps him to start and the brawl is on fast. Taker clotheslines him down but misses an elbow drop. They fight to the floor with Diesel going face first into the steps. This is fast paced stuff so far.

Back in and Diesel avoids Old School, only to get stunned on the top rope. We head back to the floor where Undertaker's chair shot hits the post instead of Diesel. Diesel rams him back first into the post and then does it again for good measure. Back in again and Diesel slows things up by punching Taker in the face a few times. Snake Eyes (actually called that by Vince) hits and there's the running crotch attack in 619 position to Undertaker.

The Dead Man starts slugging back and they both hit big boots to put each other down. Taker sits up first but Diesel hits him in the back to get control again. Off to the bear hug that you knew was coming sooner or later. Taker finally fights out of it and things slow down again. Notice that the fans are into this one, unlike anything in the first hour of the show. Taker hits a clothesline off the top for a somewhat delayed two count.

Out of nowhere Diesel hits the Jackknife but he can't follow up. Actually he can but he would rather stand around and brag for awhile. Taker sits up so there's another Jackknife for good measure. Diesel takes forever to cover though and Taker grabs him by the throat. They get to their feet and it looks to be chokeslam time, only for Diesel to break it up with a belly to back suplex. Taker sits up again and there's the running clothesline. A pretty bad chokeslam puts Diesel down and the Tombstone makes Undertaker 5-0.

Rating: B-. For what it was, this was pretty solid stuff. Undertaker looked better than he usually does and it was really in doubt if he could hang with someone that had just come off a year long world title reign. This was probably the turning point for the Dead Man from monster of the week slayer to big time threat to anyone. He would soon be tested by a debuting Mankind, which would change his career forever.

Goldie and Piper get back to the arena so let's get this over with. Goldust is back first and is exhausted from the driving. He and Piper stumble into the arena so I guess the "match" has been going on for an hour now.

Roddy Piper vs. Goldust

Note that the Hollywood Backlot Brawl is now a wrestling match in a ring in Anaheim. There's no referee or anything so they're just going to fight until it ends. Goldust pounds away and hits some shots to Piper's leg followed by a low blow. There goes Piper's shirt as you would expect it to. Goldust mounds him and starts pounding away but an attempt at kissing Piper makes the Hot Scot fire back.

Goldie goes up top but gets crotched down again. From his seat on the top rope though, he grabs Piper and kisses him, sending Piper into a frenzy. The fight is on and Piper, the apparent homophobe, grabs Goldust by the crotch. Goldust gets his own clothes ripped off and Piper kisses him. Well sure why not. Anyway Goldust is wearing either women's lingerie or some kind of S&M stuff so he bails, giving this to Piper.

Rating: N/A. This wasn't wrestling so no rating, but I think you can figure out what I thought of it. Goldust, who was Intercontinental Champion at this point, would feud with various midcarders before getting beaten up by Ahmed Johnson for awhile. Piper would be gone like the next day and in WCW in six months.

We recap Michaels vs. Hart which is about two different paths to get to the top of the world. The question is about who is the best, so we're going to find out in the hour long Iron Man Match.

Shawn says this is about getting to the top of the mountain.

Bret says everything has come to this point and he wants to wake up the next day with the belt.

Gorilla Monsoon is officially in charge again, taking over from Piper.

WWF World Title: Bret Hart vs. Shawn Michaels

In the famous opening, Shawn's manager/trainer Jose Lothario comes to the ring alone. He gets on the bottom rope and points to the rafters where a spotlight shines. It's Shawn, dancing atop the rafters and ziplining down into the crowd. The shot from behind him with the flashbulbs going off was one of the most shown visuals in company history for a long time. Bret just walks to the ring because he's a bit more laid back. Of course this is an Iron Man Match lasting one hour, most falls in that amount of time wins.

Earl Hebner is the referee because there's no one else that it could be. He reads the full rules to both guys which is pretty cool to hear actually. Vince says that whoever wins the first decision will win the match. It likely helps that he picked the winner. Feeling out process to start with both guys being tentative to get into anything of note. Granted they're also likely conserving energy.

Shawn easily escapes a pair of headlocks and they trade some more technical stuff. First bit of psychology: Bret blocks a third try at the same headlock counter that Shawn used both times earlier. We head to the mat with the champion in control via a headlock. Shawn fights up and we get a nice technical sequence resulting in Bret being right back in control with a headlock. Off to a front facelock as the announcers debate which man is stronger. That's a good question actually.

Back to the headlock which is smart this early in a match like this. Shawn gets up again and fires off some armdrags before hooking an armbar. Freddie Blassie and Stu Hart are in the front row. They run the ropes a few times until Bret takes it back to the mat, only to be caught in a kind of abdominal stretch on the mat. They go into the corner and Shawn fires off some right hands, only to be sent into the other corner. Shawn is cool with that as he sends Bret to the floor with a headscissors. Fifty minutes left.

Back in and Shawn puts on an armbar but Bret throws him over the top. It's Shawn though so he skins the cat and hooks the armbar again to put Bret down. Bret comes back with a shot to the ribs and a headbutt to the abdomen to take over. Off to a chinlock for a bit but Michaels escapes with a jawbreaker. There's a Fujiwara Armbar on the champ but Bret nips

up and catches Shawn in a kind of spinebuster.

The Sharpshooter doesn't work though so he clotheslines Shawn to the floor. The fans aren't sure what to think of that. Bret heads to the floor and gets sent into the post which makes him stagger into the timekeeper. We've got 45 minutes left as Shawn misses Sweet Chin Music on Bret, hitting the timekeeper by mistake and knocking him out cold. Back in and Bret hooks another chinlock as the timekeeper gets stretched out.

As the chinlock goes on for almost three minutes we see the problem with this match: it doesn't need to be an Iron Man Match. Yeah it's kind of cool that it did went an hour but it would have been fine as a regular match that went like 45 minutes or something like that. The drama would have been better too and we wouldn't have long rest holds like this. I can't blame the wrestlers for resting like that as it's not fair to ask them to go nuts for an hour, but it doesn't make for the most interesting TV in the world.

Shawn finally gets up but can't get an O'Connor Roll. Instead he hits a dropkick and grabs another armbar to take Bret down. Shawn cranks on the arm even harder with 40 minutes to go. Now we hit the hammerlock as the crowd is pretty silent. Back up and Shawn sends Bret's shoulder into the post to give him the biggest advantage yet. There's a shoulderbreaker to the champion followed by a double ax from the middle rope to the shoulder.

Bret starts firing off punches but Shawn comes back with a DDT on the arm. There's a cross armbreaker but Shawn breaks it after one pull. Now it goes on full but Bret fights up and rakes his boot across Shawn's face to break the hold. That's rather heelish no? Back to the armbar but Hart counters into a kind of middle rope hot shot. Shawn fights back but misses a Stinger Splash in the corner, giving Bret his first advantage in a long time.

The bulldog puts Shawn down so Bret goes up top. That's an odd sight for him and Shawn tries to slam him down, only to get pulled down to the mat by his hair. Bret hit the referee on the way down and we're at halftime.

Shawn comes back with a powerslam for two but a backdrop attempt is countered into a piledriver which gets two for the champion. Bret goes up again but gets slammed down.

Michaels starts speeding things up with a standing hurricanrana but Bret hangs onto the ropes to avoid the superkick. A backbreaker gets two for Shawn but Hart bails to the floor to avoid the kick again. Instead Shawn goes up and hits a HUGE dive to the floor to take the champ down. Back in and Shawn skins the cat, only to get caught in a small package for two. A Perfectplex gets two for Shawn and he hooks a sleeper. Hart gets his arm up on the second drop so Shawn rams him into the corner again.

Michaels charges at Bret but gets backdropped up and over the post and out to the floor in a great looking crash. Bret goes out to get him though which isn't the brightest idea in the world. Back in and Bret works over Shawn's injured back before dropping a leg for no cover. We've got twenty minutes left and Bret stomps away on the back. Shawn is flipped upside down in the corner and there's a belly to back superplex for a close two.

We hit the camel clutch for a few minutes before Shawn fights up again. Hart tries a superplex but has to settle for punching a jumping Shawn in the ribs. Michaels gets whipped into the corner and it's a Flair Flip to the floor where Shawn accidentally kicks Jose in the head. Out to the floor and Bret whips Shawn into the steps, knocking Jose down again. We head back inside with fifteen minutes to go.

A belly to belly suplex gets two for Bret so it's time for a slugout. An O'Connor roll doesn't work for Shawn as Bret kicks him out to the floor on the kickout. A suicide dive takes Shawn down again and we've got twelve minutes left. Back in again and Bret hits a German suplex for two. They slug it out but Shawn can't hang with Bret at this point. Hart is too exhausted to follow up though so it's back to the camel clutch.

Ten minutes to go now and the camel clutch eats up about two of that. It's off to a regular chinlock with eight minutes to go and Shawn fights up. They clothesline each other down and more time is being burned up. A superplex puts Shawn down again but he STILL manages to block the

Sharpshooter. Hart settles for a half crab as the punishment on the back continues. Shawn makes a rope but gets taken down by a backbreaker with five minutes to go.

Bret loads up his middle rope elbow but jumps into a boot to put both guys down again. A dropkick puts Bret in the corner as Shawn gets his nineteenth win according to Shawn. Four minutes to go now. There's the flying forearm and the nip up (the camera misses it) as Shawn picks up the speed. A jumping back elbow puts Hart down and a top rope spinning ax handle gets two. The top rope elbow hits with two and a half minutes left. A good looking gutwrench powerbomb gets no cover with two minutes to go.

Shawn busts out a moonsault press for two as Bret is trying to hang on. Ninety seconds left and Shawn hits a middle rope rana for two more. Shawn slams him down and goes up top but he can't follow up with a minute left. Shawn tries another rana but jumps into the Sharpshooter with thirty three seconds left in the match. The place is going NUTS but Shawn amazingly holds out until the time limit expires.

BUT WAIT!

