

Monday Nitro – February 19, 2001: One More Funeral

Monday Nitro #278

Date: February 19, 2001

Location: Von Braun Civic Center, Huntsville, Alabama

Commentators: Scott Hudson, Tony Schiavone

At this point, I can't imagine they'll ever leave the southeast again. We're past SuperBrawl and as is far too often the case with pay per views, not a lot happened. Scott Steiner retired Kevin Nash which I'm sure means he won't be back whatsoever. We've got less than four weeks until Greed so this is the final time we'll start the build to a pay per view. Let's get to it.

We open with the pay per view recap.

There's some exclusive footage of Nash walking out and driving away from the arena last night. This is far too somber for someone who spent years trying to take over the company.

In the arena, there's a Kevin Nash RIP screen up and here are some people carrying a casket. After they get to the ring, the Magnificent Seven come out in suits (with titles of course) as it's time for a funeral. Flair says we're here tonight to bid farewell to a man who walked as a giant amidst titans. Nash was a once in a lifetime athlete and now his career has come to an end because the Magnificent Seven struck last night.

Now there's no one to stand against them at all because no one can handle Scott Steiner. Scott says they'll do whatever it takes to succeed because he's the man making history. They're heels in case they haven't spelled it out well enough for you. We get the same list of people that Scott has destroyed and sent to the hospital but apparently they're all scared to come back. As Steiner talks about each victim, the RIP graphic changes appropriately. Scott was willing to let Nash live out the rest of his life at a nice retirement home but then Nash put his hands on the freak.

Now there's one man left for Scott to go after and he's going to show us who that is. The casket is opened and it's Kanyon dressed as Diamond Dallas Page. Tonight Buff is going to beat up Cat, Jarrett is going to take out Dustin Rhodes and Kanyon can hurt Page but make sure to leave Scott a little piece. Cue Page through the crowd to say he'll take care of Kanyon tonight and then get his hands on Steiner at Greed.

Miss Jones congratulates Cat for becoming Commissioner again. To celebrate, Cat makes the Cruiserweight Tag Team Titles and the tournament to crown the first champions starts next week. Well they might as well give the three teams something to fight over to make it seem like they're getting somewhere.

Jamie Knoble vs. Shannon Moore

Evan Karagias is here with Knoble. They start fast with some quick headscissors until Shannon misses a charge in the corner. Jamie gets two off a northern lights suplex as the announcers actually talk about the match for a change of pace. A running leg lariat in the corner staggers Jamie and knocks him out to the floor for a big flip dive. Shannon dropkicks him into Evan, who is knocked into the steps. Like almost any wrestler would, Evan blames Knoble and decks him from behind, allowing Shannon to hit Bottoms Up for the pin.

Rating: C. More of the same here but at least they might be mixing up the teams a little bit. I can go for the idea of some new teams going into the tournament but it would be nice if they had some new talent instead of the same six guys fighting over and over again. Shannon has been growing on me in the last few weeks and his ring work has been making him stand out, which says a lot given who he has around him.

Konnan and Kidman are ready to take out Animal and Chavo tonight. They don't want Road Warrior Animal style though. Instead let's do it Filthy Animals style.

Mike Awesome vs. Bryan Clarke

Fallout from Awesome dressing up like Clarke last night, though I thought Clarke was still injured. They slug it out to start with Clarke getting

the better of it, though he keeps looking over his shoulder. As you would expect, Elix Skipper runs in but gets slammed down with ease. Lance Storm comes in as well and that's enough for the DQ.

Team Canada beats Bryan down until Brian Adams comes out for the save.

After a break, Team Canada is still in the ring when Cat and Miss Jones (in a completely different outfit than earlier) come out. It's time for Storm to pay for his crimes as Commissioner so Cat is giving him a match. If Storm doesn't fight, he can go make pancakes in Canada because he'll be fired.

Kid Romeo is coming. Or coming back as he was around a little over a year ago.

Chavo Guerrero Jr./Animal vs. Konnan/Billy Kidman

Animal and Konnan start fighting in the back after Chavo has come to the ring. Kidman, in a black shirt for a change, runs in from behind to jump Chavo and we take a break with no bell. We come back to see Chavo and Kidman brawling with referees not being able to break it up. Konnan and Animal come down the ramp and the match actually starts with Chavo hitting a tornado DDT on Kidman.

I'm assuming the match started somewhere during the break as Konnan does Chris Jericho's springboard dropkick to knock Chavo off the apron. Things settle down with Kidman elbowing Chavo in the face and handing it off to Konnan for a reverse standing Figure Four with both arms tied up. That's certainly different. Animal makes a save because he's Animal and doesn't do a lot of wrestling, allowing Chavo to take over in the corner.

Konnan gets in his rolling lariat so Kidman can come back in. Everything breaks down and some double teaming puts Animal on the floor and Konnan completely botches his faceplant on Chavo. You can hear the crowd going awkwardly silent as they seem stunned that Konnan can't sit down properly. The big guys fight on the floor as Rey Mysterio runs in for a What's Up legdrop to Chavo, setting up the Kid Crusher to give Kidman the pin.

Rating: C. Chavo continues to look good in the ring and putting him in there with Kidman is only going to produce even more great stuff. I wasn't wild on Rey coming in for the cheating as it takes some of the steam out of Kidman's win, as well as doesn't fit someone like Rey in general. Still though, not a bad match here with Konnan actually working hard to make up for Animal not even trying.

In case you thought something of Kidman there, Animal powerbombs him into oblivion. Animal never was legally in the match which keeps making me wonder why he has this spot. Was Team Canada so important that they couldn't put Mike Awesome in his same spot?

Buff Bagwell vs. The Cat

Before the match, Cat offers Bagwell a chance to leave Flair's team and come back to the good side. Bagwell considers it before hitting Cat in the face to take over. Cat comes back with some chops to the throat but gets caught in a swinging neckbreaker for two. It's already off to the chinlock but Buff stops to strut instead. We hit the second chinlock and Cat looks like he's nodded off.

Some clotheslines cut off the comeback and it's BACK TO THE CHINLOCK. We're not even five minutes in and it's already the third chinlock. At what point do you just realize Buff has nothing else to offer? Buff dives into raised feet and it's time for some kicks. Cue Kanyon so Miss Jones gets on the apron, only to allow Buff to get in the double arm DDT (with Cat landing on his hands). The Blockbuster puts Cat away for the pin.

Rating: D-. Again: five minutes and three chinlocks. Bagwell gets lazier and lazier every single time he's in the ring but at least he's had some good matches before. I don't ever remember Cat doing anything above bad. If that chinlock is the best they can do, cut this off and put on a Norman the Lunatic match instead as you might get some chuckles as a result.

Jones gets a Kanyon Cutter post match. Cat fights them off but I can't imagine we'll be seeing Jones again, which is a shame.

Post break Jones is taken away in an ambulance.

US Title: Rick Steiner vs. Lash Leroux

Steiner is defending and quickly takes Lash outside for a whip into the barricade. This looks like one of those matches where Rick seems more ticked off than usual. A Steiner Line almost takes Lash's head off as the fans accurately call this boring. Steiner throws him down with a release German suplex before ripping at his face. Another Steiner Line and three Steiner Drivers complete Lash's destruction.

Rating: F. Yes we get it. Rick Steiner is the most amazingly tough wrestler of all time and we're supposed to be interested in seeing him beat people up really hard. For some reason he's the US Champion despite not drawing a dime in years and barely associating with his brother, which would be almost the only possible way for people to be interested in him.

Lash is checked out by medics post break.

Scott Steiner gives Kanyon his brass knuckles to use on Page later. Page isn't making it to Thunder.

Hugh Morrus wants to fight Rick Steiner for personal revenge but his match with Storm tonight is about pleasure.

Lance Storm vs. Hugh Morrus

Team Canada is barred from ringside. Storm says he doesn't care who he's fighting tonight because he was born to wrestle. Morrus can't get him into a test of strength to start so the referee says they have 6:30. They trade chops until Morrus knocks him outside with a clothesline. Back in and a fall away slam looks to set up No Laughing Matter, only to have Storm take him down and possibly hurt the knees.

Morrus gets back up and catapults Storm into the buckle but can't follow up. A trip to the floor lets Morrus take over again and he splashes Storm in the corner for good measure. Storm superkicks him down and grabs the Mapleleaf, only to get slammed and hit with No Laughing Matter for the pin.

Rating: D+. The feud had lost any of its heat at this point but it was

nice to see them actually stick with Morrus as a big deal who can win matches on his own for a change. Storm is in a really weird place at the moment as he was Commissioner for six days but is now losing most of his matches without putting up much of a fight. It could have been a worse match but Morrus winning made more sense.

Here's Jeff Jarrett dressed as Dusty Rhodes (including a very stuffed shirt and jeans) for a bad comedy impression. Jeff, in a borderline good Dusty, talks about how he's here to save WCW and says no one can beat Dustin when his daddy is in his corner. Unfortunately there's no way he can beat the Chosen One because Dustin (the fruit of his loins, which Jarrett says about ten times) just isn't good enough.

Jarrett calls in some young wrestlers for an exhibition, which means slow motion elbows. Jeff falls down and can't get up as the announcers treat this as some horrible idea. One of the guys gets Shattered Dreams until Dustin comes out, only to have Rick Steiner follow and beat Dustin down. Jeff guitars him and the villains stand tall. This went on and on and wasn't that funny, mainly because it's about Dusty Rhodes in 2001.

The announcers pay tribute to Dale Earnhardt, who passed away the day before.

Kanyon vs. Diamond Dallas Page

Page goes right after him to start and knocks Kanyon outside, meaning it's time for a brawl in the crowd. That only leads to some brawling before they get inside again with Kanyon bailing to the corner to avoid a Diamond Cutter. Kanyon comes back with a middle rope faceplant for two and a Russian legsweep gets the same. Page is sent into the corner for a middle rope Fameasser and it's off to the chinlock. The fans chant for Page in one of the few genuine reactions of the night.

Page fights up and gets a belly to back suplex to put both guys down for some of the loudest spot calling I've heard in a long time. The discus lariat drops Kanyon but he's still able to get out of the Diamond Cutter. The Kanyon Cutter gets two and the Positively Page book (which clearly has a brick inside) gets the same. Kanyon loads up the knuckles but walks into the Diamond Cutter for the pin.

Rating: C+. I know Page doesn't have the best reputation around this time but he's by far and away the most consistent main event star of this last year. He just has good matches with anyone you put him out there against and that's so valuable to have. Above all else though the fans still care about him and that's more important than almost anything anyone can do in the ring.

Post match Scott Steiner leads the troops out but Page is smart enough to bail into the crowd to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. That middle portion is the usual death but there was enough good stuff in here to easily carry things for a week. Greed has some potential but the big story would seem to be who comes after Page to challenge Scott for the title. The announcers were talking about the Cat and Dustin Rhodes, who are somehow two of the top three faces in the company at this point. This place needs star power and it needs it in a hurry. I still think Sean O'Haire could have been something but he's just too young at this point. Maybe in fifteen years or so.

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Monday Nitro – February 12, 2001: Not This Again

Monday Nitro #277

Date: February 12, 2001

Location: Mississippi Coast Coliseum, Biloxi, Mississippi

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Scott Hudson

It's the go home show for SuperBrawl and it's probably not a good sign that they're in Mississippi for the second week in a row. We're set for the pay per view and the card isn't exactly thrilling but you can see how we got there for the most part, which is a lot better than some of the shenanigans we've put up with from WCW over the years. Let's get to it.

Rick Steiner vs. Dustin Rhodes

This is joined in progress as the show opens and I'm assuming the title isn't on the line. The Cat has allowed Dustin to wrestle here and it's very strange to see him in a singlet. Flair comes out and says this isn't happening. Ric threatens to have security take him out but it seems to be an excuse to have Steiner jump him from behind. I don't think you can really call this a match and the "action" wasn't even a minute long.

Dustin is told to leave because he'll never work here again. Ric gets in the ring with Rick, Animal and Sanders to brag about how much power he has. Cue the Cat for the same argument these two two have every single week. Apparently Dustin is reinstated (Was he ever instated in the first place?) but Flair makes Cat vs. Lance Storm for the Commissionership right now with Sanders as guest referee. Thank goodness he has a referee shirt under his suit.

Before the match we go to a break and come back with Chavo Guerrero Jr. yelling at Flair about the El Nino stuff last week. Ric promises that he'll get revenge before SuperBrawl.

The Cat vs. Lance Storm

Cat kicks him down to start and does a little dance before uppercutting Sanders for fun. He loads up the dancing elbow but Sanders decks him instead, only to have Cat DDT them both at the same time. An elbow drop gets two with Cat making Sanders slap the mat but he's not the Rock so an elbow doesn't work. The Feliner drops Storm and Cat tries to steal the referee shirt, allowing Storm to hit the superkick and put on the Mapleleaf for the quick non-submission because that's the only screwy thing in this match.

The Magnificent Seven comes down to celebrate and they all get together to beat on Cat. Before anything can happen though, Nash pops up on screen to say he wouldn't do that. Ric says he has all the bases covered but Nash isn't so sure. The camera pans back to show a beaten up David Flair with tape on his mouth. Wait we're doing the Flair father/son thing again?

Since he's in charge tonight, Nash wants Storm vs. Cat for the commissionership at SuperBrawl. Flair agrees, so Nash wants Dustin Rhodes vs. Rick Steiner for Dustin's job tonight, and if Dustin wins then Nash gets a World Title shot against Scott Steiner tonight. The threat of a left hand to David forces Ric to make the matches and he promises to smooth this over with Scott.

During the break, Ric sends Sanders to find Dustin.

Totally Buff offer O'Haire and Palumbo spots on the team so the Magnificent Seven (thereby making it nine) so they can have all the gold.

Sanders finds Dustin but he's not interested in saving David's skin.

Dustin: "Now go on, git! GIT!"

Lash Leroux vs. Yang

The winner is in the #1 contenders match at SuperBrawl. Yang's kicks confuse Lash to start so it's time for the Crane Kick to knock Lash around even more. Lash is sent into the corner for another running kick to send him outside but Yang holds off on the dive. The second attempt takes Lash down though, followed by a moonsault to floor Lash again. Back in and Lash powerslams him for two, only to miss a frog splash.

A quick ankle scissors puts Lash on the floor but he comes right back in with a slingshot clothesline (looked good too) for two. Lash drives in a knee lift and you can see how dark the top of the arena really is. Yang comes back with a tornado DDT but can't cover. Instead it's Lash up first with a pumphandle into a sitout powerbomb for two more. Whiplash gets the same so Yang runs to the top for a moonsault press and a near fall of his own. A Regal Roll sets up Yang Time (which mostly hits Lash's head) to give Yang the pin and the spot on the pay per view.

Rating: B-. Lash was in over his head here but he was able to hang in there well enough to make this work. Above all else though, this got an unthinkable nine minutes, giving it a chance to actually go somewhere. Yang winning was the right call though it's getting more and more obvious that we're heading towards the Dragons vs. 3 Count again in that six way on Sunday because that's where they belong, likely opening the show again as well.

Sanders tells Ric that he's negotiating with Dustin but that's not what the boss wants to hear.

Dustin agrees to the match tonight if he gets a title shot against Rick on Sunday if he wins.

Shawn Stasiak says he's going to prove he carried Palumbo to the titles.

Diamond Dallas Page gives Cat a pep talk.

Ric has Animal hold Sanders up by the throat until Sanders says it's taken care of. Dustin's demand isn't mentioned.

Video on the Steiner Brothers reuniting.

Dustin Rhodes vs. Rick Steiner

Non-title. It's a slugout to start and Tony is SHOCKED that Rick was dropped with a flying clothesline. Like, how could a former US Champion do damage to Rick Steiner? The Steiner Line gets two on Dustin which is a lot more realistic of course. They head outside with Rick being sent into the barricade but he doesn't have time to sell. Back in and Rick slaps on a reverse chinlock before ripping at Dustin's face and ripping open his

nose.

We hit a chinlock because Rick is already spent after so much effort. Even that looks lazy but it still manages to get two armdrops, only to have Rick blast him with a Steiner Line for two. Back up and Dustin accidentally headbutts the referee, meaning there's no one to count the cover off Dustin's bulldog. Cue Animal to knock Dustin into a belly to belly but here's Shane Douglas to hit Rick with his cast. Dustin grabs a DDT for the pin and the title shot.

Rating: D-. Rick Steiner is just so bad and it's getting harder and harder to watch him every single week. Dustin was Dustin Rhodes instead of the interesting character he was capable of being but that doesn't make for anything interesting. Shane Douglas becoming a face isn't the most interesting idea either, which is likely why we're seeing it happen.