As Bret leaves, Gorilla Monsoon orders the match to continue under sudden death rules. As Bret puts it: why? This was never agreed to and Bret is indeed getting screwed here. The bell rings and Bret is TICKED. He goes after Shawn's back and hits a big backdrop. Bret whips Shawn into the corner, and in one of two moments that made me jump to my feet when I was watching it live, Shawn jumps over Bret out of the corner and hits Sweet Chin Music to put both guys down. Michaels gets up, tunes up the band, and kicks Bret's head off for the pin and his first world title.

Rating: B. After an hour and five minutes of this match, there's one word that can sum it up: LONG. That's the problem here: it did not need to be an hour long and would have been much better suited as a regular one on one match. Either that or have a few falls in between, as having it be one very long glorified one on one match makes the stipulation seem pretty lame. The psychology is good though and it's not a bad match by any means. It just could have had over 20 minutes cut out and you could

have had the same match, and that's not a good sign. Oh and what happened to Bret's shoulder injury?

Bret, ever the mature one, storms off like a baby with the ability to walk as Shawn is awarded the title. Shawn has a very touching moment when he realizes he finally won the title and is very somber. Then he turns into Shawn and goes nuts celebrating which he deserves the right to do.

Overall Rating: C+. The show isn't terrible but the main problem is that it's almost a one match show. Now to be fair there's a five match card (not counting the brawl) and two of the matches are quite good, but the problem is that this was basically a four man show. It's certainly not terrible, but it feels incomplete due to one match being about half the show. Bret vs. Shawn is worth seeing, but make sure you have a remote in your hand.

Ratings Comparison

Camp Cornette vs. Yokozuna/Jake Roberts/Ahmed Johnson

Original: D+

Redo: C

Steve Austin vs. Savio Vega

Original: B-

Redo: C+

Ultimate Warrior vs. Hunter Hearst Helmsley

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

Undertaker vs. Diesel

Original: B

Redo: B-

Roddy Piper vs. Goldust

Original: N/A

Redo: N/A

Shawn Michaels vs. Bret Hart

Original: B

Redo: B

Overall Rating

Original: C-

Redo: C+

I guess it gets better over time.

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/19/history-of-wrestlemania-with-kb-wrestlemania-12-one-really-long-match-and-not-much-else/>

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Lucha Underground – June 17, 2015: Yo That's Different

Lucha Underground

Date: June 17, 2015

Location: Lucha Underground Arena, Los Angeles, California

Commentators: Matt Striker, Vampiro

This is a special show as the entire episode is one match. Tonight Prince Puma is defending the title against Johnny Mundo in an all night long Iron Man match as ordered by Dario Cueto as we come closer and closer to Ultima Lucha. The last time there was a one match card things went very well so let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Mundo's heel turn, which earned him a spot in tonight's title match.

Lucha Underground Title: Prince Puma vs. Johnny Mundo

Prince Puma is defending and this is an Iron Man match with TV time remaining. However, it's only pins or submissions. Both guys are in the ring to save time which is always appreciated. No Konnan here either, at least to start. Striker does a good job of running down their history as they circle each other to start. You don't want to burn yourselves out in something like this.

Mundo takes the champ to the mat to start but Puma gets to the apron for a breather. That's not something you often see from a face. Back in and they lock up again with Johnny grabbing a headlock but getting rolled up for a few near falls. They start the flipping and Puma backflips into a headscissors, only to get kicked in the head to put him on the floor. Mundo misses a dive and lands on his feet, allowing Puma to slide back in and hit a big corkscrew dive of his own.

We take a break (I believe the third time ever during a match) and come back with a clock saying 33:45 remaining. That's a nice touch as I can't stand it when a match going until the end of the show suddenly ends with

five minutes left. Puma grabs a rollup out of nowhere for the first fall and Johnny is looking frustrated. A neckbreaker gets some near falls for Johnny and it's off to an armbar.

Puma comes back with a shot to the head and a standing moonsault for two as they're still not going full speed. The champ gets dropkicked out of the air for two and it's back to the arm. The fans chant JOHNNY ZERO, which isn't quite on the NXT crowds' level but it's a nice try. A quick cutter stops Johnny cold, though he's still able to avoid a high cross body.

The End of the World is broken up but Puma lays back on him for a quick pin to tie things up, of course with a grab of the ropes like a villain should be using. Back from another break with Mundo chilling on the floor 28:20 to go. Vampiro: "I am so happy that he cheated." Back in and Mundo hits a big knee to the face for two but his superplex attempt turns into a slugout on the top rope.

That's fine with Puma who jumps from one side of the apron to the other for a hurricanrana down to the floor. It's time to pull out a tool box (meaning we get a Hornswoggle reference from Striker) and Puma is the first to get violent with a Mickinoku Driver through the crate. That's fine with Mundo who comes up with a crowbar to the head (remember No DQ) for a pin to make it 2-1. A quick Moonlight Drive makes it 3-1 and the Flying Chuck followed by the End of the World makes it 4-1 in Mundo's favor. Now we're getting somewhere.

Mundo stops for a water as Puma can barely move. Puma pulls himself into the corner and rolls into a DDT but can't cover. Johnny is smart enough to put his foot on the ropes just in case in a very nice show of intelligence. Back up again and Johnny hits a neckbreaker onto the apron to knock Puma silly again as we go to a third break.

We come back and Mundo blasts Puma in the face with a big metal ladder. Mundo puts the ladder next to the balcony and takes his sweet time setting up two tables. With Johnny on the balcony, Puma pulls himself off the tables and slugs Mundo into the crowd before jumping down to set up a third table on top of the other two. Vampiro is starting to have fun

here, despite over twenty minutes of good stuff so far. We make it four tables as I'm guessing we're at about fifteen minutes to go in the show (put the clock up more often people).

Mundo blocks a superplex through the tables and superkicks Puma off the balcony for a crash which isn't treated as that big of a deal. Then again he got hit in the head with a crowbar earlier in the night and isn't dead so you have to give it some slack. Johnny climbs up to the bandstand and cuts a promo about the score about the moment, demanding that we get a song. The band plays and we're at 13 minutes to go.

Ever the cocky heel, Johnny turns his back, allowing Puma to climb the ladder. Johnny's swing of a 2x4 is blocked and Puma gets to the bandstand. A BIG guitar shot knocks Johnny silly and they go crashing through the four tables as we go to a break, thankfully skipping over the three minutes of laying around on broken wood.

Back again with 11:20 to go, meaning we're not missing much if anything between the breaks. Puma drags Mundo back to the ring and gets the easy pin to make it 4-2. Striker: "Prince Puma has cut the lead in half." No Matt, he hasn't. They slug it out until Mundo misses a spinning forearm, allowing Puma to nail an enziguri and a tombstone to make it 4-3.

Now we get some extra psychology as Johnny bails to the floor and runs into the crowd to kill some clock. Mundo has some blood on his nose as the chase goes over to the announcers' desk. Puma finally catches up with him for a kick to the head but he misses the Phoenix Splash. Mundo runs to the entrance but here's Alberto to blast him in the back of the head and kick Johnny down the steps. Alberto is all ticked off and looks like a killer for one of the only times in his career. I'm digging what I'm seeing there, but then again I've always thought he was better as a face. Johnny is thrown back in and a 450 ties things up.

With 4:00 to go, Alberto throws out a challenge to Mundo, whether it's for the title or not. He'll take a title shot at Puma too, but of course you already knew that. It's tied up with about 3:00 to go as Johnny drives him into the corner and hammers away but has to elbow out of a fireman's carry. A quick C4 gives Mundo two with under 2:00 to go. Mundo

misses a top rope hurricanrana as Puma slides away, leaving Mundo to just crash onto the ropes and then the mat. Puma kicks him into the corner and nails the 630 for the 5-4 lead to retain as time expires.

Rating: A-. Well that worked. It dragged a little bit in the middle and the comebacks were a bit of a stretch (crowbar to the head!) but the key here was the logical flow. This felt like one long match instead of a bunch of different acts thrown together. That makes a long match so much easier to watch and the lack of any extended resting (which would have been understandable) helped a lot too. I had a good time here and while it was a bit of a stretch to have Puma pin Mundo four times in about twelve minutes, at least it made sense in context. Really good stuff.

Overall Rating: A. This is a great example of what Lucha Underground does so well. This show was completely out of the ordinary for normal wrestling promotions and that makes Lucha Underground feel like an actual alternative. You hear that term thrown around for TNA and ROH all the time, but there really isn't much different between those shows and WWE. Dedicating an entire hour to one match IS different and makes me want to come back instead of just say "yeah that was different but I've seen better." I'm not saying this is better than WWE or anything, but they're excelling at what they do and that's a very good sign.

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On This Day: December 13, 1989: This Here Is What We Call A (Bad) Concept Show

Starrcade 1989

Date: December 13, 1989

Location: The Omni, Atlanta, Georgia

Attendance: 6,000

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jim Cornette, Terry Funk

As mentioned, this is the culmination of a banner year for WCW. The year 1989 might have had the best in ring action that the company ever saw with the younger guys rising up the card while the older guys were being phased out. That's why this card was such a strange idea: there are twelve matches and only twelve guys wrestling on the show. Let's get to it.

The opening video is a bunch of shots of everyone in the tournament with a computer theme. This show is called Future Shock for no apparent reason.

The announcers go over the scoring system.

The lighting is bad again after showing some improvement last year.

Doom vs. Steiner Brothers

Again, ALL matches are tournament matches so there's no point in listing them as such. Apparently the Samoans are replacing the injured Skyscrapers. Doom has Woman and her bodyguard Nitron with them here. Nitron is actually Tyler Mane, who you might know as Sabretooth from the X-Men movies. The Steiners are the World Tag Champions. Scott starts with Doom #2 (Reed) as there are A LOT of empty seats opposite the cameras. Scott hits a quick powerslam for two but charges into a boot in the corner.