Post match Rick and Animal break Shane's good arm with Dustin's save attempt failing.

Scott Steiner isn't happy with what Ric has done and says he's doing things his way.

Billy Kidman vs. Elix Skipper

This should be good and it's another qualifying match for Sunday's six way. Kidman dropkicks him into the corner as we get a graphic saying SuperBrawl is in six days. I've always liked that as WWE would have you believe that the pay per views are on Monday when Cole says the show is in two or three weeks on Raw.

Skipper takes over to start and stomps a bit as the fans chant USA. Kidman's cross body misses completely as Skipper pulls out the Matrix move for a sweet counter. Skipper heads up top and gets powerbombed back down for two and both guys are a bit gassed. A reverse suplex gets two for Kidman and he reverses the Overdrive (Play of the Day) into the Kid Crusher for the quick pin.

Rating: C+. As usual the cruiserweights are putting on the best matches of the night and for a change they're actually getting a bit of time.

Unfortunately it doesn't matter if this doesn't lead anywhere because it's the same cruiserweight stuff we've seen for years with no one actually being elevated. That's one of so many of WCW's problems over the years and this is no exception.

Hugh Morrus is told he gets the Wall at SuperBrawl so he issues a challenge for a tag match on Thunder: Morrus/Mysterio vs. Wall/Chavo. I know it's not much but that's a simple, logical story and a match that makes sense.

Scott Steiner beats up a backstage worker for not knowing where Nash is.

Ric is on the phone with his wife and promising to find David.

Video on Kanyon and Diamond Dallas Page.

Shawn Stasiak vs. Chuck Palumbo

It's a bad idea to have Palumbo be the one that is going to be carrying the match. Stasiak is knocked to the floor to start and a fall away slam gets two for Chuck back inside. A not great looking gutwrench slam gets two for Stasiak and Palumbo gets the same off a small package. Stasiak bulldogs Palumbo onto his leg (another botch as Stasiak isn't great in the ring) sets up a neckbreaker for two.

We hit the choking for a few seconds as the announcers speculate about where David Flair might be held hostage. Stasiak charges into a boot and gets caught in an Alabama Slam for two more. Chuck tunes up the jungle but gets caught and turned into an awful looking rollup with the referee not being sure if he should count or not. Clearly that was going to be the ending as Stasiak grabs a quick rollup and hooks the trunks for the pin.

Rating: D. This right here summed up the issue with the Natural Born Thrillers in a nutshell: they were generic wrestlers and not very good in the ring. Neither guy here did anything special to make them stand out and they were both just guys in trunks. It also doesn't help that neither has anything resembling a character or a personality and it shows more and more every time. Oh and there were several botches here because they

weren't much to see in the ring either.

Post match Stasiak says that proves he carried Palumbo.

Here's Diamond Dallas Page in a Sopranos shirt with something to say. He's ready for Jeff Jarrett at SuperBrawl but he has to talk about Kanyon. Page isn't happy with Kanyon stealing all of his stuff so it's time for Kanyon to learn that no one steals nothing (his words) from DDP. He's ready for Kanyon anywhere, anytime. Instead here's Jeff Jarrett to say he's ready for Sunday. Page wants to fight right now but first he has to fight off a sneaking Kanyon. The distraction lets Jeff come in with a guitar shot and the Stroke to leave Page laying.

WCW World Title: Scott Steiner vs. Kevin Nash

In case you just couldn't wait to pay for it on Sunday. Nash is challenging and brings David Flair out with him for a right hand to the face. Ric comes out to get his son but Nash powerbombs David first. They start fast with Nash sending him into the turnbuckle before the bell rings. A clothesline gets two and unfortunately Scott puts together the fact that Nash is getting a shot in Nashville.

We cut to the back to see Ric sending the troops out despite promising that there would be no interference. Steiner posts Nash to take over and it's time to choke and shout a lot. Cue the two factions to fight on the way to the ring as things stay even. A side slam gets two for Nash and there go the straps but Ric comes in for the DQ.

Rating: D-. No surprise here as they kept promising no interference and you always go with what they promise not to happen. I've never gotten the idea of having a match on Monday and then asking people to pay for it on Sunday, especially when it's the same match we're going to be seeing with no changes whatsoever. They could still change something on Thunder, or knowing WCW, they'll change it at the pay per view and blame the fans for being annoyed.

Ric takes the Jackknife but Steiner destroys Nash's knee with a pipe to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. The cruiserweights tried tonight and almost pulled off the minor miracle of saving this show. However, there's only so much you can do when you're up against this much bad. The David Flair stuff isn't interesting as he and Ric have turned on each other so many times over the years that it's hard to care about. Page vs. Kanyon is good, partially due to Page's natural charisma and ability to make anything seem somewhat interesting. Other than that though, this is another show where you can see a lot of the holes that need filling in a hurry.

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Thunder – October 11, 2000: I Don't Want To Jump Off A Cliff

Thunder

Date: October 11, 2000

Location: Entertainment Centre, Brisbane, Australia

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Tony Schiavone, Stevie Ray

We're still down in Australia for a show that was taped right after Nitro. Monday's show was an improvement but it's hard to say how well that's going to carry over because this company has the consistency of a broken roller coaster. Halloween Havoc is in a few weeks and most of the

card is already set though so let's get to it.

Scott Steiner and Jeff Jarrett yell at Shawn Stasiak, telling him to tell Sanders that Steiner wants Booker tonight. Of all the people you could tell this to, you pick Shawn Stasiak?

Shane Douglas/Lance Storm vs. Konnan/General Rection

Fallout from the Down Underwear match on Monday. Before the match, Douglas and Torrie rip on the Australians for being wannabe Americans. 0 Canada is interrupted by the Misfits theme, which is quite the downgrade. The good guys rush the ring and clean house before we get going. Douglas and Konnan slug it out in the corner to start but Storm sneaks in with a blind tag, setting up a springboard cross body to drop Konnan in a nice move.

The heels take turns on Konnan with Shane nailing a nice basement dropkick. You would have thought Storm would use that spot. Gunns offers a quick trip though and a double clothesline puts Storm and Konnan down. We get a good looking catfight as Rection comes in off the hot tag. Rection's top rope elbow gets two on Storm with Shane using a reverse Hennig necksnap for the save. Cue Kidman for a Kid Crusher to Shane, setting up No Laughing Matter for the pin.

Rating: C. Storyline advancement, Kidman, a three way catfight and some good looking stuff from Storm and Douglas. What more can you ask for from a short tag match between two midcard storylines? If I didn't know any better, I'd think WCW was actually being booked somewhat well.

Mike Sanders is singing Tie Me Kangaroo Down Sport (obviously an Outback Jack fan) when Stasiak comes in to explain Steiner's demands. Booker gets a non-title match tonight (not necessarily against Steiner) and a quick argument breaks out over a stuffed kangaroo.

Here's the Cat to talk to Australian martial arts champion Sam Greco. Sam admits that most people don't know who he is but he'll fight anyone that WCW puts in front of him. Cue the Thrillers, with Sanders saying Cat can't hire anyone. Cat: "I hired your mom last night." Sanders is annoyed so Cat gives him Stevie Ray tonight, which forces him to make Cat vs.

Kevin Nash. We're still not done yet though as Cat changes the match to Sanders vs. Sting. Greco kicks Sanders down and that's supposed to be his big introduction. Tank Abbott he is not.

Jindrak and O'Haire don't have much to say to Sanders.

Tag Team Titles: Sean O'Haire/Mark Jindrak vs. Lieutenant Loco/Corporal Cajun

Jindrak and O'Haire are defending and start beating up the much smaller guys in a hurry. Loco is thrown across the ring and clotheslined down. The Misfits come right back with DDT's, only to have Sean plant Loco with a tilt-a-whirl slam. The hurricanrana into the Seanton gets two with Chavo making the save, setting up a Frog splash for two on Sean. Leroux grabs a hurricanrana of his own for the very quick pin on Jindrak for the titles in a big surprise.

Rating: C. They kept this one moving fast in the smartest move of the night as Chavo and Leroux are only so interesting even when they're at their highest speed. O'Haire and Jindrak are a good, young team and it's really no surprise that they lose in a nothing match like this to a low level team.

Not so fast though as Sanders comes out and says the rematch is RIGHT NOW.

Tag Team Titles: Lieutenant Loco/Corporal Cajun vs. Sean O'Haire/Mark Jindrak

A quick double rollup gets two on the new champs and Sean superkicks Chavo. Lash dives back in with a high cross body for two, followed by a botched sunset flip for the same. All four stay in the ring and we get an awkward sequence where Sean brings in a belt but watches Jindrak get sunset flipped again for two more before hitting Lash in the head to turn a hurricanrana into a powerbomb. That's still not it though as Chavo makes the save but gets knocked out, setting up the Seanton for the pin to give the Thrillers the titles back. Too short to rate but as usual the title change doesn't mean much.

AWOL comes out to fight the champs.

Elix Skipper brags about being an Olympian and wants Kidman later tonight.

Kronik vs. Booker T.

Non-title. Before the match Booker does some good sucking up to the fans. Well what else is a face champion supposed to do? The beatdown is on in a hurry with Kronik beating Booker down like he's any given jobber. It's not like titles mean anything anyway right? The full nelson slam looks to set up High Times but here's Goldberg through the crowd to spear Clark. Adams almost gets a full nelson slam on Goldberg but eats a superkick from Booker as the match is thrown out. Well that was pointless.

Chuck Palumbo is on the phone with someone who might be his mom and asks for advice against Goldberg.

Johnny the Bull tells an arriving Nash that Sanders is having problems but Nash doesn't seem worried.

Kidman vs. Elix Skipper

This could be fun and Duggan is with Skipper. Kidman pounds away to start and dives onto Duggan with a nice plancha. Back in and Kidman misses a quick splash, allowing Skipper to stomp away. We get some CANADA SUCKS chants as Skipper misses a top rope elbow (drawing a Macho Man reference from Madden).

The Bodog gets two for Kidman and a quick BK Bomb gets the same. Kidman gets crotched and Skipper rope walks into a hurricanrana for a cool looking yet mostly screwed up spot. Not that it matters as Duggan gets in a board shot, setting up the Play of the Week (Wasn't it Play of the Day last time?) for the pin.

Rating: C-. I was expecting more here but they're doing a good job of building Skipper up as a player in the division. This makes him 1-1 against Mysterio and Kidman which is a lot better than a lot of people do. Just like so many cares before him though, it's likely that he winds

up doing nothing because the Cruiserweight Title is stuck in an angle instead of a feud but at least he isn't being wasted.

Palumbo confirms that he was indeed talking to his mom but lets it slip that she told him to run. WHY ARE YOU TREATING THE THRILLERS LIKE WORTHLESS COWARDS??? WCW spent all this time and effort to bring these guys up (years after they should have) and it's another excuse to waste them while making the old guys look strong. Yeah they've gotten the midcard titles that almost everyone has won over the years and haven't done anything for anyone but since it's WCW they do the same things over and over and over again and then wonder why it doesn't go anywhere.

It's time for an Australian Lava Lamp Lounge because this gimmick WILL get over no matter how dead it is. At least the set is a bit more festive this week with the Australian décor. Tonight's guests are Kwee Wee (not Kiwi Mike, though it would be easier to type) and Paisley and Mike gets right to hitting on her. Kwee Wee talks about training with the Thrillers and yells at Mike for the Paisley stuff, only to have the Thrillers and Harris Brothers come out for the weekly attack. Another week with the same stuff because WCW wants to make Mike Awesome look as stupid and worthless as possible.

Sanders tells Nash about his match with Sting tonight. So Nash wasn't watching the show either?

Goldberg vs. Chuck Palumbo

After the long entrance, Palumbo (looking very serious in yellow) tries a cheap shot with as much success as you would expect. Stasiak gets in a shot from the apron but Goldberg no sells a top rope shoulder. A spear drops both guys and Goldberg Jackhammers both of them for back to back pins, making the new streak 7-0. To be fair they had to do something to make this new one get higher in a hurry and this is as good as they can get.

Halloween Havoc video.

Sting vs. Mike Sanders

Non-title of course. Jarrett comes out dressed as Surfer Sting (again to Metallica) and points the bat at Sanders. Jeff talks about having no heart anymore and lays down, drawing out the real Sting to clean house. A Stinger Splash misses though and Sanders gets in a few bat shots followed by a dancing DiBiase falling punch. We hit a cobra clutch of all things until Sting makes the obvious comeback with three Stinger Splashes and a Death Drop for the easy pin. Good thing those baseball bat shots didn't have too much effect.

Post break Sanders yells at the Thrillers, even though he should be yelling at Jarrett for bailing so early. Then again, heels aren't supposed to make sense.

Harris Twins vs. Mike Awesome/Crowbar

Awesome gets beaten down by the Twins to start as the referee continues to not care about doing his job. Crowbar dropkicks both Twins out to the floor and the thrown together 70s team (the fact that Crowbar was one of the roster's hidden gems for so long and gets this as a reward sums up a lot of WCW's problems) getting the better of it early on.

Crowbar tries to speed things up a bit too much though until he charges into a Rock Bottom as everything breaks down. A nice wheelbarrow suplex (always liked that move) drops Ron but it's already table time. I'm not sure if I'd rather have a table involved or watch the Harris Brothers try to have a regular match. The table is set in the corner but Awesome counters a powerbomb with a backdrop to drive Ron through for the pin.

Rating: C-. The action was faster paced here but the important thing is the Twins losing. I know it isn't going to mean anything long term but at least a team of two talented guys who work hard got a win over one of the least interesting acts in the company. Maybe that's just dumb luck or maybe it's Russo being gone. Either way, at least it was the right call.

Rey Mysterio vs. Scott Steiner

We get a few rhymes from Steiner about how awesome he is with the ladies. For some reason Stevie says that watching BET at night doesn't mean you're going to win. Tony: "Tygress, you got it girl." Steiner knees Rey

in the ribs to start and we're already in squash mode. If it's good enough for the Jung Dragons, squashing Rey isn't much of a stretch of course. I mean, all cruiserweights are the same right?

Rey tries to speed things up but gets his head taken off by a clothesline. Steiner throws him over the top but Rey hangs on, allowing him to drop a springboard legdrop to break up the pushups. A hurricanrana staggers Steiner again...and he throws Rey down with a suplex to take over again. Something like an Angle Slam from the middle rope sets up the Recliner to end this squash.

Rating: D. I get the idea here but there has to be someone besides Mysterio that you could put into this spot. Normally this should have been Lash Leroux but for some reason we already saw him twice tonight. You can't find anyone else other than the most successful cruiserweight the company has ever had to take this beating? No one at all? With the roster WCW had they didn't have three schnooks to put out there and get squashed in a handicap match?

Kevin Nash vs. The Cat

Oh wait as here's Mike Sanders because we haven't seen him enough.

Stevie: "When is he going to defend that belt?" Tony announcers Nitro and Thunder in England next month but Stevie doesn't want to go. Did he turn heel and I missed it? Sanders sits in on commentary in a holdover Russo trope but pops up to the apron for an early distraction. You know, because Kevin Nash needs help against The Cat.

Nash does his usual slow offense in the corner while throwing in some trash talk. Now it's Nash offering a test of strength but getting kicked in the ribs for a surprise knockdown. I'm stunned Nash actually bumped for that. Another karate shot stuns Nash but he kicks Cat in the face. There go the straps but Sanders comes in with a chair to knock Cat out for absolutely no apparent reason.

Booker comes out to save Cat from a powerbomb through the chair. This brings out Steiner which brings out Sting which brings out Jarrett. The heels dominate until Goldberg comes out, only to have Kronik run in and give Goldberg High Times to end the show. One note here: for the last few

weeks they've had a Halloween Havoc countdown come on screen a few times a show. It's a good idea to keep fans thinking about this but also letting them know that they're running out of time to order the show. I wish more companies would do this today as it can't take more than a few buttons to get it on screen.

Overall Rating: D+. Again, better show here as the problems that have been plaguing the shows are still there but they're toned way down. They need to cut out the dueling authority figures nonsense and stop with the quick title changes but the show doesn't feel as chaotic. It doesn't make me want to throw the remote at the screen anymore and is now just more of a show with a lot of problems instead of a show flying off a cliff. That's something, right?

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Thunder – January 19, 2000: All Hands On Deck

Thunder

Date: January 19, 2000

Location: Roberts Memorial Stadium, Evansville, Indiana

Attendance: 2,726

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Mike Tenay, Bobby Heenan

The big story at the moment is how a huge chunk of the midcard and the World Champion are all gone due to Kevin Sullivan being part of the new booking committee. In addition to the talent leaving due to Sullivan, it also means that the show has gone from going 200 miles per hour to about 20 miles per year as the show has slowed way down and gotten a good deal more boring. Let's get to it.