A hard clothesline puts Reed down as Ross is already mixing up which Doom member is which. Off to Rick vs. Simmons with Rick hitting a quick suplex but barking instead of covering. Back to Reed who snapmares Rick down and pounds away before getting caught in a slam for a quick two count. Back to Scott for a headlock and an atomic drop as the announcers actually have to acknowledge the fact that the seats are so empty.

Scott takes Reed down and cranks on his leg before bringing Rick back inside. That goes nowhere so here's Scott again for a backbreaker for a near fall. Scott misses a big clothesline and crashes out to the floor to give Doom their first advantage. Nitron gets in some shots of his own as Scott is in big trouble. Back in for a powerslam by Simmons for two before Reed comes in for some shots to the ribs.

Scott is sent back to the floor for another mugging as Rick keeps trying to make the save, only allowing Nitron and Reed to double team Scott. A double backdrop puts Scott down and there's a whip spinebuster by Simmons for two. Doom hits a double back elbow and Scott is sent back to the floor again. Simmons suplexes Scott back inside but Scott falls on top for two.

A belly to belly suplex puts Simmons down and there's the hot tag to

Rick. Rick pounds away and hits a big old powerslam for two and Reed is knocked over the top and out to the floor. A HARD right hand puts Simmons down but Reed is back in for the save. Nitron trips up Rick but gets clotheslined down for his efforts. Everyone brawls to the floor and Rick dives in to beat the count for the win.

Rating: C. Not bad here but it was a pretty standard power vs. power match. I'm guessing the ending had to happen that way for the sake of the scoring but it's, yet again, a pretty lame way to open up Starrcade. Doom would actually go on to beat the Steiners for the world tag team titles soon after this and hold them longer than any team in the history of WCW.

Steiners – 15 points (2 matches remaining)

Road Warriors – 0 points (3 matches remaining)

Samoan Swat Team – 0 points (3 matches remaining)

Doom – 0 points (2 matches remaining)

We get to meet the four people in the singles tournament.

Sting vs. Lex Luger

Luger is US Champion and bails to the floor to start. He tries to leave up the ramp but Sting catches him with a beating in the aisle. Back in and Sting immediately pounds away before being sent to the apron, only to take Luger down with a clothesline. A slingshot splash gets two and Luger falls to the floor. The fans are NUTS for Sting at this point. Luger gets in a kick to the ribs but Sting blocks a ram into the barricade. A clothesline puts Luger down again and Sting breaks the count back inside.

They go to the ring one more time and Sting hits a top rope cross body for two. This is all Sting so far. Sting pounds away in the corner and clotheslines Luger down again for another near fall. Off to a wristlock and armbar on Luger followed by a middle rope cross body for two. Back to the arm as it's still been all Sting so far. A dropkick gets two on Luger but Sting dives into an atomic drop to give Lex his first advantage. Another atomic drop puts Sting down as the announcer continues to screw up the time, saying we're ten minutes into the match. It's more like seven but that's WCW for you.

A right hand to Sting's ribs has him in trouble again and a kick to those ribs has him in even more trouble. Luger is setting up for the Torture Rack and sends Sting ribs first into the barricade for good measure. Back in and Luger hits a middle rope axhandle for two as he's starting to crank it up. A powerslam plants Sting down but he backflips out of the Rack, only to get caught in the corner.

Lex pounds away in the corner but Sting is all fired up. He comes back with right hands of his own on Luger followed by a suplex for two. Luger bails to the floor, only to be rammed into the barricade for his efforts. They both literally fall over the top rope to get back in, but Luger lands on top and grabs the top rope for the evil pin to take the early lead.

Rating: C+. Much better and more exciting match here than the opener with the crowd being WAY into Sting. These two would go to war for years on end as they would be nearly eternally joined at the hip. The timing issues are already becoming annoying but as mentioned, that was something you would often see in wrestling.

Lex Luger – 20 points (2 matches remaining)

Great Muta – 0 points (3 matches remaining)

Ric Flair – 0 points (3 matches remaining)

Sting – 0 points (2 matches remaining)

Doom vs. Road Warriors

Animal and Reed start things off and it's as slow and plodding as you would expect two guys of this size to be. After a dropkick to Reed's chest it's off to Hawk for a wristlock. They collide a few times in the middle of the ring with Hawk finally taking him down via a clothesline. Off to Simmons (keep in mind that they're not named that but it's obvious which is which if you've seen them wrestle enough) who collides with Hawk several times. Hawk takes over again and it's off to Animal who gets taken down by an elbow to the face.

It's back to Hawk almost immediately for a missed charge, sending his shoulder HARD into the post. Simmons catapults Hawk's throat into the bottom rope and it's back to Reed who gets two off a powerslam. We hit the chinlock for a bit until a double back elbow takes down Hawk.

A middle rope elbow gets two for Reed as Woman talks trash from the floor. Back to the chinlock on Hawk as the time speeds up again. I haven't noticed any clipping here so I'm guessing they're just speeding things up to get through the matches faster. Hawk fights back with right hands and gets the tag off to Animal. A powerslam puts Reed on the mat as everything breaks down. Simmons tries a piledriver but Hawk comes off the top rope with a clothesline to give Animal the pin.

Rating: D. Not much to see here as we're already reaching the problem with a tournament like this: we've already seen Doom twice and we get to see them again later on. It's not interesting to watch them fight at this point given that they're pretty much already eliminated from a math standpoint. Also it's a bad sign when you have to bring math into a wrestling show but maybe that's just personal taste.

Road Warriors – 20 points (2 matches remaining)

Steiner Brothers – 15 points (2 matches remaining)

Samoan Swat Team – 0 points (3 matches remaining)

Doom – 0 points (1 match remaining)

Ric Flair vs. Great Muta

Muta is TV Champion and undefeated coming into this match. Flair is of course world champion and brings the Andersons with him. Muta has Gary Hart to counter, meaning advantage Horsemen, as usual. Muta speeds things WAY up to start as is his custom. He's one of the most exciting guys you'll ever see and he was at his best around this point.

Muta immediately pounds him down into the corner and hits his quick strike elbows on the mat. Flair comes back with chops and has the Figure Four on maybe 75 seconds in. Hart calls out Buzz Sawyer and Dragonmaster but they're cut off by the Horsemen. Muta is out of the hold but his moonsault hits knees, allowing Flair to get a rollup for a pin in less than two minutes.

Ric Flair – 20 points (2 matches remaining)

Lex Luger – 20 points (2 matches remaining)

Sting – 0 points (2 matches remaining)

Great Muta – 0 points (2 matches remaining)

Steiner Brothers vs. Road Warriors

This is the ONLY meeting (that mattered) between two of the biggest tag teams of all time. Why it was wasted on a show like this in an inconsequential tag match is beyond me. These teams are friends at this point. Scott and Hawk get things going with Cornette considering this a battle of idiots. Ross says the fans are in awe as an excuse for them being bored so far. Both guys get big boots to the face in succession so it's off to Rick for a chance at Hawk.

Hawk hits a BIG clothesline to take Rick down for two before Animal comes in for a double back elbow. Rick comes back with a Steiner Line to stagger Animal and we're at a standoff. Animal tries a bearhug but gets caught in a belly to belly suplex for no cover. Back to Scott to meet Hawk with the bird enthusiast gorilla pressing him down to the mat with ease. Rick has to make the save this time and Hawk is annoyed at his actions. Animal comes back in and gets caught in a few belly to belly suplexes. This is pure power the entire way so far.

Animal comes out of the corner with a hard clothesline so Hawk comes in for an over the shoulder kneeling backbreaker. A release tilt-a-whirl slam gets two on Scott but he comes back with what was supposed to be a middle rope suplex. Instead it was more like Hawk fell flat on Scott's chest and was driven face first into the mat. Back to Animal for a bearhug on Scott followed by a BIG powerslam from Hawk. Everything breaks down and Animal picks up Scott for a belly to back suplex with Hawk

adding a top rope clothesline. Animal bridges Scott back but Scott raises his arm to get the pin as Animal's shoulders were down.

Rating: D+. Most of that is for the star power alone. This was a lot of pounding on each other and a SCARY botch on that middle rope belly to belly superplex. The Steiners winning was probably the right move here as they shouldn't have gotten pinned while still being the tag team champions. The Warriors should NOT be wrestling multiple matches in one night though as they already look spent.

Steiners – 35 points (1 match remaining)

Road Warriors – 20 points (1 match remaining)

Samoan Swat Team – 0 points (3 matches remaining)

Doom – 0 points (1 match remaining)

Sting vs. Great Muta

These two fought about a million times and it was Muta who took the TV Title from Sting. Sting dodges a quick spin kick but gets caught in a full nelson. He easily powers out of the hold and puts on one of his own. Muta takes it to the corner and rolls out of it before kicking Sting in the chest. A shot to the face has Sting in trouble as Funk wishes he could do the things Muta is doing. Muta hooks a headlock but Sting escapes again and flips Muta over before getting two off a suplex.

A quick attempt at the Scorpion Deathlock is escaped and Muta bails to the floor for a bit. This is a rather fast paced match which is different from what we've been seeing so far. Back in and Muta backdrops him down

before hitting some of those quick strike elbows of his. Muta grabs both arms behind Sting's back and flips forward, pulling them forward. Bryan Danielson (Daniel Bryan) would use this move in the indies and call it Cattle Mutilation.

Sting flips forward to escape and pounds away with AMERICAN right hands, because all foreigners are evil and must be destroyed by the powers of our American heroes. A big elbow drop gets two on Muta and it's off to a chinlock. Back up and Muta takes him into the corner and out to the apron for only a few seconds. A backbreaker looks to set up the moonsault but Muta lands on his feet when Sting moves. Muta kicks Sting down and goes up, only to be crotched and superplexed down for the pin.

Rating: C. This wasn't bad but again the time constraints are getting really annoying. These guys could easily have a twenty five or thirty minute match but they're relegated to eight and a half minutes after already wrestling once tonight. It's decent enough for the amount of time they had but these matches are begging for extra time.

Lex Luger – 20 points (2 matches remaining)

Ric Flair – 20 points (2 matches remaining)

Sting – 20 points (1 match remaining)

Great Muta – 0 points (1 match remaining)

Since we're halfway done we take a breather and look at the scenarios and recap everything.

Samoan Swat Team vs. Doom

The Samoans are Fatu (more famous as Rikishi) and Samoan Savage (more famous as Tama of the Islanders) and they have Oliver Humperdink as the Big Kahuna in their corner. Before the match, the Samoans and Kahuna do their tribal ceremony or whatever you want to call it. Reed and Savage get things going and unfortunately it's the Samoan and not Randy. They collide in the middle and we get SAMOAN YELLING.

They collide again with no one going anywhere so it's Reed pounding away at the ample midsection instead. Savage comes back with some kicks to the ribs of his own and it's off to Fatu. The match continues to go slowly but to be fair this is Doom's third appearance tonight. Simmons comes in and it's a brawl again as he pounds on Fatu. Back to Reed for more pounding on the back followed by something resembling a spinebuster. A double back elbow gets two on Fatu off a blind tag and Doom is looking good for the first time tonight.

Reed sends Savage out to the floor and Simmons rams him into the barricade. The Samoans are called both the New Wild Samoans and the Samoan Swat Team but the latter is the better known of the names. Simmons comes in off a tag and gets caught in a sunset flip for two. A bulldog is countered by Savage but Reed breaks up a tag attempt to Fatu. Simmons hits a middle rope right hand to the head for two followed by a sloppy body slam. Reed goes up top but misses a middle rope shoulder as everything breaks down. Fatu headbutts Reed down for two but after they collide again, Fatu falls on Reed for the pin.

Rating: D. This was terrible as it was clear that Doom was totally spent. As mentioned, they would move on soon after this and win the tag titles, albeit with a new manager. This was a BAD styles clash as the Samoans were trying to match power with Doom and power vs. power rarely works for the most part. This didn't go that well and we get two more Samoan

matches tonight.

Steiners – 35 points (1 match remaining)

Samoan Swat Team – 20 points (2 matches remaining)

Road Warriors – 20 points (1 match remaining)

Doom – 0 points (0 matches remaining)

Ric Flair vs. Lex Luger

Back at this point, champion vs. champion matches were very rare so this is a treat for the fans. Feeling out process to start with both guys seeming a bit tentative. You can't think Flair is tired at this point after having about three minutes in the ring earlier. As is his custom, Flair can't get much going in the early part of the match. The chops have little damage and Luger throws Ric around like he's not even there. A hard clothesline puts Flair down and another puts him out on the floor.

Back in and Flair goes after the knee but Luger has too much experience against the Nature Boy to let him do that. Instead it's an atomic drop for the world champion and some right hands for good measure. Flair is an American so those aren't American right hands according to JR. Another attempt at the knee goes a bit better though and Luger is slowed down a bit.

The world champion stays on the leg and it's so strange to hear the fans approve of him being on offense. Luger shoves him away and scores with another clothesline before posing like the arrogant jerk that he is at this point. The announcers keep pushing him as the champion of the future

as he rams Flair's head into the corner to put him back down.

Luger stomps away in the corner and poses some more followed by yet another clothesline. Some elbow drops get a near fall on Flair as we're at five minutes left in the time limit. Flair comes back with another chop but Lex pounds him right back down. A big backdrop puts Flair down and Ric rolls out to the floor. Back in and Luger goes after the neck and back as we have four minutes left. Flair comes back with a suplex but he can't follow up. Three minutes left now.

A backslide gets two for Flair and they slug it out until Flair is flipped over in the corner. He runs down the apron and goes up but jumps up into yet another clothesline. That gets two and Lex is very frustrated. A sunset flip gets two for Flair so Luger pounds him down with ease. Ric goes up top very slowly and gets slammed right back down like he's nothing. Luger misses a jumping elbow and we have thirty seconds to go. Flair gets a belly to back suplex out of nowhere and throws on the Figure Four but the time limit runs out for a draw, giving each guy five points.

Rating: C+. The match was fine for the most part and the ending was the only thing they could do given the points structure and the fact that you don't want either guy to go over the other at this point. It wasn't bad for the most part but when you had these two going at it for thirty minutes last year, it was kind of hard to get into a match that only got half that much time. Not bad though.

Lex Luger – 25 points (1 match remaining)

Ric Flair – 25 points (1 match remaining)

Sting – 20 points (1 match remaining)

Great Muta – 0 points (1 match remaining)

Samoan Swat Team vs. Steiner Brothers

Rick and Fatu get things going and it's time for more SAMOAN YELLING. Rick doesn't take time to translate and punches Fatu in the face instead. The fans are WAY into the Steiners here. It's off to Scott for the power of the team with a slam. The Savage comes in and walks into a slam as well as the Steiners take over. The Samoans run to the floor and we get the classic Steiners pose of Rick on all fours and Scott standing over him.

After a conference with the Big Kahuna (that's so fun to say), it's back to Savage vs. Scott. Since nothing else has worked, the Samoan goes with the ancient tribal custom of poking him in the eye to take over. A headbutt staggers Scott and it's off to Fatu for more brawling. The basics of the Samoan offense is as follows: kick, scream, forearm to the back, scream, headbutt, scream. Just picture that combination for about five minutes and you have the majority of this match.

The Savage comes in again and sends Scott into the corner before clotheslining him down for another near fall. The fans are trying to get behind the Steiners but they're so tired after a show this long and uninteresting. Scott gets choked in the corner by Fatu as the Kahuna distracts the referee. A double headbutt puts Scott down for two but Rick comes in and bites the Savage. It doesn't seem to have much of an effect as Scott is knocked out to the floor.

Back in and Scott's sunset flip attempt is broken up before Fatu puts him in a bearhug. We're under four minutes now as Scott is beginning to fade.

The hold takes Scott down to the mat so Rick comes in to break it up, only to cause Scott to be double teamed. Back to the bearhug as the match continues to waste time until we can have extra drama.

A powerslam gets two on Scott with two minutes left. Scott grabs the Frankensteiner out of absolutely nowhere but Fatu tags out before Scott can bring in Rick. Savage misses a splash and there's the tag, even though the referee didn't see it. Rick cleans house but Scott throws Fatu over the top rope which is a DQ in WCW.

Rating: D+. Very basic tag match here and nothing all that special. At the end of the day, the Samoans are little more than a gimmick tag team and not much more. The Steiners were still new as a tag team so they weren't able to carry a team like Fatu and Savage, especially in their fourth match of the night.

Steiners – 35 points (0 matches remaining)

Samoan Swat Team – 30 points (1 match remaining)

Road Warriors – 20 points (1 match remaining)

Doom – 0 points (0 matches remaining)

Great Muta vs. Lex Luger

Luger comes to the ring very gingerly because of the leg work from earlier by Flair. Lex is very tentative to start as Muta tries some sweeping kicks to the leg. A clothesline finally staggers Muta a bit but Luger can't hit it with all of the force that he usually has behind one of them. Some right hands stagger Muta as the fans aren't sure who to

cheer for in this one. The paint is almost entirely off of Muta's face by this point.

Muta finally connects with a kick to Luger's leg and the entire match changes almost instantly. Luger limps around the ring and Muta fires off kick after kick. An Irish whip sends Luger limping into the corner for Muta's handspring elbow. Off to a leg lock on the mat by Muta until Lex finally rakes the eyes to escape. Muta goes right back to the leg and both guys are down again. A quick half crab has Luger in even more trouble but Muta turns it into an inverted Indian deathlock with a chinlock to crank on the leg even more.

Muta stays on the leg as we continue in the same cycle of this match. We only have four minutes left which should be almost twice that long. A superkick puts Luger down and a dropkick does the same. Luger comes back with a hard clothesline to put Muta down and they slug it out with two minutes to go. A bad looking hiptoss puts Muta down and Lex throws him to the outside. Back in and a sunset flip gets two for Muta but he walks into a powerslam with a minute to go. Luger loads up the Rack but Muta sprays hit green mist in Luger's face (with Luger looking like he was hit by a bus) for the lame DQ.

Rating: C. This is a match that could have been excellent if it had another ten minutes and a good finish. The problem here is that they had to do the stupid finish here or the ending to the tournament would have far less drama to it. Muta was far better than he was allowed to be here, but he would lose the TV Title in a few weeks to Arn Anderson.

Lex Luger – 35 points (0 matches remaining)

Ric Flair – 25 points (1 match remaining)

Sting – 20 points (1 match remaining)

Great Muta – 0 points (0 matches remaining)

Road Warriors vs. Samoan Swat Team

If the Samoans win at all they win the tournament, if the Warriors win by pin or submission they win the tournament, and if the Warriors win by DQ, the Steiners win. I have no idea what happens in the case of two teams tying so we'll assume that isn't going to happen. Animal and Fatu start things off with Fatu not being able to piledrive him down. Hawk comes in to chop it out with the Savage but it's clear that neither team has anything left.

Savage tries what was supposed to be a suplex but basically drops Hawk on his head. A clothesline gets two for Hawk and it's back to Animal. Fatu gets slammed down and Animal starts beating on him all over again. Savage comes in with a superkick to take Animal down as the boredom continues here. We hit a chinlock for a bit but the Savage misses a middle rope splash. Off to Hawk and everything breaks down. Savage goes up and gets crotched, allowing Hawk to hit his top rope clothesline on Fatu for the pin and the tournament.

Rating: D. I have to give them a break here as they were totally spent at this point. You can't ask a team like the Warriors to go for twenty minutes in three shifts on the same night. It wasn't a good match for the most part, but again it's hard to criticize them given how much they had done already tonight.

Road Warriors – 40 points

Steiners – 35 points

Samoan Swat Team – 30 points

Doom – 0 points

The Steiners come out to celebrate with the Warriors for their tournament win.