There's a closed door meeting taking place.

The NWO arrives.

Tag Team Titles: David Flair/Crowbar vs. Mamalukes

The mafia guys are challenging and Disco sits in on commentary. Vito and David get things going with Young Naitch getting knocked into the corner with ease. I know Crowbar is crazy but how did he consent to letting Flair start? David comes back with some shoulders to the ribs in the corner, only to get nailed in the throat for his efforts. Crowbar dives over the top to take the Mamalukes down and gets two off a cross body.

That goes nowhere as Vito comes back with a delayed suplex, but only after he jogs around the ring while holding Crowbar in the air. Off to Johnny who eats a double clothesline but comes right back with a spinning kick to the head. Everything breaks down and Crowbar powerslams Vito down and drops a top rope splash for two with Johnny making a save. A Lionsault (minus the running start) gets the same as this is basically a handicap match. David gets the crowbar but the Mamalukes kick Crowbar into him (and the bar), setting up the spinning Impaler DDT from Vito for the pin and the titles.

Rating: D. I like the result but not the method they used to get there. It's very nice to see the titles go to a team that could actually work some decent matches, but the match that got them there was pretty much a mess. David just doesn't have what it takes to be on this level and it was showing every time they were in the ring. At least the Mamalukes, as mediocre as they are, can work well enough.

Nash talks to the cops.

Page and Kimberly arrive.

The Mamalukes want Disco to take someone out.

Curt Hennig vs. Jim Duggan

Really? As I fathom the fact that these two are fighting in 2000, I took some time to see how many times these guys have fought. Believe it or not, they only have a few house show matches in the WWF and two Thunder matches. You would think these guys would have been a logical pairing at some point. Hennig answers something like an open challenge but doesn't have on wrestling gear, so Duggan calls him a chicken.

Curt McFly charges to the ring and gets slammed down but he snaps Jim's throat over the top rope. Some choking and a dropkick follow but Duggan just slugs away to come back. Ten punches in the corner are broken up by an eye poke but Hennig throws Duggan into the referee. You know I hadn't realized how few ref bumps there had been since Russo was gone. Hennig brings in the 2x4 but Duggan hits the referee by mistake, sending Hennig running away as Duggan's music plays. Huh?

It's 3 Count time!!! They do a letterboxed performance and now they even have a super fan in the form of Karate Norman Smiley. Evan, so overwhelmed by the music, charges at him but Norman feels the power and clotheslines him down. All three members are taken out and Norman is so fired up that he issues an open challenge. Cue Tank Abbott because we need to see him every week. Norman fails at using Dave Penzer as a human shield and goes down in one punch. I'm so glad the fans got excited over Smiley until he got knocked cold by Abbott because we haven't covered that yet.

Lash Leroux vs. Chavo Guerrero Jr. vs. Psychosis

Sometime tonight we should be getting a statement on Oklahoma and the Cruiserweight Title. Chavo goes after Psychosis to start with some chops as Lash just chills by the ropes. Psychosis escapes a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker before joining Chavo for a double clothesline. That's about

it for the working together as Chavo sends Psychosis into the corner and slams him down, followed by a dropkick to put Lash on the floor. Psychosis and Chavo slug it out but Lash gets back up and dives onto both guys to finally do something in the match.

Back up and Psychosis nails Chavo by mistake, followed by a backbreaker from Leroux. Psychosis is sent outside with Lash following him for a whip into the barricade. This time it's Chavo hitting the big dive to the floor and everyone is down. Back in again and Lash misses a dive, allowing Chavo to throw Psychosis to the floor. Whiplash is countered and Chavo nails the tornado DDT, only to have Psychosis comes back in with the guillotine legdrop to knock Chavo silly for the pin.

Rating: B-. Much like on Nitro, this was an old school fun cruiserweight match between three guys who should be fighting over the title instead of having Oklahoma hold it as a comedy bit. It's cool to see Psychosis win as well as he's an underrated talent, but the same could be said for Chavo. Either way, at least we got an entertaining match.

The Artist still won't sing.

The Artist Formerly Known As Prince Iaukea vs. Kidman

Kidman has his solo theme back instead of the Filthy Animals' song. Prince shoves him into the corner to start but gets reversed and beaten up. Paisley earns her paycheck by tripping Kidman so Artist can slam him down and snap a wishbone. This brings out Torrie for her big return as Kidman starts his comeback, only to springboard into a powerslam.

Back up and Kidman gets two off a rollup, only to have his comeback punched down. Another slam sets up something off the top rope but Prince slips going up and almost falls down. I know it happens with everyone, but given that it's Prince Iaukea I blame his lack of talent. Prince tries a springboard but Torrie pulls him down, allowing Kidman to hit the BK Bomb for the pin.

Rating: D+. Pull the plug on Iaukea already. He doesn't have it and this new character isn't masking the fact that he isn't that good. Yeah he can do basic stuff well enough but anything more than simple offense is a

chore for him. You have an army of talented cruiserweights on your roster and this is the best you can do? Kidman was his usual self here so there isn't much to say about him.

Terry Taylor is escorted to the ring. I wonder if he got an extension can can still have tailor made suits now that it's 2000.

Here's Taylor as the executive representative (at least it's someone who knows how to talk) to address the World Title situation. This coming Monday (because it has to be Monday and not at your next pay per view), there will be a match to determine the Undisputed World Heavyweight Champion. Commissioner Kevin Nash is going to get to pick one participant and the executive committee gets to pick the other. The committee's pick: Sid Vicious.

This brings out Nash to rip on Taylor a bit and says he's been reading the commissioner's handbook, which says he gets to make the matches. The fans chant for Goldberg and again Nash threatens to fire him. As lame as his matches are, at least Nash knows how to antagonize a crowd. This Monday, Sid can have his title shot...if he beats Jeff Jarrett. As for Nash's pick, of course it's himself. It wasn't specified but I'm assuming Jeff doesn't get the title shot if he beats Sid.

I'll give them points for adding in a crowd favorite in Sid and Nash makes sense as the villain, but they couldn't throw in a curveball here? You have a chance to make a brand new star to distract the fans from the fact that you just lost four young guys and you go with the safe route of Sid? I get the thinking behind it, but this would be a prime chance to pull the trigger on someone. They don't even have to win the title, but give the fans something to get excited over. Like, at SuperBrawl, not the show five days away.

Nash makes tonight's main event: Booker T./Big T. vs. Sid/Total Package. Ha that's good. Now what's the real main event?

Berlyn vs. The Wall

Time for the blowoff! Berlyn goes after him during the entrances but Wall, the giant monster, grabs a wristlock. Can we get someone to explain

the idea of psychology to these people? Berlyn comes back with a nip up and dropkick and the fans already think this is boring. Wall throws him to the floor and drops an elbow to the back but posts himself, allowing Berlyn to dive off the top to take him down.

The second attempt (this time from the apron) doesn't work as well and Wall throws him inside again. Get this match over with already. Back in and Berlyn tries to flip over Wall but doesn't get all the way, making the match look even worse. Wall drapes him over the top rope and nails a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker but the chokeslam is broken up by a rake of the eyes. Berlyn hits the ropes, eats a big boot and.....gets pinned?

Rating: D. So they established these guys as a team in September and have the horrible blowoff on a show no one is going to watch in January? That's the best thi....yeah this actually is the best they can do at this point. Terrible match here as there's no interest in either guy. They've managed to destroy so many members of the roster that there's no reason to get interested in almost anyone.

This Week In WCW Motorsports. Yes this is still a thing.

Here's Cruiserweight Champion Oklahoma as he continues to get to book himself into a spot for the sake of his own laughter. He brags about promising to bounce Madusa's silicone censored back to the kitchen and that's exactly what he did. After that win, Oklahoma has decided to vacate the title because there's nothing left for him to accomplish. This brings out Madusa to call Oklahoma a coward before saying she wants to start a women's division. Oklahoma starts his rebuttal but here's Sherri Martel of all people to attack Madusa.

So wait. We'll get to the match in a minute but I need a second here. Not only did Oklahoma set himself up to beat Madusa for the title, vacate it due to weighing 260lbs and cover her with barbecue sauce because making fun of Jim Ross is just oh so funny, but now Madusa is just being moved on to a new feud? In other words, the heel booker gets away with everything with his only comeuppance being the barbecue sauce after he won the title? Well of course it is.

Madusa vs. Sherri Martel

Miss Hancock comes out and sits on the announcers' table for some fan service. Sherri chokes a lot, Madusa comes back with clotheslines, Sherri goes up and slips, Madusa suplexes her down for the pin. The match lasted a minute.

Nash tells the NWO girls to massage him.

Fit Finlay vs. Jerry Flynn

Not hardcore surprisingly enough. Jerry chops him down to start and pulls Finlay away from the ropes because Fit is trying to hide for some reason. Finlay comes back with an uppercut and let's look at Buzzkill in the crowd because that's still going on. Fit knocks him down a few times and drops a middle rope knee and they head outside with Finlay hitting an uppercut.

A chair to the throat puts Jerry in even more trouble but here's Brian Knobbs with a kendo stick. Brian gets in some stick shots on Flynn but Jerry comes back with some kicks to Finlay. Knobbs goes to the apron with the stick but Finlay is sent into it instead, giving Flynn the fluke rollup pin.

Rating: F. It was slow, it was boring, it had Brian Knobbs and Jerry Flynn is getting a pin on television over someone like Fit Finlay. Flynn is similar to Tank Abbott: here's there for one reason and for some reason the company insists on pushing him, albeit slowly, no matter how boring he continues to be. Another bad match tonight.

Kanyon vs. Diamond Dallas Page

The Triad fallout continues. Kanyon says he's beaten Page over and over again now so there's nothing left to prove. This brings out Kimberly, who is offered a spot in Kanyon's entourage. Kimberly offers to think about it if the other girls leave. This brings Page through the crowd to get in some cheap shots to start things off. A suplex drops Kanyon and Page knocks him off the apron, setting up a Page dive to the floor.

Back in and Kanyon grabs a swinging neckbreaker (way too popular a move in WCW these days), followed by elbows and a chinlock. Page fights up and

they head outside again with Kanyon hitting a quick Fameasser onto the steps. A high cross body from Kanyon is rolled through for two for Page. They slug it out with Page taking over, only to walk into a pumphandle slam for two. Cue J. Biggs with the briefcase but Page knocks him off the apron. Kanyon dives into a powerbomb, setting up the Diamond Cutter for the pin.

Rating: C. Not bad here but you could see Page having the whole thing mapped out. Kanyon continues to be entertaining in almost everything he does and should be doing something better than just fighting Page and Bigelow all the time. The same is true of Page. He could be fighting for the US Title (along with a few other people) but he's just kind of here, going from match to match and never advancing.

Luger and Big T. talk backstage.

The NWO watches from their locker room.

Total Package/Sid Vicious vs. Booker T./Big T.

Oh this could be bad. Mr. T.'s offspring get in an argument to start and the fans chant for Ahmed. Eventually it's Big T. vs. Sid to start and T. wants a test of strength. Sid asks the audience if they want to see it, complete with the hand to the ear, but Big backs down. It's off to Booker as we've somehow eaten up two minutes of the match with no contact yet. Booker and Sid lock up, let go, and it's off to Luger.

Amazingly enough it's Luger with the first real contact of the match as he runs Booker over with a shoulder, only to have Booker knock him out to the floor. Nash is here to watch as Luger chokes Booker in the corner. We take a break and come back with Sid holding Booker in a chinlock. It's off to Luger who eats the running forearm, only to have Big T. slapjack him from the apron. Now, down 2-1, Big T. comes in and gets chokeslammed, leaving Luger to Rack the unconscious Booker for the submission.

Rating: D-. So to clarify, not only is Big T. fat and out of shape, but he's very stupid. Let's just get to the stupid angle that's coming with Harlem Heat so we can get Booker out of this and on to ANYTHING else because yet another Harlem Heat storyline can only go so far and we

passed that about a month ago.

Overall Rating: D+. This is an interesting look at how the new regime is going to go. First and foremost, the matches are getting more time. Several of these had 4-5 minutes, which is enough time to get the point across. I'd still like to cut out a match or two and extend the matches they already have, but at least they're letting the wrestlers tell a story and not have to fly through five plot points while trying to fit in some moves in between.

However, there's another side to the new bosses. WCW is so desperate for a new star but they're hanging on to the old guard as tight as they can. It should be all hands on deck to make someone into a star but instead we're getting Sid and Luger in the main events with Booker T. doing the job to advance the Harlem Heat feud.

Since they announced the title match for Monday, I've been trying to figure out who they could have put in that spot instead of Sid and there really aren't a lot of options. Assuming he's healthy, there's always Sting, but is that really where you want to go again, especially with Hogan out there somewhere? There's Vampiro, but my goodness that would be a jump. Kidman is a US Title level guy at best. That really just leaves Booker T., who is last seen out cold and being put in the Torture Rack because Luger and Sid are a team for no apparent reason.

So we're waiting to see if Sid is the guy that can carry the promotion? I'm assuming we'll get Sting and Hogan back soon enough, meaning it really is going to become even more of a good old boys network around here. I know the idea is to find someone steady, but that should be done while also building for the future, which WCW has never managed to do. Everyone young has been ground down to nothing for the sake of pushing old acts for a quick score. Above all else, that might be the biggest thing that lead to their downfall. It's really hard to care when the quality is going down and the champions get older every week.

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Starrcade 1999 (2015 Redo): Vince Russo Thinks You're Stupid

Starrcade 1999

Date: December 19, 1999

Location: MCI Center, Washington D.C.

Attendance: 8,582

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Scott Hudson, Bobby Heenan

We have arrived. We have reached the biggest show of the year for WCW. It's the final pay per view of the year and the final Starrcade of the 1990s. Over the years this show has been a showcase for legends like Sting, Ric Flair, Lex Luger and Hulk Hogan. There have been great matches, moments and shows in general, many of which have been some of WCW's best shows of all time. Now, forget everything I just said, because this is going to be one of the biggest disasters in the history of.....I would say professional wrestling but that has nothing to do with what I'm about to sit through. Let's get to it.

We open with a Scott Hudson narrated highlight package to preview the card. Up first in the package: the Revolution vs. Jim Duggan/his mystery partners. I'm pretty sure every match gets some time here, but my

goodness they aren't off to a rousing start by making me think about all of the impending disasters.

Now we get a standard opening video, focusing on the powerbomb match and then the World Title match.

Disco Inferno/Lash Leroux vs. Big Vito/Johnny the Bull

Disco lost a lot of money gambling (which I don't think he ever paid back) to the Mafia so Don boss Tony Marinara sent Big Vito and Johnny the Bull after him. Lash helped Disco out and basically started a war against the mob, setting up this tag match. It's also probably the match that has gotten the most build on the card. Normally I would ask why a match like this is opening the show, but the more I think about it, what else do they have?

It's a brawl to start with Vito punching Lash down early on. A nice suplex drops Lash again and Vito nails a good looking superkick. Heenan gets in another of his lines that are open to interpretation as he wonders why the people in the back are so quiet. Off to Johnny who eats a dropkick from Lash and a clothesline from Disco for one.

Disco stomps away in the corner but Johnny sweeps the leg (because he's the best in town) to take over. Vito scores with a hard running clothesline and Johnny's swinging neckbreaker gets two. We hit the chinlock for a bit before something like a double powerbomb plants Disco again. Vito spends too much time mocking the crowd on the ropes though and hits the mat, allowing the hot tag to Lash.

Everything breaks down and the goons are dropped with clotheslines. A gorilla press drop puts Lash down but he avoids a top rope spinning legdrop. Disco hits a top rope splash for two but Vito comes off the top to break up the save (granted the really slow count made it a bit easier). Vito reverses a whip from Lash and sends him into the Last Dance from Disco by mistake, setting up Vito's spinning DDT for the pin.

Rating: C. Totally acceptable tag match here, but I have a feeling we've just seen the match of the night. It's the old power vs. speed formula which has worked for the better part of ever and worked here as well. The

story made sense and was actually different for a change, but this could have been on almost any given Nitro. Still though, totally acceptable.

Post match Disco gets beaten up and thrown in the body bag, along with a bottle of ether. The mob takes him back to the parking lot and throw him in their car to take them away.

Goldberg vs. Hart is No DQ. If that was the stipulation beforehand, I haven't heard of it.

Scott Hall is out of the US Title match due to a knee injury so Benoit is the champion.