Sting vs. Ric Flair

Sting has to win by pin or submission, Flair can win by pinfall, submission or countout. Any other combination results in either a tie or Luger winning. Sting grabs a headlock to start and hiptosses him down. Flair bails to the floor to run off some of the clock. Back in and we get some chain wrestling, resulting with Sting in control on the mat. They get up again and Flair places Sting on the top rope to play some mind games.

Flair puts on a top wristlock but Sting overpowers him to take Flair to the mat. Very technical match so far. They run the ropes a few times with Sting dropping down a few times before hitting a gorilla press slam. Flair bails to the outside again as Sting is all fired up. Back in and Sting blocks a hiptoss into a backslide as we hit five minutes in. Flair hits a HARD chop and Sting is in trouble in a hurry.

A quick shoulder block puts Flair down for two and Sting is starting to worry about the clock. We head to the floor with Sting being sent ribs first into the barricade as the world champion takes over. Flair suplexes him back inside for two and there's the knee drop for good measure. Ric gets a few near falls off some rollups and a double underhook suplex for

the same. They head to the floor again and Flair's chops wake Sting up again.

We have five minutes left and Sting comes back in with a sunset flip but Flair punches him in the head to break it up. Sting hits a quick suplex of his own for two and it's time to get fired up again. He pounds away on Flair in the corner and there's the Stinger's Splash. The Scorpion Deathlock goes on but Flair is immediately in the ropes.

Off to the Figure Four on Sting but he makes the ropes very quickly. Flair goes back to the knee with two minutes to go. A knee onto the leg has Sting in trouble as Flair is pacing himself. Sting grabs a backslide for two and we have a minute to go. Flair crushes the leg again and cannonballs down onto it for good measure. Now it's time for the Figure Four but Sting rolls Flair up for the pin and the tournament title.

Rating: B+. By far and away the best match of the night here as you would expect from these two anytime they work together. This match was designed to set up some future stuff and Flair working as the heel here (mostly) was foreshadowing for those events. At least they let the fans have something good to go out on.

Sting – 40 points

Lex Luger – 35 points

Ric Flair – 25 points

Great Muta – 0 points

The Horsemen come out and after teasing beating Sting down for pinning

Flair, they all congratulate him.

The Road Warriors say they're awesome and Hawk talks about coming out to Iron Man by Black Sabbath and how appropriate it is.

Flair praises Sting to end the show. Literally the credits are rolling as Flair is still talking.

Overall Rating: D. This is still one of the dumbest ideas I've ever heard of in wrestling. At the end of the day, nothing was accomplished here and the fans were bored out of their minds by the end. There were only twelve wrestlers on the entire show (side note: The two African Americans and the Japanese man were all shut out. WCW had a history of racial discrimination complaints so this wasn't a good idea) and the guys were all tired by the end of the night.

The fact that only one of the twelve matches was more than just ok and it's really hard to care about this show at all. This show felt like it was a television Christmas special instead of the biggest show of the year. As I mentioned earlier, these concept shows would continue for years, but it would never be this bad again. Well, arguably almost never I guess but we'll get to that in two years.

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On This Day: September 18, 2003 – Smackdown: The Hour

Smackdown

Date: September 18, 2003

Location: RBC Arena, Raleigh, North Carolina

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

This is almost literally a one match show and it's really the only reason I'm reviewing this. This was a request and it's because this show has the Lesnar/Angle one hour Iron Man match. In 2003 there were still individual brand PPVs so every other month you would get something resembling a supershow on free TV, usually having a huge match like this one. Brock and Angle have more or less traded the title all year and Angle is champion going into this. Nothing else matters for the most part so let's get to it.

Here's Vince to open the show. One of the biggest criticisms of this year in Smackdown was that Vince was all over it as was Stephanie. He talks about the iron man match tonight and is in full on hype mode. Say what you want about Vince but the man is a promoter at heart and loves what he does. You can hear it in his voice. He talks about how awesome the main event is and how awesome both guys are and...that's it. Ok then.

Oh wait here's Taker. He had been out for a bit due to I think a beatdown by Lesnar. I should mention Lesnar is Vince's hired gun at the moment. That'll likely be brought up later on. Anyway Vince tries to sweet talk him but Taker says the main event is safe. Vince however might not be.

Intimidating indeed.

We get a tale of the tape for the main event which is something they should do more often.

Chris Benoit/Rey Mysterio vs. Tajiri/Rhyno

Rey is Cruiserweight Champion. He's defending the title next week against Tajiri and I think Benoit and Rhyno were feuding around this time so there's your explanation. Benoit vs. Tajiri to start this ECW Reunion match. Tarantula goes on but the referee keeps Rey from interfering. Rhyno comes in sans tag and Benoit keeps getting beaten up.

Chris reverses a belly to back suplex into a cross body for two. Benoit manages to suplex Rhyno and it's hot tag to Rey. Something like a tornado DDT put Rhyno down and everything breaks down. Green mist hits Rhyno and a 619 into a German takes Tajiri down. 619 and Rey drops the dime on Rhyno for the pin. Quick match.

Rating: C+. Just a quick tag match but they had some decent stuff in there. I've always been a fan of mixing two feuds into one tag match like this because you get two feuds advanced at the same time. Nothing wrong with being efficient like that and we got a decent match out of it too. No complains here.

Video on Los Guerreros vs. Haas/Benjamin which is up later for the tag titles.

Hype video for the iron man match....which is on the show we're already watching.

The Rock is going to be on the cover of GQ.

Shaniqua vs. Nidia/Torrie Wilson

Shaniqua is a big old girl that won Tough Enough 2. Dawn Marie comes out with Nidia. Basically Shaniqua is getting pushed like a taller and black Chyna, just not one that anyone wanted to see. Torrie and Nidia get in some shots early but then it gets down to tagging. In the words of the theme song of Big Zeke, "This here's what you call domination." Torrie is thrown to the floor and a powerbomb ends Nidia.

Vince wants Stephanie to quit. Stephanie won't quit. Vince won't fire her but says he'll be rough on her now. This went on for about four months.

Highlights of Lesnar vs. Angle I and II (Mania and Summerslam).

Eddie and Chavo are glad to be back together. There's nothing to these promos tonight.

Cena is on the roof and raps about underestimating Eddie and the returning Chavo. He'll win Eddie's US Title too.

Smackdown Tag Titles: Los Guerreros vs. World's Greatest Tag Team

The fans loudly cheer for Eddie who starts with Benjamin. They go to the mat first of course and it's off to Chavo. This is Chavo's first match after a torn bicep. The champs take over on Eddie but he fights out of the corner, hitting a belly to belly on Shelton to bring in Chavo. Chavo gets a wicked headscissors to send Benjamin to the floor where Los Guerreros hit stereo dives to take both guys out.

Back with the challengers still in control, beating Charlie down. Eddie gets taken into the wrong corner and double teamed for a bit. It doesn't last long as he fights out and brings in Chavo. Shelton kicks his head off and Haas works on the bad arm. Northern lights suplex gets two for Shelton.

Back to Haas and the arm work continues. It's so weird to hear Tazz being professional, talking about his past experience in the ring with the same injury and snapping off intricacies in moves being done. Chavo counters a double team move into a dropkick to Haas and it's hot tag Eddie. There are Three Amigos but Haas escapes the third and hits a German.

Eddie gets a sweet arm drag/headscissors combo to take both guys down. Frog splash is broken up and the second attempt is rolled through because Haas moved. Haas grabs some chairs but Chavo pops up to take out Shelton with a dropkick into the chair into the knee. The Guerreros hit something that looked like Haas broke his freaking neck. Brainbuster sets up the Frog Splash and we have new champions.

Rating: B-. Pretty solid match here as both teams know each other very well. They would hold the belts for a little while before the Bashams took them. Chavo would turn heel on Eddie but lose at the Rumble before Eddie would win the world title in February. Anyway pretty fun match here

and fine for a TV tag title change.

Taz has keys to victory in the Iron Man match. I'm stunned.

Everyone is watching on monitors in the back.

Smackdown World Title: Brock Lesnar vs. Kurt Angle

Angle is champion coming in. This is an iron man match with a sixty minute time limit. There's a 15 second rest period after each fall. The challenger is the heel. Lesnar jumps him to start and we have a big old clock in the corner. Brock beats him down to start but Angle fires back with some clotheslines. Angle gets a shot to the knee and Brock chills on the floor.

He stays out there until about 8 and the knee isn't right. Brock asks for time but he was just channeling his inner Bret Hart as he plays possum. Angle doesn't mind and hits a set of armdrags to send Brock out to the floor. Lesnar grabs the steps but tosses them back instead of using them. He slides in at 9 and goes right back out to break the count. Well it's not like they don't have a lot of time to kill.

Brock breaks the count again and make it three times. Four times now. Angle is getting ticked which might be Lesnar's plan. We're five minutes into the clock now and we haven't really gotten anything going but they have plenty of time. Angle goes for the knee and Brock hits the floor AGAIN. Angle charges at him and Brock nails him to finally take over. Angle snaps off a suplex and clotheslines Brock to the floor where he holds the knee again.

Lesnar is down and holding the knee but this time Angle goes after him. He rams Brock into the steps head first and they slug it out. Brock gets the better of that and rams Kurt into the post back first. He goes to grab a chair and pops Angle in the head with it for a DQ at about nine minutes. Brock lays Angle out with the chair a bunch of times but it's in the rest period so it doesn't count.

Brock grabs some water at ringside. Does that mean there's a conspiracy against him? Angle is barely able to stand so Brock drills him with an F5 to tie it up at 49:38 to go. Brock kicks him in the ribs and asks Angle if he wants to tap. Lesnar puts the ankle lock on Kurt and he taps to make it 2-1 at 47:21. We take a break and come back at 44 minutes left with Lesnar breaking an Angle rally with a knee to the ribs.