The announcers run their mouths to fill time on a show with 13 matches. Keep in mind that this is coming after a backstage segment. Not only is it boring for the PPV audience, but it's letting the crowd come down after a decent opener.

Cue Chris Benoit to say he doesn't want the title this way, so it's officially vacant. However, he'll still have the ladder match against anyone that wants to face him for the title.

Cruiserweight Title: Madusa vs. Evan Karagias

Evan is defending and Madusa offered sex to get this show. After she earned the shot, Evan dumped Madusa for Nitro Girl Spice, making this just another title match but with man on woman violence because Russo is obsessed with this idea. Madusa dives off the top to take out Evan and Spice before sending him into the barricade. They head inside where Evan slaps her in the face and plants her with a powerslam, only to miss a Lionsault.

Madusa dropkicks him down but gets slammed off the top. A powerbomb puts Madusa down for two so Madusa powerbombs him right back. They head outside with Evan diving onto Madusa, but Spice gets on the apron to distract the champ. It's just a ruse for the worst low blow ever, setting up Madusa's German suplex for the pin and the title.

Rating: D-. So not only did they have a swerve, they had only the bare bones of a match as this was nothing more than a spot fest with no flow

to it. Yeah Mysterio and Guerrera would do a bunch of spots, but at least they knew how to make them exciting. This was less than four minutes long and more about the fact that Madusa is a woman. In other words, they were trying to recreate Chyna without putting in the effort of building her up in DX all those years. That's Russo's philosophy: just go to the end goal without putting in any of the work and then blame the fans for not caring.

On the storyline front, let's recap what just happened to Evan: he was duped into giving Madusa the shot by the offer of sex, then Madusa won the title shot again in a triple threat, then Evan got pinned on Thunder for no apparent reason, then the other woman, who was involved in this story to distract Evan, turned on him to give Madusa the title for no reason other than to mess with Evan, who made the mistake of being a champion and going after a pretty girl who seemed interested in him. Oh and Madusa hit cheated to win the title. I'm not sure if she was the face or the heel here, but I'm sure WCW didn't know either.

Norman Smiley is dressed up like a Washington Redskin for his match with Meng. He certainly isn't scared and ignore the scream when the producer tries to count him out of the interview. Sudden moves like that just are not necessary when Norman is a coiled spring ready to explode! Ignore the fact that the Hardcore Title is practically identical to the ECW Title.

Hardcore Title: Meng vs. Norman Smiley

Norman the coward is defending. They throw weapons at each other to start before Meng shoves the cart full of weapons runs Norman over. It's in the back without Norman ever making it to the ring and Norman blasts him in the head with the chair for almost no effect. Norman runs away through catering before Meng slams him through a table.

Meng throws a cinder block at his head but Norman avoids the whole death thing. Smiley dives behind some boxes to hide, allowing Finlay and Brian Knobbs to come up and beat Meng down. Well kind of as Meng no sells the chair and trashcan shots until Finlay NAILS him with a lead pipe to knock Meng silly. Norman comes out and covers to retain.

Rating: D. Norman is a guy that tries so hard but can't get out of this

hardcore nonsense. This was your standard hardcore match with Meng dominating and Norman screaming a lot but somehow escaping for the title. In other words, it's your standard TV match being held at Starrcade because Russo doesn't know the difference between the shows.

Meng beats up Nick Patrick for reasons.

David Flair has a gold crowbar delivered to him and seems very happy.

Oklahoma and Steve Williams are ready. There's nothing more to this segment.

Oh wait there is, as we cut back to see the Misfits kidnap Oklahoma.

We recap Jim Duggan vs. the Revolution, which is based around the idea of the Revolution thinking they're a sovereign nation and wanting to deface the American flag. Bringing Duggan in makes sense there, but the Powers That Be says there's nothing to his love of America and made him a janitor because that's funny or something.

Jim Duggan/??? vs. Revolution

It's Asya/Saturn/Malenko/Douglas here and we have no idea who the partners are here. If Duggan wins, the Revolution has to be the janitors for 30 days, but if Duggan loses, he has to denounce America. Duggan's partners are...the Varsity Club, a team which hit its peak in 1988/1989. In case you're like, young or something, it's Rick Steiner/Kevin Sullivan/Mike Rotundo with Leia Meow (ECW's Kimona) as their cheerleader.

Shane sits in on commentary to make it a handicap match. Dean and Duggan start things off but Saturn comes in less than ten second in. The Varsity Club gets in some cheap shots in the corner before Duggan hammers away with forearms to the back. Dean comes in again for an elbow to the face and a slam, followed by the three point clothesline for two.

Saturn gets the same off a missile dropkick as Heenan points out that Duggan hasn't tried to tag out. Just get to the swerve we all know is coming from here. Saturn misses a middle rope splash but Dean hits Jim in the head with a flag. Everyone comes in with the Varsity Club cleaning house, including tying Asya in the Tree of Woe for Sullivan's running

knee. Then they turn on Duggan because what else were they going to do here? Shane runs in for the pin as the Varsity Club keeps beating up Saturn on the floor.

Rating: F. This is STARRCADE 1999 and they bring out the Varsity Club? If they were going for some kind of nostalgia/history thing here, they completely missed the point as the Varsity Club's biggest moment was when they were fighting each other, assuming anyone remembered/cared about that in 1999. As it is, this is just another four minute match capped off by a beatdown to make it a Jim Duggan story. What is the mass appeal here and who thought the one thing this show needed was MORE people running around?

Shane tells Duggan he has 24 hours before he has to renounce America. They drape the Revolution flag over him, only to take it right back off.

The Misfits have Oklahoma in a shark cage to make sure he stays out of the Vampiro match.

Vampiro vs. Steve Williams

If Vampiro wins, he gets five minutes with Oklahoma. The Misfits wheel out Oklahoma in the shark cage but he has a headset on and can still do his Jim Ross jokes because....screw the sarcasm. This whole thing is stupid. Vampiro dives off the cage to take Williams out and the brawl begins on the floor. They head inside with Oklahoma yelling at the commentators. Williams fires off a chop so Oklahoma shouts CHOP over and over.

Some three point tackles take out Vampiro's legs followed by some chops, but Oklahoma gets bored saying chop over and over. A belly to belly superplex sends Vampiro flying but brings in the Misfits. Williams cleans house with ease and suplexes Vampiro down again. He hammers on Vampiro but shoves the referee down (how have we not had a ref bump tonight?) for a DQ, setting up Vampiro vs. Oklahoma.

Rating: D. So their solution to make us care about Vampiro is to have him get beaten up until the referee gets knocked down while Oklahoma gets to do his same joke over and over and over and over and over. I feel like

iTunes on repeat (who uses records anymore?) saying this but STOP USING THE SHOW FOR YOUR OWN STUPID JOKES THAT AREN'T EVEN FUNNY IN THE FIRST PLACE!

The five minute clock starts immediately.

Oklahoma vs. Vampiro

Security gets Williams out of here as we're still waiting on Oklahoma to get out of the cage. Oklahoma gets in after about two minutes and kicks Vampiro in the head. More slow stomps connect before Vampiro hits a single chop, only to have Oklahoma nail two straight low blows. A quick Rock Bottom drops Oklahoma and the Misfits come in for some shots, which the referee doesn't seem to mind. The Nail in the Coffin ends this mess.

To recap, Vampiro needed the help of a punk rock band (how many of the fans actually know who they are?) to beat Oklahoma, who beat the tar out of Vampiro for most of the "match". Again, the announcers are getting the push at the sake of someone like Vampiro, who may or may not be entertaining but he's an actual wrestler.

Russo tells Hennig/Shane/La Parka/Creative Control that he has something big planned for tonight so he can't quite focus on their match. Thanks for letting us know about this an hour into the show instead of building it up for a few weeks, but they probably didn't know a few weeks ago.

Stevie Ray tells Booker he won't have his back tonight.

Harlem Heat/Midnight vs. Curt Hennig/Creative Control

The winning tag team is #1 contenders so Hennig and Midnight are just kind of here to fill in the roster, because Heaven forbid we just have a regular tag match. My goodness there are suddenly a lot of empty seats across from the cameras. I couldn't have missed those earlier. There's no Stevie so it's a handicap match with more man on woman.

Gerald stomps Booker into the corner to start before no selling a spin kick to the face. So much for this one changing the tide of the show. We look at the ladder for later and come back with Midnight in without seeing what happened in between. I'm betting Gerald lost a Canasta game

and had to allow the hot tag.

It's quickly back to Booker who gets beaten down again but quickly gets over to tag in Midnight for some dropkicks. Hennig clotheslines her out to the floor and the heels take over again. Back in and Creative Control takes over on Midnight as Hudson talks about the big events of the night: the return of the Varsity Club and Disco being thrown into a car. We get the old "referee doesn't see the tag" spot as Stevie Ray comes out, only to be sent to the back by Booker.

Midnight gets slammed down and Patrick drops some elbows for two. He misses the middle rope elbow though and Midnight gets over for the hot tag. It doesn't count as Nick Patrick was "talking to Stevie Ray." That's true, but THEY WERE LOOKING AT THE TAG. As in Nick clearly realized he wasn't supposed to see it and you can see him try to snap his head away in time so it doesn't look that bad but it doesn't work. Hennig sneaks in with a foreign object to knock Booker silly for the pin and a delayed bell.

Rating: D. As usual, this was an angle disguised as a match. On top of the match being boring for the most part and yet another woman being in there for the sake of being in there (Midnight was fine but the announcers spent the whole match talking about how awesome it was to have a woman in there, which just puts more attention on the fact that she's nothing special), the gaffes like Nick seeing the tag made this a huge mess. Above all else though, I just do not care because I haven't been given a reason to care. These people are just characters with little development so it's really hard to get interested.

We recap Jarrett vs. Rhodes. Basically Dustin returned as something resembling a child abductor but he decided he wanted to be Dustin Rhodes because THAT has such a great track record for him. Jeff thought it was funny that Dustin's dad got fired so the feud began again and of course it turned into a bunkhouse match to make it about cowboys and hardcore.

Dustin, wearing a Dusty Rhodes shirt, talks about the match but Jeff jumps him to start.

Jeff Jarrett vs. Dustin Rhodes

Jarrett runs Dustin's knee over with a wheelbarrow and hits him in the throat with a kendo stick. They slam each other into the wheelbarrow before heading inside for the first time with Jeff taking a cowbell to the head. Well you knew the bullrope and cowbell were going to be involved somehow. Some bell shots knock Jarrett onto the announcers' table but hitting him in the head with a metal bell doesn't sound as good as throwing powder in Jeff's face.

Dustin pulls out a whip and nails both Jarrett and the referee before duct taping the referee to the ropes. Jeff shrugs off a shot with some chaps (you think I care enough to react to that at this point?) and kicks Dustin low as Curt Hennig comes out to untape the referee. We hit the sleeper as Jarrett tries to make this wrestling for reasons I don't understand.

Dustin finally suplexes his way out and gets two off a Boss Man Slam. Shattered Dreams connects but Hennig pulls the referee out at two. That earns Curt some Shattered Dreams of his own and all three head up to the entrance. Dustin plants Hennig with a bulldog but Jeff climbs the ladder and blasts him with a guitar for the pin.

Rating: D. Ok. What else do you want me to say here? Two guys who are feuding over someone not even working for this promotion anymore had a long (by this show's standards) match and the heel had someone else come in to basically make it a handicap match. The good guy fought back and then the two beat him without anything overly interesting happening.

Jeff Jarrett continues to not by over but gets pushed to the moon (dig that huge win over DUSTIN RHODES!) because he beat up a woman in the WWF. These guys weren't really putting in a ton of effort though and it's clear that no one has anything special without some kind of character behind them. It's just two old school style guys having a boring match and that's not something I want to watch for eleven minutes.

David Flair makes the headless teddy bear stroke the golden crowbar. Somehow, there isn't a single bit of innuendo in that entire sentence. Why David is wearing a Halloween Havoc shirt isn't clear.

Page says his hands will have a crowbar in them tonight and then those

same hands will give Flair a bang.

Diamond Dallas Page vs. David Flair

IT'S A CROWBAR ON A POLE MATCH!!! This is like Russo's hit parade if I had to pay \$30 to see it. This match is due to David stalking Kimberly after Kimberly slept with Ric Flair instead of David. So yeah, we have sex, insanity, illogical stories and a thing on a pole. Like I said, the hit parade rolls on. The crowbar is pitifully low as anyone of average height could reach it from the mat.

David sneaks up from behind with the gold crowbar (different from the one on the pole) but Little Naitch (who should be in David's corner in theory) takes it away, because even if you're insane and carrying a crowbar, you MUST follow the rules! The referee checks on Page and says the match will be a forfeit, but Page shoves Penzer away and wants to go.

We get the opening bell and David hammers away because how else was this going to be competitive? David counters a sunset flip and punches Page in the face for two. A clothesline gets the same as we're still waiting on any attempt at the crowbar. Flair hits a low blow and puts on a Figure Four but Page turns it over for the break. Flair gets the crowbar, misses a swing and eats the Diamond Cutter for the pin.

Rating: F. Remember when Chris Jericho would lose and then go insane and beat the post with a chair? That's how I feel here. There was no reason for this to be on pay per view or for this to be a gimmick match other than to make the match more believable. In other words, they can't have a good match without making it a gimmick and the match can't be good because it's a gimmick. Who other than Vince Russo could book a sub four minute match into a paradox while almost completely ignoring the gimmick that causes the paradox in the first place?

Page gives him a middle rope Diamond Cutter post match and it about to hit him with the crowbar but the yet to be named Daffney runs in to cover Flair up. Page leaves instead of hit the crazy chick.

Heenan wants a beer. I don't drink but can someone get me a hammer to crush my own skull?

We recap Luger vs. Sting, which has seen Luger treat Liz like garbage (more anti-women fetish material for Russo), which sent her running off for Sting to help him. At the same time, Luger “inadvertently” cost Sting some matches and kept trying to make it up to him, only making it worse in the process. Their match tonight is for Liz’s freedom, which she totally and completely wants of course.

Total Package vs. Sting

In the back, Sting gives Liz “super high octane” mace. The STER0IDS chant begins and Luger quickly sends Sting outside. Some whips into the barricade have Sting in more trouble before some elbows get two. Sting no sells a ram into the buckle and Luger gets caught between slaps from Sting and Liz. A double clothesline puts both of them down because of those two and a half DEVASTATING minutes of action.

Liz comes in to check on Luger and sprays the mace at Sting, but it’s silly string because Sting actually outsmarted someone!!!! Even the announcers acknowledge how shocking this is. Sting makes his comeback and hits a top rope splash for two. A pair of regular Stinger Splashes look to set up the Deathlock but Liz comes in with the ball bat for a very loud sounding shot to the jaw for the DQ.

Rating: D+. I’m upgrading this because of the bat shot and the string. Other than that, this was a big mess with the whole thing not even breaking six minutes despite it being one of the bigger matches on the card. This changes nothing as Liz is freed from Luger but apparently wants to stay with him, making this whole thing a big waste of time. Imagine that.

Luger Pillmanizes Sting’s arm post match. Remember two years ago when Sting was in the biggest match in WCW history? How was that just two years ago?

To recap, that was the tenth match of the show and, assuming you count Madusa as a heel, the third match where the heel didn’t either win or get the last laugh after the match. Those three are Vampiro and the Misfits beating up Oklahoma (who dominated the “match”), Page over David Flair and Norman Smiley over Meng where Norman was treated like a goon all

match. Is there any doubt why so many fans are leaving their seats halfway through the show?

We recap Sid vs. Nash in the powerbomb match. I've watched the shows setting this match up and now I've watched the video and I'm still not exactly sure why they're fighting. They've fought a few times but I'm not sure why they started in the first place. Again though, I doubt WCW does either other than "hey, they're both big!"

Sid Vicious vs. Kevin Nash

You win by using a powerbomb instead of a pin or a submission because we just couldn't have either guy do a real job for the sake of....probably some legal deal actually. Nash takes over to start and hits the framed elbow and a side slam for two. A low blow breaks up Sid's powerbomb attempt and it's time to go outside so they don't have to wrestle. Sid hits him in the back with a chair but stops to tell the fans to shut up. Good grief dude at least know what you're supposed to be doing out there. Back in and Sid tries to start a powerbomb chant but the fans are mostly silent. Well to be fair that's what Sid wanted.

The referee FINALLY GETS BUMPED, right before Sid hits a powerbomb. Cue Jeff Jarrett with a guitar to knock Sid out cold. The referee slowly gets up and Nash loads up a powerbomb but his back is out. Now the referee turns around as Nash is holding his back and Sid is down. Nash: "Yeah I powerbombed him." Referee: "WELL OK THEN!" Nash wins. Scott Hudson: "I refuse to refer to Nash as the master of the powerbomb!" Oh dang man. No Scott Hudson endorsement? This is a sham of a reign as powerbomb master!

Rating: F. Failure, freaking stupid, for the love of all things good and holy, for goodness' sake, fire them both. Pick any two and that's what the F stands for here. I actually had to get up and walk around for a bit before I started talking about this. They somehow booked a match built around one finisher and then they couldn't even do that finish because Nash didn't want to do the powerbomb.

From a kayfabe perspective, how freaking horrible do the referees in this company look? Ranging from staying down for five minutes off a single shot to not being able to see a tag literally three feet in front of them

to saying "yeah, sure I'll believe you when you say you powerbombed him. You would never lie", these are the worst referees I've ever seen. Oh and then there's Roddy Piper who has a young boy doing his work for him and who hears voices in his head. I would do a Randy Orton joke there but Orton is too good for this show.

Benoit says the open challenge is still, uh, open.

US Title: Chris Benoit vs. ???

Ladder match and the title is officially vacant coming in The mystery opponent is.....Jeff Jarrett, because why have two Jarrett segments when you can have three??? And my goodness did he change from jeans to gear in a hurry. It's a brawl in the aisle to start with Benoit chopping Jeff into the ring. Something like an Irish Curse drops Jarrett and a superplex allows Benoit to go get the first ladder.

Jarrett gets up and hits a baseball slide to drive the ladder into Benoit, but Chris whips him into the ladder in the corner a few times to take over again. Benoit gets crotched against the ladder for something like a Russian legsweep out of the corner. Chris is busted open but still able to tie Jeff in the Tree of Woe in the standing ladder, only to find out that it's hard to climb a ladder with someone hanging from the other side.

Both guys go up until Jarrett gets knocked down, followed by both guys going up and getting knocked over for nice crashes. In the best spot of the match, Benoit goes up but Jarrett dropkicks the ladder out from underneath him, sending Benoit down for a huge crash. Benoit is up first and dropkicks the ladder onto Jarrett but Benoit would rather drop a Swan Dive off the top of the ladder instead of grab the belt. Now he goes up and gets the belt for the win.

Rating: B. That might be high but anything above horrible would be ten times better than everything else on this show. Best match of the night here by about 19,000 years and naturally it only has ten minutes because we needed to give Oklahoma two matches and have the really stupid David Flair match instead of giving this another eight minutes. There isn't much to say here other than the guys were doing big spots and making them

look good. In other words, the polar opposite of everything else tonight.

We recap Goldberg vs. Hart, which started over Hart wanting to give Goldberg a title shot, and then became an Outsiders story involving the Tag Team Titles. Other than a few one off promos, these two have barely addressed each other.

Bret says he's winning whether Goldberg likes it or not.

WCW World Title: Bret Hart vs. Goldberg

No DQ and there must be a winner with Bret defending. Instead of asking if we're ready to rumble, Buffer tells us we're ready because the fans would probably boo such a question out of the building for making this last even longer. You know how most of the time at Wrestlemania the main event eats up like 40 minutes? The bell here rings with just over thirteen minutes to go in the show. For some reason it would feel wrong if the main event of the biggest show of the year had more time than that.

They shake hands and we're ready to go. Goldberg shoves him down out of a lockup to start but Bret takes him down with a headlock. That goes nowhere so Goldberg gorilla presses him into a powerslam for two. Goldberg tries that rolling leglock but Bret turns it into an early Sharpshooter attempt as only he could do. They fight outside with the referee getting bumped. It's not even a big deal at this point.

Robinson comes out as a replacement and an overly excited (and likely drunk) fan is dancing badly in the front row. A big boot puts Hart down back inside but Robinson gets bumped on a hiptoss. Goldberg spears the turnbuckle as the third referee comes down to see Bret put on the Figure Four around the post. Back in and Bret starts in on the leg and puts on a regular Figure Four. The turn sends Bret running for the ropes so he wraps the leg around the middle rope in the corner.

Goldberg reverses and hammers away but referee number three goes down. There's the Bret Killer superkick to set up the spear but a dejected Roddy Piper comes out to be the fourth referee. Bret, apparently having shrugged off the spear kicks Goldberg in the knee and MONTREAL STRIKES

AGAIN as Piper calls for the bell before Bret turns the Sharpshooter over. Hudson: "NOT MONTREAL ALL OVER AGAIN!" Yes it's Montreal all over again, because THAT'S THE DUMBEST THING THEY COULD POSSIBLY DO!

Rating: D-. The match was watchable but between the whole ending Bret Hart's career and going back to a fake Montreal over two years later with Bret on the good end this time is one of the worst possible ideas they could have come up with. If you want Bret to keep the title on a screwjob then have someone lay Goldberg out from behind or whatever, but good night don't do it like this. I mean, if this is the best they can think of, just close the doors now because Russo is clearly not what he's cracked up to be (oh gee what an understatement) and they need to find ANYONE else to give the reigns over to immediately.

Piper hands Bret the belt and walks off to end the show.

Overall Rating: No. No no, no no no, no no, no no. This is flat out not acceptable as the biggest show of the year for any promotion, or as a show for any serious promotion actually. Where in the world do I even start? Well let's start at the ending actually, as the main event was the longest match of the night at 12:07. This past week's episode of Raw had two matches longer than that and that's a run of the mill TV show.

Above all else, this felt like it could be any given filler pay per view where they're not trying. I know WCW had mixed feelings about how big of a deal Starrcade really was, but at least they would usually give lip service to the fact that it's the biggest night of the year. This felt like Fall Brawl or Uncensored instead of Starrcade and that's a feeling that you can't shake off no matter what.

Starrcade 1999 was Vince Russo with time to come up with his best possible ideas. Somehow he's managed to produce the one of the worst Wrestlemanias and the one of the worst Starrcades of all time, IN THE SAME YEAR. Do you have any idea how difficult it is to do that in the span of about nine months? So much of this can be blamed on the writing and booking too. When you have thirteen matches in a show that runs less than two hours and forty five minutes, there's very little the wrestlers can do to make the thing work.

The Mamalukes vs. Disco/Lash was the best match of the night until Chris Benoit and a ladder took their top spot. That's almost inconceivable that a totally average tag match was as good as this show could do for about 80% of the card. These stories are thrown together with no real rhyme or reason to most of them and at some point the fans just gave up. Yeah, it worked back in the WWF in 1999, but it's the same argument made about TNA now: why would I want to watch a lite version of the same stories with lesser and older talent doing the work?

There comes a point where you have to show your audience some respect or they're going to turn on you. That's where Russo doesn't get the point: he thinks the fans are going to follow whatever he does because they're watching a wrestling show and therefore aren't that smart. That means he can throw some big series of swerves at us and expect us to just go with it with an explanation of "YOU DIDN'T SEE IT COMING!" and then somehow blame us for not getting it. I know this is rambling but after watching this disaster there's no way to have any sort of coherent thought process.

It's just one big surprise after another, but the problem is you can start to see the surprises coming about half an hour into the show. If you train your audience to expect a big swerve, it stops being a swerve and becomes part of the plot. Piper coming out at the end of the big swerve would have worked better if we didn't have so many people turning on each other or one big surprise after another for two and a half hours leading up to it.

It doesn't help that Piper is a legend and hasn't had a good match in about seven years at this point but he's being featured as a major plot point for a story that people don't care about. The build for this show didn't make me want to see it and then the show itself was horrible, making me have no desire to keep tuning in.

What is there that's left untied here? Nash wins to show Sid is worthless, Hall is probably going to come back and take the title from Benoit, and we get to see more Jeff Jarrett. The big cliffhanger here is "WHY DID PIPER SCREW BRET???" If that's the big question going into Nitro tomorrow, I have zero desire to keep watching this promotion, but I'm

sure it's my fault for not supporting Russo like he deserves for putting on all this EXCITING TV for me. Total disaster of a show and more like hitting a rock wall instead of starting some new chapter in the company's history as the year is coming to a close.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of 1998 Pay Per View reviews at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

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Thunder – December 2, 1999: As Close As They Can Get

Thunder

Date: December 2, 1999

Location: Landon Arena, Topeka, Kansas

Attendance: 2,467

Commentators: Larry Zbyszko, Mike Tenay

After a week off due to Thanksgiving, we're back for one of the final live Thunders as the tapings would soon move to Tuesday nights. In other words, this might be the last "good" show in the series' run. We're less than three weeks away from Starrcade and the World Title scene is very slowly rounding into form. Unfortunately everything else is rounding into form and it's not a pretty sight. Let's get to it.

Hardcore Title: Norman Smiley vs. The Wall

Norman, the champion, is in karate attire and Berlyn comes out for

commentary. There are weapons in the ring already but Norman relies on the power of the 80s with a Crane Kick pose, earning him a clothesline. Wall blasts Norman with some weapons shots as Berlyn is suddenly fine with speaking English and demanding an apology from the big guy.

Norman keeps screaming as the beating continues but eventually kicks the trashcan into Wall's face. The Big Wiggle is teased but Wall hot shots him instead. The chokeslam is loaded up but Berlyn hits Wall with the belt, knocking him out with his hand still around Norman's throat. Norman covers while still being choked to retain the title.

Rating: D+. I love Norman. Even when he's just getting beaten up he's fun to watch as he's clearly trying, unlike so many of the other wrestlers on this show. Wall is fine for a big man, but do you really want him jobbing in one of his first singles matches? Just have him maul some people, like maybe those worthless cruiserweights. Actually we can't because they're getting beaten up later to further the parody of Jim Ross. I guess we just have to make the new monster lose in a comedy match.

Luger isn't happy that he's fighting Sid tonight.

Silver King wants his check back from Dr. Death, as apparently Williams hasn't cashed it for some reason. Football insults are hurled and death will come soon for Silver King.

Kaz Hayashi doesn't like Maestro. Time for a transition!

Kaz Hayashi vs. Maestro

No Symphony here, meaning my interest quickly fades. They hit the mat for a faster sequence than you would expect with Maestro getting two off a rollup. Tenay is of course talking about Jeff Jarrett, because Russo likes getting announcers involved. Kaz comes back with a dropkick but gets sent face first into the buckle. Choking and stomping ensue to show that Maestro is a heel. It's actually not clear otherwise, even with David Flair kidnapping him on Monday.

We hit the chinlock on Kaz and here's David with the crowbar. Kaz flips out of a German suplex and hits a dropkick but the referee gets bumped,

bringing David inside. His crowbar hits Kaz by mistake, sending Maestro running for the hills. The unconscious Kaz wins by countout and is shocked when he wakes up.

Rating: D. Another day, another match with a stupid finish designed to get a bad angle over instead of the wrestling. Maestro is a guy whose looks deceive you as he had a decent match despite looking out of shape. Kaz is solid in the ring as well and can give you a good performance when he isn't cannon fodder for a David Flair feud.

Disco and Lash Leroux arrive but have to run from the Mamalukes.

Lex Luger loses his bag, takes Jimmy Hart's by mistake, then gets his own bag back. He tries to leave but has flat tires because....I have no idea actually.

Chavo Guerrero vs. Buzzkill

Buzzkill's entrance: "It's me, it's me, it's that B-U-Double Z!" Chavo tries to sell him some tyedye and a broken lava lamp, which Buzzkill tries to turn on despite a lack of electricity. The fans are ALL OVER this and Chavo only makes it worse by giving Buzzkill a Walkman to make him go down on the mat to the music, but it's only good for two. Chavo gives up on the sale but has a shirt for the referee, allowing Buzzkill to hit him with the briefcase for the pin.

Buzzkill is mad at himself for cheating, but borrows money from the referee to buy the tyedye and lamp from Chavo.

I'm pausing now and trying to compose myself. Normally I would write up some rant about how Russo doesn't get wrestling and what a waste of talent this is, but I can't bring myself to care. That was one of the stupidest segments I've ever seen in wrestling and it was painful to watch. There's nothing wrong with a comedy segment here and there, or even more than one a show. However, when your entire promotion is one comedy/stupid segment after another, you lose the benefit of the doubt. You lose your audience too but that's another story.

Chris Benoit is ready for his match with Liger, who he respects very

much. For once, there's nothing else going on in a promo. The idea of Benoit vs. Liger is one of the only things that can bring me back after what I've sat through already.

Meng gets into his dressing room but Lash and Disco show up and swap his name plate for theirs.

Evan Karagias is in the back with Madusa and implies that he's rather, shall we say, antsy. Madusa promises him "everything" after Starrcade.

Long recap of Nitro. That doesn't help things, though at least it's shorter.

Luger is still worried, but he knows he's the best and has nothing to worry about. But doggone it, do people like him?

Sid is playing with a Luger action figure as Gene tells him that he has a powerbomb match vs. Nash at Starrcade. Gene doesn't have the match if that's not clear. Nash wouldn't take it after seeing Gene and Hogan team up against Steele and Fuji back in 84. Sid breaks the figure to show what's going to happen to Luger tonight.

Luger calls a cab. Can't he just walk to a bar or something and wait until the show is over?

The Mamalukes beat up some production guy and lock him in a freezer so he can give Disco and Lash a message.

Steve Williams vs. Villano IV/Villano V/Silver King

This should be short. Larry leaves the booth because Oklahoma disgusts him so much. For once, I can't say I disagree. The trio gets destroyed to start until Silver King nails a dropkick. A triple headbutt is shrugged off though and King gets press slammed. I'm missing a good chunk of the match, though as a consolation I do get a lot of shots of Oklahoma talking. Vampiro comes out to go after Oklahoma, which allows Silver King to sneak down and take his check. Williams pins a Villano off the Stampede in a quick match.

Luger is trying to get into his cab but the Mamalukes stop him to ask for

Disco and Lash. In one of the smartest things Luger has ever said, he recommends the dressing room with their name on it. As this is going on, Silver King dives into the cab and leaves. Luger is completely thwarted, because that was the only cab (or form of transportation it seems) in all of Topeka.

After a break, the Mamalukes are outside the dressing room door. Thankfully they're nice enough to not go in or do anything else until after the next match.

Jushin Thunder Liger vs. Chris Benoit

Please let it go long. Please let it go long. Please let it go long. Larry is back on commentary and annoyed at all the guest announcers screwing up. We can't start just yet though as Juventud Guerrera comes out for commentary with his arm in a sling and flanked by Psychosis and La Parka (rocking the red skeleton attire). Juvy sits in on commentary and he's going to be the focus of the match isn't he?

Liger rolls out of an early suplex attempt and they hit the mat for a technical sequence into a backslide attempt from Benoit but Liger powers into a sunset flip. A stalemate gets some polite applause from the crowd as Juvy says IT DOESN'T MATTER what the wrestlers are doing. Benoit is taken down in a test of strength but Liger can't break his bridge. The Liger Kick connects as Juvy takes credit for building the Cruiserweight division. He doesn't mention his current reign as the IWGP Junior Heavyweight Title but why should he do that?

Tenay announces Benoit vs. Nash on Nitro and a US Title shot in a ladder match at Starrcade. That's quite the schedule. Liger hooks his feet under Benoit's arms and takes him to the floor in a crash before putting on the Surfboard back inside. The brainbuster gets two and Liger wins a chop off. Benoit breaks up a tornado DDT attempt and it's a double clothesline to put both guys down. There's the snap suplex and a belly to back for two on Liger and Benoit nails him with a clothesline to the back of the head. Liger is able to crotch him down and nail a superplex, but the other cruiserweights come in for the double DQ.

Rating: B-. I want to complain about the ending destroying what could

have been a great match, but this is such a rare treat these days that I can't bring myself to do it. Instead, I'll go on about what a shame it is that they bring in Jushin Thunder Liger and use him as a way to get over Juvy's (albeit funny) Rock imitation, which could have been done with almost anyone on the roster. At least we got about seven minutes of Benoit vs. Liger though, which is better than anything else we were going to get.

Benoit and Liger clean house.

Buff promises to beat Meng tonight.

Speaking of Meng, the Mamalukes find him in the dressing room and get beaten up as you would expect.

Luger disguises his voice and calls the WCW offices to say he has a family emergency and needs to leave. Terry Taylor pops in to say...I'm assuming nice try as Buff's music was drowning him out. I don't know if that kind of thing is a Russo joke or if the WCW production guys all just stopped caring at once, because it's been a thing for months now and it's really annoying.