During the break Brock hit an Angle Slam for two. Brock charges but his shoulder goes into the post. Angle gets a forearm smash and it's German time. Angle comes at Brock but gets sent back outside. Brock whips him into the railing HARD and this an F5 on the floor for the countout to go up 3-1 at 20 minutes in.

We take a break and come back with Angle in control after hitting some suplexes during the break. Lesnar knocks Kurt to the floor with an elbow and takes over soon thereafter. We're at 35 minutes left now as Brock gets two off an elbow drop. Angle reverses an Irish whip into the Angle Slam and it's 3-2 at 34 minutes to go. We're told that if this goes to a tie we'll have overtime.

Kurt pounds away but the Angle Slam is countered into an F5 attempt which is countered into the ankle lock. Brock rolls through and Angle manages to avoid the referee. Brock however drills him in the head with a

clothesline so when Angle hits the Angle Slam, there's no referee. Brock hits Angle low and grabs the title. A shot to the head of Angle puts him down and the referee wakes up to make it 4-2 Brock at 29:30 to go.

We take a break and come back with Angle on the floor with 25 minutes to go. Angle pulls him to the floor and hammers away, sending Brock into the steps. With Brock on the outside, Angle goes back in and up top to hit a double axe to Brock's back. That only gets two back inside though. Kurt goes up again and hits the missile dropkick for a close two. The moonsault that hits once a decade doesn't hit here and both guys are down.

Angle grabs a rollup for two so Brock takes his head off with a clothesline. Brock gets all ticked off and throws Angle over his head without leaving his own feet. Well that was awesome. It only gets two though and both guys are down. Kurt reverses another belly to belly into the ankle lock but Brock rolls through to send Angle to the floor. Angle goes into the steps again and back to the ring we go.

That only gets two in the ring as we have 20 minutes left with with score 4-2 Brock. Lesnar unhinges some steps but Angle hits a baseball slide to send them into Brock's face. Kurt looks like his shoulder is hurt from going into the steps. Angle gets an elbow for two as we take a break. Back and it's 5-2 as Brock hit a superplex for a fall during the break.

We have 14 minuets to go and it's 5-2 Brock. Brock takes him outside and tries to F5 Angle into the post but Angle reverses to give Brock an F5 into the post with the bad knee hitting the steel. Back inside and Angle throws on a half crab which is very smart. Brock makes the ropes so Angle throws on the ankle lock. Lesnar STILL doesn't tap so Kurt stomps away at the leg/ankle.

Kurt charges in at Brock but gets caught in an F5. Brock can't counter though and can only get a delayed two. Lesnar goes up top but Angle pops up for the running belly to belly and it's 5-3 with 9:50 to go. Angle wins a slugout and pounds Brock down in the corner. Angle puts the straps back up which is a new one for him. He tries to load up the Angle Slam but Brock grabs a DDT for two.

Kurt misses a right hand and Lesnar hits a German. Make that two Germans. Would you believe three Germans? He tries a fourth (there has been a lot of laying around between them so about 90 seconds passed for all those Germans) but Angle counters into two Germans of his own. Angle rolls through something into the ankle lock and in more or less the same ending at Summerslam, Brock can't find a rope and taps with 4:11 to go.

Four minutes left and both guys are down. Brock still leads 5-4. They're still down with 3:30 left. Kurt grabs the hold again but Brock rolls through to escape. They're both down again but Kurt is up and stomping away with three minutes left. Bow and arrow hold, which is like a side version of the STF, goes on to eat up some time. Brock wisely heads to the floor with two minutes left.

Smart strategy there as Lesnar only has to play defense and run the clock out to win the title. Kurt puts the ankle lock on Brock outside but back inside we go. Brock runs again so Kurt rams him into the steps. Angle hits some rolling Germans back in the ring and we hit a minute to go. He hits four Germans but this is taking way too long. Brock kicks him low with 30 seconds left but it's not seen. Ankle lock with the grapevine is on with 15 seconds left but Lesnar hangs on to win the title and end the show.

Rating: B. This match runs into the exact same problem that is more or less unavoidable for these matches: you can more or less skip the first 55 minutes and you still see the exciting parts. An hour is too long, even when the guys are having an entertaining match. This was good, but like I said the vast majority of it is just waiting for Angle to make his big comeback. However it does fly by as taking out commercials it runs about 46-48 minutes. Good match, but not a good idea for TV.

Overall Rating: C+. Like I said in the previous grade, you can skip about 55 minutes of this show and you'll see the important points. The iron man match is a trap that is almost impossible to escape in that regard and it's not a good idea for PPV or TV. It eats up so much time and so many things are put on hold for it. This was an entertaining show and it's always cool to see a world title change, but a normal match running about half an hour would have been a lot better.

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And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for just \$4 at:

Smackdown – September 18, 2003: As Close To A One Match Show As You'll Ever Get

Smackdown

Date: September 18, 2003

Location: RBC Arena, Raleigh, North Carolina

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

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Here's Vince to open the show. One of the biggest criticisms of this year in Smackdown was that Vince was all over it as was Stephanie. He talks about the iron man match tonight and is in full on hype mode. Say what you want about Vince but the man is a promoter at heart and loves what he does. You can hear it in his voice. He talks about how awesome the main event is and how awesome both guys are and...that's it. Ok then.

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We get a tale of the tape for the main event which is something they should do more often.

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Rey is Cruiserweight Champion. He's defending the title next week against Tajiri and I think Benoit and Rhyno were feuding around this time so there's your explanation. Benoit vs. Tajiri to start this ECW Reunion match. Tarantula goes on but the referee keeps Rey from interfering. Rhyno comes in sans tag and Benoit keeps getting beaten up.

Chris reverses a belly to back suplex into a cross body for two. Benoit manages to suplex Rhyno and it's hot tag to Rey. Something like a tornado DDT put Rhyno down and everything breaks down. Green mist hits Rhyno and a 619 into a German takes Tajiri down. 619 and Rey drops the dime on Rhyno for the pin. Quick match.

Rating: C+. Just a quick tag match but they had some decent stuff in there. I've always been a fan of mixing two feuds into one tag match like this because you get two feuds advanced at the same time. Nothing wrong with being efficient like that and we got a decent match out of it too. No complains here.

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Wrestlemania Count-Up – #12: It Just Doesn't Hold Up That Well

Wrestlemania 12

Date: March 31, 1996

Location: Arrowhead Pond, Anaheim, California

Attendance: 18,853

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jerry Lawler

Star Spangled Banner: N/A

This show is a very different direction for the company, and while the match is remembered fondly, this is one of the lowest rated Manias of all time and I think that's for one reason: there are only 6 matches. You have the iron man match, Diesel vs. Taker, and four other matches that hardly anyone remembers. Razor Ramon is on the box but was less than two months away from debuting on Nitro.

After what apparently was viewed as a big show the year before, tonight was all about Shawn Michaels. Looking back at the buildup, we all should have seen it coming. Shawn was the guy that never quite could put all of the pieces together but for the first time in forever he was healthy, he was trained properly and he was totally ready, but we'll get to that later on. Let's get to it.

The opening video is of course all about Bret vs. Shawn which is appropriate since that's all this show is about. Something about champion vs. challenger or something.

Oh and because there was no time for it, the finals of a big tag team title tournament was held on the preshow with the Body Donnas beating the Godwins when Sunny flashed Phineas.

After no America the Beautiful or Star Spangled Banner, we get our first contest!

Vader/Owen Hart/British Bulldog vs. Ahmed Johnson/Jake Roberts/Yokozuna

Ahmed Johnson was nothing short of a tank. Imagine Lashley but about ten times more awesome. Nothing but pure power all around. Shame he was injured and then left the company. He was supposed to be the first black WWF Champion but that fell through. Anyway, this is because of Yoko turning face and going after Cornette who brought in Vader to settle the score. Hart and Smith were also in Cornette's stable and Johnson and Roberts are there because they had contracts.

Yoko at this point was just embarrassingly fat. Apparently if Yoko's team wins he gets 5 minutes with Cornette. He means nothing at all by this point and it's rather clear. Yoko and Vader slug it out to start but soon it shifts to a big brawl. And then it's back to Yoko vs. Vader with Vader getting knocked to the floor. Ahmed DIVES over the top to take down Vader.

Total insanity to start us off here so at least it's fast paced. The giants explode again and it's Yoko with the advantage. Owen comes in and gets beaten on for a bit until Bulldog saves him. Back to the fat boys here as for some reason they decided Yoko should be in there for three or four minutes to start us off. Vader punches him down in the corner and talks to him for awhile for no apparent reason.

Yoko gets a freaking Rock Bottom of all things and tags in Ahmed. He cleans house, destroying all three evildoers. Sunset flip on Vader results in Vader jumping up and landing on his own back. Bulldog gets in a few shots and Vince says Camp Cornette is like a herd of buffalo. Sure why not.

Owen gets a missile dropkick out of nowhere to take over. Enziguri to the back (which thankfully they say was to the back) puts Ahmed down. Back to Vader as this is a basic formula now. Is there a reason as to why Jake isn't getting the beating so that Ahmed can get the hot tag later? Ahmed gets a shot to take Owen down and finally brings in Jake.

Mr. Fuji comes down to ringside as I'd assume he got lost or something. Jake calls for the DDT but Owen grabs the rope. Roberts gets caught in the corner and the beatdown is on. Vader mauls him for a bit as this is starting to get a big long. Top rope elbow by Owen gets two. Just to show what a different time it was, Jake kicks out of the powerslam from the Bulldog like it's any other move. That's just wrong.

Yoko finally gets the lukewarm tag and hammers Vader down in the corner. He looked like he was sticking a fork in the top of his head which explains the speed of those shots. Jake comes back in because he's clearly fine after that long beatdown and Ahmed can't come in yet due to affirmative action or something. DDT to Owen but Cornette saves. Vader takes Jake down and the Vader Bomb ends him.

Rating: D+. The wrestling really isn't that bad, but it went

on forever. Take 5-7 minutes out of this and it goes way up in value. The psychology made very little sense here which is a weird thing to see in a Roberts match. This went nowhere for the most part and feels really weird for a Mania opener. Nothing to see here.