Buff Bagwell vs. Meng

Well it would have to be this match after that last segment wouldn't it? Meng throws him around like a Tongan monster throws around a pretty boy to start. Buff's right hands and clotheslines have no effect but some dropkicks stagger Meng. Apparently Buff has an easily built ego as Buff tries ten right hands in the corner, only to get dropped on the top rope before he gets to nine. Meng comes back with strikes in the corner as Larry thinks there's something up with the Outsiders and Russo. Gee Larry, YOU REALLY THINK SO???

A lot of choking ensues before Buff gets bent over Meng's knee in a backbreaker. Buff comes back with his swinging neckbreaker and a cross body for two as we have Mamalukes. Say it with me: the ref gets bumped, allowing the mobsters to beat up both guys for reasons not exactly clear. Meng fights them off and Buff goes up, only to miss Meng and hit the Blockbuster on Vito. The Tongan Death Grip gives Meng the win.

Rating: D. Can we get some tougher referees? Or some wrestlers that aren't quite as careless and don't hit a referee on half the matches every show? I like that they're keeping Meng strong, even if it doesn't seem likely to lead anywhere. You can always find a way to use someone like him, but in Russo's case he'll probably wind up as a bus driver with an unhealthy fear of parrots.

Meng beats up the mobsters for fun.

Gene is in the back with Mona and Jarrett and can't stop looking at her chest. Mona: "Do you see something you like Gene?" Jeff yells at her for taking half his interview time and calls her Miss Slappy. This Monday, Goldberg and Dustin Rhodes are on his hit list.

The Mamalukes drink Surge to make themselves feel better, though Johnny could go for a cheese sandwich.

Jeff Jarrett/Mona vs. Evan Karagias/Madusa

Is there a reason why Jarrett and Mona got together and I just missed it? Larry: "If he's so chosen, why is he in a match he doesn't want to be in?" Tenay wants Jeff fined and suspended for his actions on Monday. Evan and Mona get things started as Jarrett walks around ringside. He takes her down with ease to start but the camera goes to see Jarrett and Tenay yelling at each other. I wonder if that's what the TNA meetings were like.

Mona armdrags Madusa down but gets caught in a double backdrop. Now Jeff sits on the steps (which is nothing like when Mankind did the same to the Rock, appropriately enough against the Hollys) while Madusa cranks on an armbar. Back up and Mona slams her off the middle rope and crotches Evan, followed by a top rope hurricanrana. Madusa gets back with a German suplex though, allowing Evan to hit a corkscrew plancha for the pin.

Rating: D. So to recap we have a woman who is using sex to get a title shot at Starrcade, another woman who wrestles hard but gets beaten up at the end, but the whole thing is about Jeff Jarrett arguing with an announcer. They really thought this was the answer to women like Chyna?

Mona dropkicks Jarrett post match and eats a guitar to the head. Serves her right for trying in her match.

Long recap of Bret's WCW career. No real context or reason for this but it's there.

The Revolution talks about having their own country. Saturn: "And our own continent! Asya!" Get out while you can boys.

Luger is on the phone with Russo and is told that the winner of the match with Sid gets a World Title match this Monday.

Gene is with Lash and Disco and recaps the Mafia angle. Wouldn't it have been better to do this EARLIER? They agree that they need each other to survive and Disco asks Lash not to do the splits tonight because dancing is his gimmick. I can't even roll my eyes at these terms being dropped anymore.

Disco Inferno/Lash Leroux vs. Perry Saturn/Dean Malenko

Shane makes fun of Disco and Lash's accents before the match. Cue the Mamalukes to go after Disco and Lash but the Revolution mocks them as well, triggering another brawl. Disco and Lash are smart enough to stand outside and watch as Asya hits the Italians low, allowing the Revolution to clean house. Security gets them out of here so Disco and Lash jump Saturn from behind and get two off a Russian legsweep.

Tenay announces Evan vs. Mona vs. Madusa on Monday with the Cruiserweight Title shot on the line. Logic would say Mona vs. Madusa in a singles match, but why do that when it can be men vs. women? Lash beats Saturn up even more and does the split into a punch spot, prompting Disco to angrily tag himself in. This time it's Disco knocking Saturn around but stopping to dance, allowing Dean to come in and kick Disco's head off (yet the hair still doesn't move). Disco fights back with a sunset flip but Saturn kicks him again to break it up.

The Last Dance is broken up and Disco gets sat on top, allowing Saturn to bulldog him out to the floor in a nice spot. Lash and Dean get tags and the Cajun cleans house on Malenko but Whiplash is broken up by Saturn. A

superkick drops Lash to the floor where he almost gets into it with Asya, allowing Shane to get in a cast shot. The Cloverleaf on the unconscious Lash gets the win as Saturn holds Disco.

Rating: D+. Disco and Lash are prime examples of guys that were doing nothing but were given a unique story by Russo. Unfortunately, Russo's intelligence ends as soon as the matches start as they were cannon fodder for the Revolution in their first match as a team. It doesn't help that they've gotten into a buddy comedy instead of a tag team, but Russo thinks he's writing B movies instead of a wrestling show anyway.

Total Package vs. Sid Vicious

Winner gets Hart on Monday for the title. Bret comes out to do commentary and doesn't seem interested in talking about facing Sid. Luger does a quick easy way/hard way promo but gets caught holding pepper spray. Sid stomps him down with ease but gets hit low, allowing Luger to go into his offensive arsenal. Cue Liz as we get a double clothesline to put both guys down.

That's some clothesline as neither can get up after LESS THAN A MINUTE of action. Liz gets the pepper spray and goes for Luger but he takes the bottle away and sprays Sid, who powerbombs the referee, because pepper spray takes away your ability to feel a shirt. Luger grabs a rollup (with Sid's feet in the ropes) for the pin from a second referee and the title shot.

Post match Sid can suddenly see and powerbombs Luger to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. Let's recap quickly: interference – belt shot, interference – crowbar, briefcase shot, interference (didn't change ending), interference – double DQ, interference – sets up pin, double teaming, cast shot, pepper spray. The closest thing we had to a clean finish in nine matches was double teaming in a glorified handicap match. All night long we couldn't a rollup for a pin or just someone hitting their finisher to win without someone cheating or interfering? I know there are a lot of common criticisms against Russo, but with shows like these, they're not exactly unfounded.

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Thunder- November 18, 1999: Benoit Does It Again

Thunder

Date: November 18, 1999

Location: Allen County War Memorial, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Attendance: 3,283

Commentators: Scott Hudson, Larry Zbyszko

We're three days away from Mayhem and the interesting thing this week is can they keep up the wrestling on this show. Thunder has definitely become the wrestling show, with matches getting more time than Nitro gets most of the time, but with less star power and more bad interference. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Jerry Flynn vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

Hardcore so Bigelow brings out some weapons but Flynn takes him away and nails Bigelow with a trashcan. Barbarian is out here with Flynn, despite Jerry beating him in an impromptu boiler room brawl Monday. Norman Smiley comes out but Hart sends Knobbs and Barbarian after him. Without noticing what's going on outside, Bigelow takes Flynn down with a clothesline.

Thankfully he didn't ruin the mullet.

Time for the cookie sheet shots followed by the can lids crashing around Flynn's head like cymbals. The flying headbutt misses though and Jerry hits something like a Van Daminator with the trashcan. Barbarian comes in like a schnook and gets beaten down, followed by a chair to Flynn to give Bigelow the three count.

Rating: D. There was nothing to this one other than Hart and Smiley shouting at each other a lot. That was the most entertaining part of the match, which is likely due to the idea of taking two entertaining guys and letting them entertain. This is different than Flynn who is there because he knows karate and Bigelow, who could be entertaining but not in a mess like this.

Disco can't get anyone to give him action on a bet for a match tonight.

Bagwell is looking for Chris Benoit.

Disco Inferno vs. Prince Iaukea

Non-title and Iaukea has new gear. Not interesting gear of course but it's new with some trunks and boots. Disco goes to the eyes to start but Iaukea smacks him in the back of the head. I'll give WCW 1999 this much: their heels had great hair. After begging off, Disco sends him into the corner and takes over with all of his usual stuff. A clothesline and middle rope elbow get two each on the Prince.

Iaukea's sunset flip doesn't work and Disco stays on him with elbows and chokes, followed by a chinlock to keep the fans bored. Iaukea comes back with an even less interesting offense (the high spot is a dropkick) until Disco drops him with a DDT. Thankfully for a change, we get silly as a messenger brings Disco a package. Inside is....a fish? Oh I get it: sleep with the fishes. The distraction lets Iaukea grab a rollup for the pin.

Rating: F. Is it bad that I want to see where the fish story is going? I know it's the mafia gambling stuff but it's more entertaining than most other stuff going on with this promotion. What isn't interesting however is the really dull wrestling in this match as neither guy knows how to

keep an audience. Disco is nothing great but at least he has something unique with the dancing. Iaukea...what in the world do they see in him to keep him on the payroll?

Post match, Disco hits Iaukea with the fish. Remember that he has a title defense three days from now.

Evan Karagias says he's going to beat Savage for the love of his woman.

Van Hammer asks Curt Hennig to get counted out tonight and a fight breaks out. This story is one of the worst in the company and that covers a lot of ground.

Evan Karagias vs. The Maestro

The bubbles in Maestro's entrance are always odd to see. Maestro grabs a quick headlock to start and nails a shoulder. Evan comes back with a cross body but rolls outside to kiss Madusa. The delay works for a bit but Maestro comes back by raising a boot in the corner. Some forearms and a belly to back suplex get two on Evan as this is just a step ahead of the previous match.

More uppercuts set up a German suplex but Evan flips over the back and gets two of his own off a snap suplex. Madusa has to play cheerleader despite looking about 20 years older than she really is here. A spinebuster puts Evan down but Madusa gets on the apron and kisses Maestro. Evan kicks him down and checks on Madusa (who didn't seem to mind), allowing Maestro to roll him up for the pin.

Rating: D-. Boring wrestling, uninteresting characters, Madusa being a focus for reasons not exactly clear and the #1 contender to the Cruiserweight Title losing about ten minutes after the champion lost. The wrestling on this show isn't great, but the booking continues to be the real problem dragging this down. I guess they're setting it up that Evan is distracted by Madusa, but when the champion loses earlier in the night and Evan has never really done anything, the story is a huge mess.

The Revolution talks about Torrie being a Barbie doll. Shane wants to see Asya rip her apart, sending Saturn into a rant about taking the limbs off

a Barbie. Shane: "Perry, IT WAS A FIGURE OF SPEECH!" Saturn: "My point exactly!"

Disco is panicking on the phone with Tony Marinara.

Benoit heard that Bagwell is looking for him. He leaves a few seconds before Bagwell shows up.

Nitro recap video, complete with Sid's half the brain line.

La Parka and Kaz Hayashi have another overdubbed interview with Hayashi sounding like he's from rural Georgia. I think these predated Kaientai's INDEED promos but they're around the same time.

Buff and Benoit finally get together with Bagwell asking Benoit not to use the suplexes or the Crossface on the bad neck. Benoit says Buff knew what he was getting into and they brawl.

Kaz Hayashi/La Parka vs. El Dandy/Silver King

Kaz has his own chair and even the announcers have to mention the dubbed voices. Dandy gets flipped around while trying to backslide Kaz so it's quickly off to La Parka vs. King. La Parka does his dance so King dropkicks him in the face and everything quickly breaks down. King and Dandy are headscissored to the floor and the fans are actually behind Kaz and Parka here. Dandy comes in and tries a right hand but hits his partner by mistake. After the calamity calms down, Kaz gets whipped into a gutbuster as we settle into a more standard formula.

A double slam gets two on Kaz but Dandy lets him walk over for the tag to La Parka. Things speed up with Silver coming in to help Dandy as the heels take over again. La Parka is sent to the floor so Kaz comes in, only to get tripped down a few seconds later. The heels screw up with King hitting Dandy, allowing Kaz to tag La Parka again. Everything breaks down with La Parka hitting a missile dropkick and Kaz adding a high cross body to King. La Parka's kind of Whisper in the Wind is enough to pin King.

Rating: C-. This got messy in the middle but I like the idea of La Parka and Kaz being these guys who can barely speak English but suddenly have

the dubbed voices. I'm fine with these decent nothing matches on Thunder though, as they're clean enough to not make my head hurt and long enough to quality as a match instead of an angle. It doesn't mean anything after the match ends but at least it was decent while it lasted.

La Parka chairs King post match.

Bagwell and Hennig get in a fight over something we don't hear.

Curt Hennig vs. Van Hammer

Larry goes on a rant against the term "Powers That Be". I kind of agree as WCW has announced that they're Russo and Ferrara so why not just go with that? Curt knees Hammer on the way in but gets thrown outside for a brawl. To keep up the stupidity of this show, we see a sign saying "I'm only here for the Nitro Girls." Maybe Russo is on to something about the fans being morons. Back in and Hennig starts in on the leg as Bagwell strolls out to follow up on a five minute old angle. All the oil on Buff's arms distracts Hennig so Hammer can get in a cheap shot and snap his throat across the top rope.

Curt goes after Buff but catches Hammer trying to jump him from behind with a kick to the ribs. Back in and Hennig slams Hammer's head against the mat as Buff plays cheerleader for Hammer. Apparently it works as Hammer comes back with a knee in the corner followed by a DDT, only to miss a middle rope flip dive. Curt is sent outside for a brawl with Bagwell, only to have Benoit come out and get sent into the barricade. Back up and Hammer is accidentally whipped into Buff, allowing Curt to hit the HennigPlex for the pin.

Rating: D-. I need a minute here. Let's try to figure this out. So the Powers That Be want to get rid of Hennig by saying he's gone as soon as he gets pinned, because a submission isn't good enough for them for whatever reason. At the same time, they want to screw with Bagwell by making him job all the time because wrestling is scripted, but Bagwell wants to rebel and win his REAL matches.

Now he's screwing with Hennig to get rid of him, presumably as a favor to the Powers That Be to get them off Bagwell's back? At the same time,

Benoit is involved despite being in the final four of the World Title tournament because they have nothing better to do with him tonight and there's NO ONE else they could throw into this mess? The fact that I had to write out two paragraphs to understand this story, ignoring the fact that it completely exposes the business, sums up Russo's booking in a nutshell: A stupid midcard feud took that long to understand and I don't even care now that I've figured it out.

Luger works out as Chavo sells Liz Amway jewelery. THIS story gets to continue but we're not likely to hear any more about La Parka and Kaz.

Lash Leroux vs. Kenny Kaos

Leroux takes him down to start but Kaos kicks him in the ribs and scores with a butterfly suplex. After a middle rope legdrop gets two, Lash botches a flip over the back but takes over anyway. Why let something like a big mishap screw up your quick match right? Kaos comes back with a boot to the face and a bunch of kicks and punches in the corner.

A gutwrench suplex gets two for Kaos but Lash comes back with a Russian legsweep and stomps of his own. Kaos is sent outside but Lash baseball slides into his leg to really take over. The leg is fine enough to catch a diving Cajun though and drive him back first into the barricade. So he's generic and doesn't sell. Back in and Lash escapes a slam and hits Whiplash for the pin.

Rating: D. In the old days, this would be filler on Saturday Night but now it's one of the later shows on Thunder. It really is apparent that no one cared about this show and they were clearly just filling in time. Again, I'd love to know what someone was high on when they picked Kaos to be a champion a year ago. That stuff could make me a fortune on the streets.

The Animals brag about Torrie being a martial arts expert. I smell an unfunny comedy bit coming up.

Vampiro wraps a chain around his hand.

Chavo Guerrero Jr. vs. Barbarian

Chavo comes out with his order forms for Barbarian, but Barbarian hits him in the back with the briefcase, setting up the Kick of Fear for the pin at 8 seconds.

Post match, Barbarian says he'll pay Chavo later. Well, at least it's something for Chavo to do. Stupid yes but something.

Tournament recap.

Liz and Luger watch Meng from a monitor.

Meng vs. Vampiro

Vampiro gets taken down by the hair to start, which you would expect to have been the other way around. Meng loses a kick-off but Vampiro stupidly tries a headbutt. Well no one ever accused him of being smart. Now Meng headbutts the buckle but doesn't seem to phase it. A bunch of chops stagger Vampiro and Meng nails a decent dropkick. I remember Jesse Ventura freaking out when Haku hit those and I can't say I disagree.

Vampiro gets piledriven and sent to the floor for a whip into the barricade. Back inside and Meng is finally put down by a top rope spinwheel kick. That's the extent of Vampiro's offense though as his hurricanrana is countered with a powerbomb. Jerry Only of the Misfits comes in and takes the Tongan Death Grip and that's the match, presumably for a no contest.

Rating: D+. Meng is one of those guys that is kind of fun to watch, just due to him no selling almost everything and hurting as many people as he did. Unfortunately he's being set up with Luger, which is about as dull of a program as you can have. The ending here did nothing for anyone, but that really shouldn't be surprising.