We recap Piper vs. Goldust in one of the most homophobic feuds ever. Piper is president of the company and Goldust is turned on by Piper's power. This set up the Hollywood Back Lot Brawl, which is just a fight in the back alley. Michael Freaking Cole does the voiceover for this. He was there in 1996? Hokey smoke indeed.

Goldust vs. Roddy Piper

Piper was seen earlier with a bat and a water hose. This was supposed to be Razor vs. Goldust but Razor is in rehab (I'm stunned to) so we get this instead. Goldust pulls up in a gold Cadillac and Piper stops it by spraying it with a gardening hose then beating it with a bat. The smash cuts here are really, really annoying. This is hardcore before there was hardcore and they get fairly brutal out there.

Obviously this isn't live or anything like that as they filmed this earlier in the day. I'm not sure who thought this was a good idea but it's certainly not one at all. Piper chokes him with a bat and sprays him down with a high pressure hose. Goldust gets a shot to Roddy's pipe and drums and takes over.

Goldust just gets the heck beaten out of him for the most part as some of Piper's punches are either legit or the best fakes I've ever seen. The son of the Dream gets in the car and Piper (or an extremely average impersonator) jumps onto the hood to keep from getting crushed. Goldust leaves and Piper chases him in a white Bronco. This doesn't finish here so we'll come back to the rest of this as it happens. This was REALLY bad as it was all taped and clearly edited and the crowd is of course silent after five minutes of just sitting around watching a TV

monitor.

Steve Austin vs. Savio Vega

These two had a long feud for no apparent reason. Austin was the Ringmaster at the time and the Million Dollar Champion. They feuded for several months and it was just a waste of time. This gets PPV time but the tag team title match doesn't. Of course it does. Savio is with Doc Hendrix and we get a quick look at them being paired together in the tag tournament and Austin screwing him over. Savio says he's ready for anything.

It's a brawl almost immediately and they roll around on the mat. We hit the floor and it's Vega in control. DiBiase gets involved to give Austin control but that gets him nowhere at all. This is a boring match in case you didn't get that. Showing the boredom of Vince we go to Roddy Piper on cell phone as he chases after Goldust on the freeway.

Savio hurts his arm on a clothesline as we hear about how great of a technician Austin is. Back to the phone stuff as Austin works on the arm. Middle rope elbow drills Savio for two as Piper yaps away. The sad thing is that this is a pretty good back and forth match but the crowd is dead because of being killed by the parking lot thing.

We continue the idiocy with aerial footage of Piper chasing Goldust. And of course, it's of the OJ Simpson chase. Savio takes Austin's head off with a spin kick but Austin takes over again. An elbow off the top (Austin was a completely different wrestler before he became the Rattlesnake and somehow better in the ring) misses and here comes Savio.

Naturally in an Austin match at Wrestlemania the referee goes down, in this case due to another spin kick from Savio. DiBiase slips in the Million Dollar Belt to Austin who clocks Savio with it twice to knock out him cold. Then in something I've never seen before, Austin wins with a reverse chinlock.

Yes as in the mother of all rest holds. Savio is out so the match is over. Wow indeed. Only at Wrestlemania baby!

Rating: B-. This was a good match actually despite the idiocy of the whole Piper thing. Austin was great back in the day and when he wasn't hanging out with various other morons so was Savio. This was a good match although they would go on to do some better stuff. Or maybe that had already happened. Yeah it had so this was the finale.

More Piper stuff as Vince says this is familiar.

We recap the whole mind games thing between Taker and Diesel. I think I have Diesel in their match tonight.

Another shot of the cars. Is there a point to this at all? Is it supposed to be tongue in cheek or something?

HHH vs. Ultimate Warrior

This is Warrior's big return. HHH debuts some new chick named Sable. He's rather new also here and the difference in size between then and recently is amazing. Warrior is allegedly 400lbs and bald according to Lawler, which shocks Vince. You know a lot of his lines are far funnier knowing what we know now. Naturally he looks like his old self. The fans react...I think. Vince wants you to believe the roof just got blown off but it's simply not there.

HHH jumps him to start and I can't believe how quiet the fans are here. I mean it's eerie. Pedigree hits maybe 40 seconds in and Warrior beats him to his feet. Warrior hammers away and the slam and splash end this in maybe a minute and a half. He would be gone by late summer.

Wildman Marc Mero, the former Johnny B. Badd debuts here which caused a ton of jokes at his expense in WCW. In exchange he wound up getting the Intercontinental Title and the biggest pushes of his career. HHH comes up to glare at him and Sable stands by. They brawl for a bit and that's about it.

Piper is on his way back here.

Undertaker vs. Diesel

No backstory given but that's why I have a job here. Both guys had cost each other the title at back to back PPVs including the famous shot of Diesel being pulled under the ring by Taker during a match against Bret in a cage. Taker played a ton of mind games and this is the result. This isn't quite a co-main event but it's the other big match on the card for sure. Diesel is freshly heel here.

From everything I can find this is their first and only one on one match too. That makes sense as Diesel was gone in less than two months and was in WCW for the next five years. Once he got to WWE again he was in the NWO and never feuded with Taker. Once he was out he was on Raw and then Nash left for TNA. I will never get tired of Undertaker's entrance. It's simply awesome on so many levels.

They go at it from the opening bell and the crowd noticeably dies as soon as it rings. That's rather odd. Taker goes onto offense and the fans cheer a bit so they're definitely into this. They head to the floor and Taker hammers away with those uppercuts. I remember a friend of mine back in the day said Taker definitely couldn't have had a boxing background. Methinks the punches he throws suggest otherwise.

Taker wants the Tombstone about two minutes in but it's countered. Nash is moving out there which is very weird to see indeed. Taker with a cross body (???) for two. Old School can't take Diesel down. The jumping clothesline misses as Diesel uses his training as Super Shredder in TMNT 2 to duck out of the way. Taker gets another uppercut to put Diesel on the floor. A chair shot misses and here comes Big Daddy Cool.

Diesel won't let Taker get back in. It's weird to see Nash with so much energy like this. Big boot puts Taker down. Side Slam gets two. Not quite as pretty as his usual ones but still

a decent one. Diesel beats on him with his slow and methodical stuff but it's not boring. Some guys just have a slower pace than others and Nash is one of them. Taker fights back a bit and both guys hit big boots. That was kind of cool.

Taker sits up to a big reaction. Diesel beats Taker to his feet and slaps on a bear hug. He isn't CM Punk though so he's not going to get a submission. Taker breaks the hold and it's off to a headlock? A suplex gets Taker out of it and both guys are down for a bit again. Top rope clothesline and a good one gets two for Taker. He sends Diesel in and like an IDIOT, puts his head down and there's the Jackknife.

And also like an IDIOT, Diesel doesn't cover him. He just stands over Taker who isn't moving an inch. Taker sits up so Diesel gives him another powerbomb. Diesel FINALLY goes for a cover but Taker grabs him by the throat. He must have waited for 40 seconds after that Jackknife so he deserves it. Diesel fights out of the grip twice but can't do it a third time. He gets a suplex to get out of the choke but Taker sits up. Flying clothesline sets up the Chokeslam which sets up the Tombstone to make Taker 5-0.

Rating: B. This was good stuff and definitely Taker's best Mania match to date and his best until Mania X7 against HHH. Also this made the Streak seem like it meant something as Diesel had been world champion for almost a year. Power vs. power rarely works and battles of the giants are usually bad but this was one of the best ones I've ever seen. Good stuff indeed.

Post match we get the at the time famous shot of Diesel laying on the mat completely unconscious.

Piper and Goldust are back so it's time for the ending of the Brawl. Both cars get back and Piper parks right next to Goldust so the driver's door can't open. Good thing he was already out and into the arena. Roddy drops about 5 F Bombs as

he's looking for Goldie. They head into the arena and the fight is on. Actually Goldust backing away while Piper stalks him with a belt is on but you get the concept

They go into the ring and Piper hammers away. Officially this is still a match I guess. Screw the whole formatting thing as I guess you could call this the longest match in PPV history. Goldust takes over in the ring as he's an active wrestler and therefore likely in better shape. Piper's shirt comes off and Goldie chokes away.

Roddy gets back up and the crowd pops a bit for it. Goldust tries to kiss him and Piper fights back. Goldie goes up but Piper crotches him. And then Goldust kisses Piper. Oh you know it's on now. Piper grabs him by the balls (does that mean he liked the kiss?) and slaps Goldust a bit. Off come the clothes and Goldust has S&M stuff on. Piper kisses Goldust. Ok so in other words, he's kissed him, groped his balls and spanked him. Sweet goodness indeed. Goldust leaves and I guess Piper is the winner. Sadly this gets the biggest pop of the night so far.

We recap the Bret vs. Shawn...feud I guess you'd call it. They're both faces here but the idea is that Shawn has finally gotten to this point after working his entire life to get here. On the other hand you have Bret who is the best in the world and has been for a good while. It's pretty clear that Shawn is going to win but the idea is to give a classic on the way.

Now this match has gotten a very argued opinion from the staff as some of us say it's great and some of us say it's very overrated. I like the match but let's see how well it holds up. Both guys say nothing of note at all.

Gorilla Monsoon finally gets the roll he was born for: President of the WWF. That fits perfectly even though he rarely did anything. lding up the Iron Man Match and Shawn's

rise to the main event as a face. Nothing special here.

WWF World Title: Shawn Michaels vs. Bret Hart

We open with a rather good start as Shawn makes one of the most famous entrances of all time, riding down from the rafters on a zipline. That's definitely one of his most famous moments and is still cool to this day. Bret's entrance of walking through the curtain is a bit of a letdown by comparison. I like the basic fireworks Bret would get. Simple yet effective.