Liz comes out to apologize to Meng and the monster is nice enough to stop lunging at her with the Death Grip as Luger is late with his cue. He finally shows up and chairs Meng down before crushing his knees with the chair.

Chris Benoit vs. Buff Bagwell

Ever the genius, Buff tries to slide under the ropes and gets stomped down. Chris takes over with a dropkick and a knee to the ribs but gets dropped ribs first onto the top rope. They head outside with Buff dropping Benoit's throat across the barricade before stomping away. Back inside and Buff keeps up the stomping motif as this is actually one of the more entertaining matches of the night due to the charisma both guys have. Buff wasn't much in the ring but he had some energy to him.

A neckbreaker sets up a chinlock on Chris as I guess Buff is a heel all of a sudden. They trade punches and chops in the corner before Benoit takes it to the floor to give Bagwell the beating he deserves. Back in and Benoit hits the snap suplex and puts on a surfboard before "accidentally" kicking Buff low. They head outside again with Buff getting whipped into the barricade but Benoit makes the same mistake Buff made at the start and lets Bagwell get in some shops as he comes in.

Buff hammers away but has to grab the ropes to block a German suplex. That's fine with Benoit as he plows through Buff with a clothesline, only to miss the Swan Dive. Buff goes up for the Blockbuster but here's Hennig to break it up, allowing Benoit to slap on the Crossface for the win.

Rating: C+. So to recap, Benoit has gotten two of the longest matches of the Russo Era and has put in two of the best performances to date. Aside from Benoit being awesome, a lot of it goes to show that when you give the guys a chance to show what they can do, you more often than not get a good match. You can't do anything with two minutes and three plot devices at a time.

Benoit stares at Hennig and leaves, allowing Curt and Buff to brawl to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. They had something here with the self contained story of Bagwell/Benoit/Hennig ending with a match but I can't imagine this is going to be a recurring theme. Other than that though, this was your usual disaster with nonsensical ideas and booking decisions that seem to be more there for the amusement of Russo and Ferrara than anything else. I have no desire to see Mayhem more than I did two hours ago though, so the show was a waste of time.

No show next week due to Thanksgiving.

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Thunder – November 11, 1999: By Jove They're Getting Better!

Thunder

Date: November 11, 1999

Location: Allen County War Memorial, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Attendance: 3,283

Commentators: Scott Hudson, Larry Zbyszko

We're closing in on Mayhem and I'm losing my will to fight. Thankfully this is a live show meaning it's only going to be mostly horrible instead of the scum of the earth that it can be when it's taped. One of the few good things about Russo TV is the matches are short so the horrors don't go on as long. Let's get to it.

One more note: of those 3,283 in attendance, 1,771 were paid. The WWF ran a house show at the same venue about seven months earlier and drew over 7,700 paid. The building's capacity for a basketball game at the time: 10,240.

Opening sequence.

Lash Leroux vs. Evan Karagias

Disco comes out for commentary, which will be a running theme tonight. For Nitro: Evan vs. referee Johnny Boone, who is working this match. Why? Actually I was hoping you knew. Feeling out process with Evan taking Lash down for a headlock but Leroux uses the ropes for a break. Evan starts arguing with Boone, so here's Madusa because the opening match on Thunder needs this many storylines. They start some basic wrestling to fill in time before the next story and Lash is clotheslined to the floor.

Cue the story as Disco hits on Madusa. That thankfully goes nowhere and Evan hammers on Lash, only to have Leroux flip out of a belly to back suplex and grab a Russian legsweep for two. Another suplex puts Evan down as Disco says he's going to seal the deal with Madusa. Evan fights back with some chops and wins a slugout before getting two off a Thesz press. Instead of following up though, he goes after Disco for hitting on Madusa, who slaps Disco as she sees Evan. As he heads back inside, Leroux nails Whiplash for the pin.

Rating: D. This ran 4:34 and managed to fit all that nonsense in there. How in the world do they think this is the best course of action for the opening match? I have no idea who I was supposed to cheer for out there or what I'm supposed to focus on, but I'm pretty sure it's not the wrestling.

Disco laughs at Evan and says he'll bet \$25,000 that he can beat Karagias at Mayhem. Madusa helps Evan up, whispers in his ear and kisses him. Evan accepts and Disco is given another Whiplash.

Gene asks Berlyn why he stopped dancing, earning him a hand over his mouth and a threat. Were we really not supposed to realize that was Wright until now?

Sid is looking for Rick Steiner.

Berlyn vs. Curly Bill

My goodness. Of all the things in WCW, THIS is the thing that gets a

blowoff??? Curly is announced from South Pittsburgh, Texas. Berlyn hammers him in the corner as you would expect but Curly slips out of an attempt at a slam. Cue one of the Misfits to tell Berlyn to come out back for a fight, but the Bodyguard goes instead. Not that it matters as Vampiro comes in to jump Berlyn for the DQ. See, this is one of those things where a simple tweak would have been fine. Why not have Berlyn get a quick pin on Bill and THEN do the angle? Would that have really hurt anything?

Post match, Curly covers Berlyn and counts his own three, so the Bodyguard comes in and throws him out. Thanks for wasting that extra bit of time guys.

Gene talks to La Parka and Silver King. La Parka speaks English here, on orders from the Powers That Be. His English is actually fine, making me wonder why in the world he's never used it before. The guy was over, he was fine in the ring and apparently he could talk so wh.....oh right it's WCW. Or that wasn't La Parka under the mask, which is always a possibility.

Chavo tries to sell Amway products to a Villano. OH COME ON. They're making a throwaway line into an angle?

Rick Steiner rants about Sid dumping him for the Outsiders so Sid nails him. Security breaks it up and I guess that's our next HUGE match.

La Parka/Silver King vs. Lizmark Jr./Villano V

Before the match, La Parka talks about learning promos but still getting stuck in these lame matches. His lips don't move so maybe I don't have to be so annoyed at WCW for not pushing him. Well not really as he was good enough to be pushed harder but at least the talking wasn't as big of a deal. It sounded like Ed Ferrara this time. Everyone jumps La Parka for what he said and he starts with Lizmark. A tilt-a-whirl backbreaker puts La Parka down and Lizmark taunts King into the ring for a beatdown on the skeleton guy. King gets back at him with a knee to the spine and it's off to King and Villano.

King slams Villano down and does a dance (he's no Big Wiggler) before

tagging La Parka back in. Villano avoids a dropkick and Lizmark throws La Parka to the floor for a suicide dive. With his partner in trouble, King busts out the yet to be named 619 to taunt Lizmark before sidestepping a charging Villano. Now it's King diving on everyone before what appeared to be an edit sends La Parka back to the ring. As in he was on the floor and a split second later he was on the mat. Lizmark misses a top rope backplash and gets caught by La Parka's corkscrew dive for the pin.

Rating: C-. Totally standard lucha tag with nothing interesting and the clipping being more distracting than anything else. So much for the show being live too. One might think they're going somewhere with the La Parka stuff, but if he never gets near the title scene, none of it is going to mean much.

Post match La Parka chairs Lizmark and Villano.

Berlyn and the Bodyguard beat up Curly Bill in the back. This thing is continuing???

Hennig says he isn't losing and going anywhere.

Chavo sells a childless Kaz Hayashi a bunch of diapers. I think this speaks for itself.

Recap of Nitro.

Booker says he and the woman from Nitro go back a long way. More on this later I'm assuming, but we might have to see Chavo selling stuff again.

Sid stares at Rick Steiner on a monitor. Steiner doesn't seem to know that there's a camera on him.

Disco is on the phone and says he'll have their money. Maybe he can get some additional money if he gets rid of Hennig.

TV Title: Rick Steiner vs. Booker T.

Steiner is defending and hammers Booker down in the corner to start. Back up and Booker ducks a Steinerline and hits the flying forearm and a side kick. They have to get all their stuff in though as this match isn't

likely to break five minutes. Steiner comes back with two straight belly to belly suplexes (check those off the list too) and clubbing forearms before we hit the chinlock. Booker quickly fights up with his series of kicks but Steiner shoves the referee in front of the missile dropkick. Cue Sid to shove Steiner off the top and plant him with a powerbomb to give Booker the pin!

Rating: D+. And never mind as this happens.

Other referee Johnny Boone comes out and we've got a Dusty Finish. Sid powerbombs both referees and brawls with Steiner. The match was nothing special and your standard angle disguised as a wrestling match.

Curt Hennig vs. Dean Malenko

Douglas is on commentary and Hennig is fired if he gets pinned. I believe this is the third week where we still have no explanation for why that's the stipulation. They do some of that wrestling nonsense to start with Dean grabbing an armbar before opting to hammer away in the corner. You can see his soul dying with every punch. Curt gets two each off a sunset flip, backslide and rollup as he tries to keep his job.

Malenko bails to the floor before heading back inside, only to get punched in the face to send him back outside. Back in again and Dean grabs a quick belly to back before putting on a chinlock. Curt comes back with his usual but Dean hits a very unusual (for him anyway) low blow but gets small packaged to counter the Cloverleaf. Back up and Malenko misses a charge in the corner, only to have Asya distract the referee so Shane can hit Hennig with the cast.

This brings out Disco Inferno as Malenko covers off a suplex. Disco shoves Malenko off and covers Hennig but Curt gets up and hits Inferno. Dean suplexes Hennig again for two but Benoit runs out for the Swan Dive on Malenko as Disco keeps everyone else at bay, giving Hennig the pin.

Rating: C-. It's kind of interesting that you have easily the best wrestling match of the night going on when they have a nonsensical run-in followed by a more sensible run-in to end the whole thing. As many people have said before: Russo did not know how a wrestling match was supposed

to go so he watered it down into something he did understand and the wrestling fans suffered as a result. It's so sad to see Dean clearly just there because he has to be and doing things he doesn't want to do. You can see how miserable he is out there and I completely understand him leaving soon.

Rick Steiner and Sid fight.

Maestro is ready for his match with Brian Knobbs tonight and promises to go heavy metal if necessary. Well he's already below Van Hammer so it can't hurt.

Knobbs and Hart aren't happy with Norman Smiley. I am as he's one of the funniest things on the shows lately.

Maestro vs. Brian Knobbs

Hardcore. Smiley comes out for commentary with a violin case to distract Knobbs but it doesn't work so well (imagine, mind games not working on Knobbs) as Brian nails Maestro with a trashcan a few times. It's cookie sheet time but a chair shot doesn't work as well as Maestro scores with a dropkick. Maestro gets in some basic weapons shots but Jimmy Hart grabs his leg, allowing Brian to take over again.

Smiley yells at Hart to scare him off and the guys in the ring trade more basic weapons shots. There's not much to say here other than "Knobbs hits Maestro, Maestro hits Knobbs, Knobbs and Maestro are hitting each other." They head outside where Smiley goes after Jimmy to distract Knobbs, allowing Norman to hit Brian with a pipe. Maestro rolls Knobbs up for the pin.

Rating: D-. I just sat through five minutes of Maestro to set up a Norman Smiley vs. Brian Knobbs match. This is what I've come to in my life. It's also proof that there's more to this kind of stuff than just hitting people with weapons. People remember Road Dogg, Al Snow and Crash doing the same weak spots because they did them with some charisma and other creative spots to go with it. Also it helped when they did things outside the ring area but that could go horribly for WCW. Anyway, match was as bad as you would expect it to be.

We look at Malenko beating Mysterio on Nitro.

Tag Team Titles: Kidman/Konnan vs. Barbarian/Jerry Flynn

I'm assuming this is a title match with Kidman and Konnan defending in case you're really new at this. Torrie is in a backless green top and even Barbarian seems to notice her. After far too many catchphrases and unintelligible gibberish from the Animals, Flynn goes outside to hit on Torrie and gets slapped in the face. She's not into mullets I guess. Eddie goes after Flynn and gets both himself and Torrie ejected. There goes the interest in the match. As this is going on, Konnan and Kidman double team Barbarian with Kidman getting two off a middle rope Thesz press.

Barbarian shoves him out of the corner though and it's off to Flynn for a spinwheel kick. Yes Jerry Flynn is throwing kicks people. I'm stunned too. A belly to belly gets two on Kidman before it's off to Barbarian for a headbutt and a powerbomb, putting him on the same list as Lodi and Sid. Now there are three names you'll probably never see together again. Barbarian misses a top rope headbutt but catches Kidman on top with a huge belly to belly superplex. Cool move actually. Everything breaks down and Kidman hits a high cross body to pin Barbarian.

Rating: C. This was WAY better than I was expecting but that might be due to it being so simple. The Animals were never in any danger but you have two guys get in some decent looking offense on them and it's a nice little match. I still stand by my theory that Barbarian is very underrated. The guy kept getting steady work for over ten years and had some good looking power moves. He was a great role player and nothing more but he was good at what he did.

Luger says he meant to mace Goldberg on Monday and promises to make it up to Sting. The fact that these two are in a feud in 1999 tells you almost everything you need to know about where this company is heading.

Video on the Nitro Girls civil war. They really think we remember which of these are which?

The Revolution says they're not done. Saturn starts talking about the

Beatles so Malenko asks him who writes his promos. In an actually funny reply, Saturn pulls out a notebook and says "I do! I've got a hundred of them!" That one caught me by surprise. Well done.

Total Package vs. Kaz Hayashi

During the entrances, Norman Smiley vs. Jimmy Hart is announced for Nitro. Yes, that's a match they want to advertise in advance. Luger comes out with a knee brace and street clothes on, saying he's wrestled over 3,000 matches in thirteen years and won't be able to compete on this knee. Kaz is annoyed that Luger mispronounces his name and calls him a chicken so the fight is on. A suplex, choking and a clothesline set up the Rack to end this in less than a minute and a half. Total squash.

Luger holds his knee post match. There's nothing wrong with a good old fake injury.

Sid Vicious vs. Perry Saturn

Sid shoves him down to start and nails a clothesline as Shane Douglas jumps in on commentary again. Saturn's cross body is countered into a backbreaker as we seem to already be in squash mode. Malenko offers a distraction but gets stared down, only to have Saturn dive on his stable mate by mistake. So Sid is so insane that he makes the other wrestlers make mistakes?

After being dropped on the barricade, Saturn grabs a quick t-bone suplex back inside, followed by a springboard leg for two. A springboard forearm staggers Sid again but he kicks Saturn in the face to take over. Saturn kicks him low to break up the chokeslam, only to jump into it a second later. Powerbomb is good for the pin.

Rating: D-. Oh sweet mother of goodness they're turning Sid face aren't they? I know it's been hinted at all night but he's wrestling this match as the good guy. Just...no people. I know he's insane and the crowd likes him but I can't just forget all the matches he messed up, ruining Benoit's push and EVERYTHING ELSE he's done in the last few months to accept him as a face now.

I rant and rave about a lot of things WCW does but this actually bugs me. Sid needs to do WAY more than fight Rick Steiner (after turning on Steiner like a heel would. So yes, Rick Steiner should be the face in this feud and good night does that sound wrong to say) to be forgiven for what he's done in the last few months but this is the new WCW I guess.

Sid teases powerbombs on Malenko and Asya but has to fight off an invading Rick Steiner to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. Somehow this was one of the better shows of the Russo run so far. It's another meaningless show with no connection to most of the main stories, but now we get a SID face push. I can tolerate these shows a lot more easily than Nitro as it's shorter and less insane, but it doesn't mean they're fun to watch.

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Thunder – October 28, 1999: What Are You Talking About?

Thunder

Date: October 28, 1999

Location: Cox Arena, San Diego, California

Attendance: 5,091

Commentators: Larry Zbyszko, Mike Tenay

The company has been turned upside down in the last week and a half as suddenly there's a World Title tournament for the vacant belt, wrestling doesn't matter, and the Filthy Animals are ALL OVER THE PLACE. Now to be fair that means Torrie on TV a lot more so maybe this isn't all bad. Heaven help us with whatever Thunder is going to become. Let's get to it.

Opening montage.

Juventud Guerrera vs. Evan Karagias

This is a rematch from when Bret interrupted their match on Nitro a few weeks back. Evan misses an early dropkick and gets headscissored down but Juvy stops to pose. He spends too long though and gets sent into the buckle so Evan can hammer away in the corner. A spinwheel kick drops Evan but he reverses a suplex into one of his own. They're starting to pick things up a bit. Juvy nails a dropkick and a headbutt before yelling at the fans....and here's Sid so never mind.