Hebner gives the instructions to both guys and you have to wonder if he can hear Bret tap already. They're really playing this up as epic. It's most decisions in an hour as you know but you can win a decision by count-out or DQ. So could the title change on a DQ only? I'd love to see them do that in a world title match. They used that as a loophole for 2/3 fall matches before.

There's the bell and we're off. Jerry says if Bret wins the first decision he'll win while Vince says that'll go either way. They hit the mat for a bit and we reach the issue here: you can more or less take a 57 minute nap and you'll not miss the ending of the match. That's why you don't see these on TV. Bret gets a headlock as we get to our first rest hold/time killer of the match. I don't think calling it a rest hold is fair as both guys have great cardio.

Jerry gets on Vince for being an idiot when he says there are no Bret or Shawn fans but only WWF fans. Preach it King. There's a nice idea here of Bret wanting to wear Shawn down so he can beat him while Shawn is looking for a fast win and then go from there. Nice little contrast of styles there. Back down to the headlock as they sped things up for a bit.

They're going slowly here for the most part but to be fair they're conserving energy so it's understandable. We get into an interesting debate here: which of these two is stronger?

Jerry explains how much a hold like a headlock can take out of you. In other words, he's using his experience in the ring to give an explanation of what we're seeing. Almost like he's analyzing it. What a novel idea!

Shawn works on the arm which is as good as anything else I guess. Stu Hart, Bret's dad, is at ringside sitting next to Freddie Blassie. Jerry asks if Helen (Bret's Mom) is here. He thinks it's unlikely since she went shopping today and went to an antique store and they kept her. That got a chuckle if nothing else. Bret starts hammering away in the corner so Shawn speeds things up to send Bret to the floor.

The idea here is that Shawn is wrestling a very conservative and slower paced match to throw Bret off his game. That's psychology again there people. Shawn works the arm but Bret throws him over. He skins the cat though and drives Bret down with an armbar again. We're a little under 12 minutes in at this point.

Shawn goes back to the arm as we waste even more time than we usually do if you can believe that. Jerry suggests that maybe Bret should submit to get out of this armbar but says that probably wouldn't be a good idea. Bret gets up and gets a modified almost spinebuster to put Shawn down and wants the Sharpshooter but Shawn counters.

A clothesline puts Shawn on the floor but Bret doesn't want a countout. Bret is sent into the post and at 15 minutes into the match Shawn kicks the timekeeper's head off! That looked great and he is DEAD. Back into the ring and Bret gets the chinlock again. The timekeeper is taken out on a stretcher. Bret yells at Hebner to check Shawn because it's not a staring contest.

This is getting really boring really fast as these rest holds are going on for like two or three minutes at a time. This particular one is about two and a half. Shawn comes back with

a clothesline but his neck hurts and he can't follow up. Bret gets one of his own and down goes Shawn. Vince goes into a speech about how awesome the WWF and Wrestlemania is while we're in ANOTHER chinlock. It's always cool to hear Vince talk about how great wrestling is as his love really comes out in his voice.

O'Connor Roll is blocked and Shawn gets a dropkick to go back to the armbar. Twenty minutes in now and of course we're still in a hold. Shawn rams some knees into the arm and shoulder. He gets a wristlock on using his arms for leverage which results in Bret's face being shoved into Shawn's boot which looks cool. Vince talks about Jerry's Kiss My Foot match with Bret which was always kind of funny.

Bret tries to reverse but gets rammed into the post. Shawn drops an F Bomb at a camera in his face. A shoulderbreaker has Bret reeling and is followed up by a double axe to the shoulder. Hammerlock slam as Shawn channels his inner Anderson. The shoulder goes into the buckle a few times as this is still very slow paced.

Twenty five minutes in and it's still arm work. Bret hammers away but Shawn gets a DDT on the arm and hooks a cross armbreaker to kill the crowd again. Before the hold was on Vince suggested that Bret should submit. Why? It's not like there's a rest period or at least there isn't one announced. Bret punches out of it and gets a second rope Stun Gun to break the hold.

Slingshot and Shawn "hits" the post. That gets two for Bret whose arm is kind of hanging there. So much for that as Shawn rams him into the buckle to take over again. Bret fights back again and there's a bulldog. He goes up though and takes way too much time. I think they botch something as Bret grabs Shawn's hair and rides him down kind of like a bulldog but with the knee in his back. The referee goes down in the collision which I don't think was intentional. Thirty minutes

even left and the referee is up in maybe 20 seconds so yeah that was unintentional.

Shawn gets a powerslam for two. Bret's arm is magically better somehow. What a shock: Shawn does a ton of work and Bret makes it look like nothing. Bret gets a Piledriver for two. He goes up again and Shawn catches him one more time. Shawn starts drilling Bret, possibly out of anger for the total lack of selling.

Sweet Chin Music is ducked and Bret hits the floor for a bit. Shawn is like screw that and hits a HUGE dive to the floor to take him down. That's the first big spot of the match and the crowd definitely reacted to it. Shawn goes up and hits a cross body but Bret rolls through for two. The fans are staying into it. Small package gets two for Shawn as they're definitely picking things up here.

Perfectplex gets two for Shawn. Twenty five minutes left. Shawn gets a sleeper on which is a smart move. That gets broken up and Bret goes into the corner. Now we get the momentum changer of the night as Shawn gets backdropped over the corner and wipes out a cameraman with the only visual we see being Shawn flipping over his head.

Shawn gets rammed into the post on the floor and is reeling badly. Bret drops an elbow into the back. Backbreaker hits as we have 20 minutes left. This is getting close. Bret gets a Banzai Drop down onto Shawn's back in an oddly cool move. In another cool spot Shawn does his flip in the corner and sits on the top so Bret runs up and does a belly to back off the top for two. Crowd is getting into these kickouts now.

Chinlock by Bret as we need to kill off more time. Shawn gets a sunset flip out of nowhere for two. They kind of just fill time in for a few minutes with nothing special going on. Russian leg sweep gets two. Shawn gets whipped over the corner and over the top, kicking Jose in the head as he goes down.

That can't be good. Is there a pile of dust anywhere? Bret whips Shawn into the railing and Jose goes down again! This is getting awesome!

Fifteen minutes left now. Belly to belly gets two. All Bret here. We finally get an answer about what the Sharpshooter hurts: the back. Shawn gets all ticked off and throws big bombs but Bret gets a shot to the back to take him down. Bret sets for a suicide dive on the floor and it looks rather stupid as Shawn has to stand up in a hurry to get hit by it.

Bret is willing to take a countout. He changes his mind though as he's not quite ready to turn to the dark side. German suplex gets two as the crowd is getting into this. Shawn tries to fight from his knees so Bret KICKS HIM IN THE FACE. Freaking ow man! Back to the chinlock now with ten minutes left.

Nine minutes left and we're still in the chinlock. Shawn fights it off with 8 minutes left. Shawn hammers him about the head and shoulders with seven minutes left. They're moving VERY slowly. BIG superplex gets no cover as Bret wants the Sharpshooter instead of the relatively easy pin. Shawn is crawling away as Bret holds the foot with 6 minutes left.

Half crab is on for a bit. Backbreaker hits as we have five minutes left. Bret does the I HATE THIS SO MUCH spot as he jumps into a boot. Shawn hits a dropkick to send Bret into the corner. Bret's chest eats buckle as Shawn can barely move. Four minutes left with both guys down. Forearm and nipup (camera missed it) and Shawn is all fired up.

Jumping back elbow to Bret. Jerry: Shawn Michaels has just gotten his 19th wind! Spinning double axe off the middle rope with three minutes left. Suplex sets up the big elbow for two. Gutwrench sitout powerbomb gets no cover with two minutes left. Moonsault press gets two. 90 seconds left. Kind of a botched rana off the top gets two.

Shawn slams him but collapses with a minute left. He goes to the top but Bret gets up. A dropkick misses though and Bret locks on the Sharpshooter with 33 seconds left! What a shock that it's tied up and Bret finally gets his hold on with 33 seconds left! Shawn doesn't give up as the time runs out and Bret collapses. Shawn is DEAD.

Gorilla gets into the ring as Bret is handed the title. Bret walks out and then the Fink says that it's not over yet by orders of Gorilla. It's sudden death! Bret is MAD and asks a very good question: why? Why should Shawn get another chance? The ruling was that there would be a 60 minute time limit and Bret survived that. This actually wasn't fair to Bret at all.

There's the bell and Bret goes off on Shawn. Jerry and Vince agree Bret is going to have to pin Shawn. Bret whips him into the corner and in one of my all time biggest mark out moments, Shawn grabs the ropes and vaults up, landing behind Bret and kicking Bret's head off with Sweet Chin Music. The crowd pops and when I was watching live I JUMPED off my couch. Bret staggers up and Shawn kills him dead with another superkick to win his first and by far most famous world title.

Rating: B. Ok now this is going to draw some issues, but this match is not the masterpiece it's built up to be for multiple reasons. First and foremost, WAY too many rest holds. There are two ways you could make this better. First, make it 30 minutes. Second: drop the Iron Man aspect. Imagine if those near falls were at one fall to a finish. This would have been otherworldly.

Bret's lack of selling also kills this match badly. His arm was perfectly fine about 40 seconds after Shawn stopped working on it, making that whole 25 minutes TOTALLY POINTLESS. It's certainly a good match, but this needs to lose about 20-30 or even more than that minutes to work as well as it could.

Finally, this isn't even the best iron man match the company has ever had, at least not in the same universe as Rock vs. HHH. The reason that was better is simply that you had a reason to keep watching. Here it's way too dull with the rest holds and the sitting around for so long. Good match, but definitely not a classic or even great for that matter.

At first he's very reserved and stunned, but then Shawn celebrates like crazy to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. Looking back, there's really very little to this show. You have an overly long six man, a non match, a squash, a midcard match that went nowhere, a solid match, and a main event that was 40 minutes too long. That adds up to very little in my eyes. Check out the last 20 minutes of the Iron Man, the Taker/Diesel match and if you're bored the first half of Piper/Goldust. There's just nothing special here.

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