Sid actually doesn't destroy them and lets Juvy leave. He says he's undefeated and has proof that Goldberg didn't beat him. Sid throws out an open challenge to anyone in the back and Juvy comes back in to sit on the ropes. Thankfully that's just a red herring as Benoit comes out to accept the challenge. Sid promises to cripple Benoit tonight and chokeslam the cruiserweights to restore our faith in him.

The announcers chatter about Benoit.

The Maestro is in the back and talks about being the star of the show. This character is as much of a disaster as Berlyn.

Chavo Guerrero is looking for Goldberg because he wants TV time.

Prince Iaukea vs. The Maestro

Good grief end this show already. Iaukea dropkicks Maestro as he turns around so Maestro points a finger at him. THE DEVASTATION! We get into some basic stuff with both guys trading wristlocks until Maestro slugs him into the corner. A whip sends Prince across the ring and Maestro follows him up with even more punches. Prince chops and backdrops for two but eats a knee lift and gets caught in an STF (the Encore) for the

submission. Short, bad and the Maestro vs. Prince Iaukea. I think that sums the whole thing up.

Quick recap of the Revolution vs. the Filthy Animals with Torrie being kidnapped on Monday.

Perry Saturn/Dean Malenko vs. Silver King/El Dandy

Shane says Asya is keeping Torrie wherever the Revolution wants her. Malenko threatens to break Benoit's legs on Monday in their tournament match. The Revolution throws their victims to the floor but Silver King comes back in for something like a running DDT to Saturn. Dandy comes in for a double drop toehold and a double kick to the chest to keep Saturn in trouble.

Back to King but Dean offers a distraction and Saturn kicks Silver in the face. It's off to Dean for a basement dropkick and a lot of spitting, setting up Saturn's top rope knee. The Revolution takes King outside for some choking before a suplex/high cross body combo gets two. King gets in a few shots for the tag to Dandy for a missile dropkick to Dean. A plancha takes Saturn down as well (barely touching him but the dive looked good) but Dean nails Dandy with a chair, setting up the Cloverleaf for the win.

Rating: D+. Another squash here and a bit better performance from the luchadors than I was expecting. That being said, we're two days into the Revolution vs. Animals feud and I'm already sick of both teams. Neither is likeable in the slightest and the Revolution has gone completely against their original idea. This was acceptable but at least it didn't involve the Animals.

Chavo searches for Goldberg.

Long recap of Nitro. This felt like filler.

Harlem Heat is ready for Curly Bill tonight but Chavo interrupts to talk about looking for Goldberg.

The Revolution gets in a car.

Curly Bill says there are no problems in the Rednecks and he needs to go back and tend to the moose on his ranch. Gene doesn't think ranches have moose and Curly goes off on him about being the real cowboy here. Ok that wasn't bad.

Stevie Ray vs. Curly Bill

Oh...joy. Stevie jumps him at the bell and stomps away in the corner as Booker is on commentary, talking about facing Jeff Jarrett in the tournament. Stevie misses a middle rope elbow but no sells Curly's shoulders and kicks him in the face. They head outside with Curly going face first onto the announcers' table (Booker: "ARE YOU OK?", followed by a right hand to the face). Back in and Stevie gets two off a side slam but the referee gets bumped. Dear goodness enough with that nonsense. Curly hits him with the boot but Booker comes in for a hard Harlem side kick, setting up the Slap Jack for the pin.

Rating: D-. This ref bump stuff has to stop. There's one on almost every show now and they're not even in the main events. This was a three and a half minute squash but the squasher needed a ref bump to win. That doesn't make sense and misses the entire point of basic wrestling booking.

Konnan/Kidman/Eddie Guerrero vs. Steven Regal/Chris Adams/Dave Taylor

Before the match, all of the Animals talk about wanting to do various things to the Revolution, including playing them like marks. Rey jumps in on the announcers' table to talk about the Revolution. Taylor goes right after Eddie to start and avoids an early dropkick before taking Eddie down with European uppercuts and a basement dropkick of his own.

Off to Adams, who gets caught by a rolling clothesline from a crotch grabbing (his own at least) Konnan. As Rey tries to get money out of Zbyszko, Konnan jumps over Adams in the corner but eats a European uppercut from Regal. Off to Kidman who sends Regal into the ropes, nearly knocking Adams off by mistake. Kidman throws Regal down but charges into a hot shot to change control again.

The Brits start stomping away until Kidman blocks a powerbomb. Konnan,

ever adherent to the rules, comes in to nail Adams without tagging. Kidman charges into Regal's elbow in the corner and it's off to Adams, who goes up and tries....something resembling a Superman Punch but crashes down. The hot tag brings in Guerrero to clean house as everything breaks down. Eddie hits a quick suplex on Taylor and a big frog splash is enough for the pin.

Rating: C. Not the worst match in the world, Filthy Animals annoyance aside. They're just unlikeable people who ramble on with lingo that ranges from sounding stupid to making no sense while seemingly want to rape every member of the Revolution. Somehow, one of the most likeable wrestlers of all time in Rey Mysterio is associated with this group and WCW seems to think the fans will find them to be the good guys.

Oh and the Filthy Animals steal the losers' robes for good measure.

Chavo is on the phone, saying he's going to get himself over since Goldberg isn't here to do it for him. Wrestlers using this lingo today would appeal to an extremely niche audience. In 1999, this might as well be Martian.

Berlyn speaks English to say that his master plan is in effect and we will all serve him one day. His plan is to lose to Brad Armstrong?

Chavo Guerrero Jr. vs. Lash Leroux

Lash says he's going to win the tournament and be the younger World Champion ever. I think Giant still has his beat even if he wins. Chavo comes out and reminds us that he's looking for Goldberg for no apparent reason. Lash goes right after him to start and does his splits but misses a clothesline, allowing Chavo to hook a headscissors.

A belly to back gets two for Chavo and he slugs away in the corner. Lash jawbreaks out of a chinlock and gets two of his own off a suplex. That goes nowhere so Chavo takes him into the corner for a stomping but gets forearmed in the head, setting up a chinlock. We get a very sudden BORING chant which almost feels piped in.

I would ask why a company would do that, but this is one of the least

stupid things WCW has done in recent weeks. More really basic stuff changes control a few times until Chavo gets a positive reaction and a near fall off a dropkick. Guerrero scores with a clothesline and some chops in the corner, only to get caught in Whiplash for the pin out of nowhere.

Rating: D+. So Chavo wants to find Goldberg, gets cheered by the fans and then loses to Lash Leroux. Somehow they've managed to fit that much plot into about 75 minutes after Chavo having almost nothing to do for weeks. If they could find a happy middle ground, I'd be curious to see where some of these ideas went. As it is, I barely remember them by the end of the show because of how fast they come and go.

Kidman records Buff Bagwell and Scotty Riggs talking about the finish of a match. I think I know where this is going and I can feel the headache coming.

Ernest Miller, flanked by three women, gets out of a white limo. So he's the Godfather now? I've heard worse ideas.

Berlyn vs. Jerry Flynn

Just cut the cord already. During the entrances, we hear that WCW is filming a movie in Los Angeles. My goodness it's Ready to Rumble time isn't it? Berlyn goes right at him and hits a kind of floatover DDT before cranking on a wristlock. Shouldn't that be the other way around? They trade kicks before Berlyn sends him into the ropes for a kick to the face, a nipup and another dropkick for the best looking sequence he's done in years.

More kicks to Jerry set up a belly to back but Flynn avoids a charge against the ropes. Jerry fires off his usual array of strikes but throws in some right hands to show his versatility. The Bodyguard intercepts Jimmy Hart (who is the face here anyway?) and nails Flynn for missing a charge, giving Berlyn an easy victory.

Rating: D. He's evil, German and apparently athletic when he wants to be. This character is dead in the water though and they need to find something else for him to do. That's one area where Russo truly was

excellent: finding a new character for someone. The words “creative has nothing for you” do not exist on his watch. The gimmick might be insane and ridiculous, but he would have something.

Chavo is still looking for Goldberg but finds Sid instead. “YOU WANT TV TIME?” A chokeslam leaves Chavo on a cart, end scene.

Here’s Ernest Miller with the three good looking women. After telling the rednecks to sit down, he informs us that he’ll be in the tournament on Monday against doctor’s orders. THIS warranted coming to the ring and talking?

Benoit thinks Sid is running his mouth too much. I’d say it’s more that he’s wrestling too much but that’s just me. Benoit isn’t done with Malenko either.

Scotty Riggs vs. Buff Bagwell

Some things never change. We recap Buff’s kayfabe murdering story about not wanting to job ever again because he doesn’t care for the Powers That Be. This would be the REAL part in the middle of all the fake stuff you’re seeing. I have no idea if Bagwell is a face or a heel here and I think that’s the point. Riggs doesn’t have the mirror anymore. They trade full nelsons to start until Buff breaks out and just stands in the corner.

Tenay promises us eight more tournament matches on Monday. Be still my beating heart. Riggs gets taken down in a headlock but walks into a dropkick to send him into the ropes for more staring. Some leg work keeps Bagwell down and a high cross body gets two. Riggs looks stunned because, I kid you not, that was supposed to be the finish. The referee yells at Bagwell but he small packages Riggs for the pin with the referee slowly counting it. Bagwell’s music doesn’t play and THAT WAS A SHOOT. BECAUSE FANS KNOW WHAT THAT IS!

Rating: F. “Come see Buff Bagwell! He’s bored and not trying because he doesn’t agree to our scripted finishes! By paying us your money, you’ll get to see him stand around and not care and barely put any effort into his matches!” Vince Russo was paid to think of this idea and then asked

you to pay money to watch it play out on pay per view. Russo somehow convinced people he was a genius by doing this. Maybe he's smarter than we all are and we just can't keep up with him.

Mayhem ad.

Chris Benoit vs. Sid Vicious

Please...be gentle? Sid shoves him around to start and fires off some kicks to the ribs (Daniel Bryan has nothing to worry about) followed by a right hand to the jaw. Benoit comes back with strikes of his own and a middle rope dropkick for two but the kickout sends him flying out to the floor. Back in and Benoit flashes back to Fall Brawl by going after the leg. Why he thinks Sid will sell now is anyone's guess.

A few cannonballs down onto the leg look to set up the Figure Four but Sid kicks him right back to the floor. This time the big man follows him out and drops Benoit across the barricade before taking him back in for choking, choking, forearms to the chest and more choking.

Benoit's comeback is stopped cold by a big boot and we hit the camel clutch so Sid can rest after his hard day in the ring. A few slams get two each on Benoit but he pops up and grabs a German suplex. The Swan Dive misses but Sid is too spent to follow up, allowing Benoit to slap on the Crossface. You know Sid isn't tapping though so here are Saturn and Malenko for the DQ.

Rating: D+. So to clarity, Benoit is now the guy that puts up a good fight against the bigger names but is never allowed to be on their level. Thanks for wasting our time with the Bret tribute match and the US Title reigns, because it's pretty clear that none of it means anything just a few weeks later.

Sid powerbombs everyone to make it clear that no one is on his level. The Filthy Animals run out to beat up the pieces of the Revolution to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. I can't believe I'm saying this but Nitro was more entertaining than this. Thunder continues to be almost nothing beyond

average and makes us sit through a ref bump in a Curly Bill vs. Stevie Ray match. The wrestling is bad, the stories range from nonsensical to previews for a Nitro way too complicated to keep track of. Yet somehow, I'd take this over the recent episodes. At least this is so insane that it's fascinating to watch in a way while the recent ones were a way to cure my sleepless nights.

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Thunder – October 21, 1999: Save Us Rus... Save Us Russ.....We're In Big Trouble

Thunder

Date: October 14, 1999

Location: Riverside Centroplex, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Attendance: 4,941

Commentators: Scott Hudson, Larry Zbyszko

Unfortunately this is the second half of a taping and they've taken Nash off commentary to make this far less entertaining than last week's show. It's also the go home show for Halloween Havoc but this was taped before Russo turned the promotion upside down this past Monday. Let's get to it.

Apparently Nash scared Tenay off this week.

Norman Smiley vs. The Maestro

We delay the start so Maestro can pose a bit before getting to some amateur stuff. Maestro is a somewhat bigger guy but still moves well. His movement isn't quite as good as Norman's wiggling, though unfortunately there isn't much here about Norman's screaming gimmick. A European uppercut staggers Maestro but he takes Smiley down by the legs.

The grappling doesn't work so Maestro hits a side slam and cranks on a chinlock. This is the match that's supposed to make me stick around for the rest of the show. More right hands have Smiley in some trouble but he blocks two sunset flip attempts. Back up and Smiley goes to the arm before hitting the swinging slam, setting up the dance. A brawl on the floor goes nowhere so Maestro tries and fails at an implant DDT, allowing Norman to slip on Norman's Conquest for the win.

Rating: D. I like Norman but maybe the screaming thing was good for him. The problem is that he's just a guy in trunks doing moves to someone and that's really not a good way to get people to notice you. The dancing and accent are only going to get you so far, as is good amateur skill. Maestro has potential to be a low level comedy character but I'm terrified of what's coming when Russo gets hold of him.

Lash Leroux vs. Disco Inferno video.

Horace vs. MVP

That would be Dale Torborg. Horace powers him into the corner to start and drives some shoulders into the ribs. MVP gets run over a few times so he opts for dropkicks, despite being a pretty tall guy who wouldn't usually throw dropkicks. They head outside with MVP hammering away and whipping Horace into the barricade.

Back in and Horace knees him right back to the floor as this is already going nowhere. An elbow drop gets two for Horace and he sends Horace into the steps to keep this moving at such a high rate of speed. A suplex and backbreaker get two each for Horace but he misses a charge into the

corner. MVP comes back with a suplex and punches followed by a clothesline for two. Horace shrugs it off and hits a Samoan drop for the pin.

Rating: D-. This show is basically a collection of dark matches. There's nothing to most of these matches and there's no reason for me to want to see the majority of them, but we're stuck sitting through them week after week. It's clear that this show is nothing more than a dumping ground for the people that WCW doesn't want to put on Nitro. The fact that this is going head to head with Smackdown is yet another reason why it was clear WCW had no chance against the WWF.

Video on Page vs. Flair on Sunday.

Curly Bill vs. Lash Leroux

Hudson refers to the NWO as defunct. Sweet goodness it took long enough. Curly starts fast by just kicking him in the face, once regularly and a second time to stop a charge in the corner. They head outside with Bill sending him into the steps for a move far too common around here these days. A Stunner across the top rope and a swinging neckbreaker have Lash in trouble.

They trade chops with Lash getting the worse of it, followed by a running knee from Curly. Slam, chinlock, slam, fans sit up smoking in the supernatural darkness of cold-water flats floating across the tops of cities contemplating jazz out of their boredom from this match. Lash fights up with his usual stuff but can't hit Whiplash. Curly comes back with a Fujiwara armbar but Lash is next to the ropes. In a bookend to the match, Curly charges into raised boots just like Lash did and Whiplash is good for the pin.

Rating: D. Virgil is getting six minutes on TV and is dominating about two thirds of the match and is up against a guy who will be getting a title shot on Sunday. Lash is nothing great in the ring but he's good enough to survive being the challenger of the month to Disco Inferno. I'll stay away from a rant about Disco being Cruiserweight Champion at

this point because Lash has this odd likability about him and I find it hard to complain about his matches. Also was there any reason to have him not beat a cruiserweight here?

Road Report. Whoever this schmuck is has nothing on Lee Marshall.

The First Family wants a title shot at Halloween Havoc. Don't they already have one?

Harlem Heat vs. Steve Regal/Dave Taylor

No entrance for Harlem Heat as they lost the titles on Monday in a non-built match, so I'm assuming this is non-title.. Regal and Booker trade arm work to start until a forearm staggers the Englishman. Off to Ray for another elbow, which freaks Regal out, sending him over to the corner for a tag. It seems that we're in a comedy match.

Taylor comes in and gets hit in the face a lot but he uppercuts Booker to the floor for some European uppercuts from Finlay. Regal has settled down enough to work over Booker in the corner, only to miss a charge and get caught in a Rock Bottom. They stretch things out a bit by having Finlay pull Stevie off the apron, only to have the tag made just a few seconds later. Stevie comes in and cleans house, only to have the First Family come in for the DQ.

Rating: D+. Regal tried but even his magic can't save a match that ends with Knobbs and Morrus running in for a DQ. Hopefully Russo gets rid of these two schmucks but for some reason I don't think even he can overcome the powers of nepotism or the urge to give someone a juvenile name.

The Heat cleans house post match.

Video on Sid.

Video on Goldberg vs. Sid.

Video on Goldberg. My goodness cancel this show already.

Video on Berlyn vs. Armstrong.

Kendall Windham vs. Brad Armstrong

Windham hammers away to start like the big goon that he is but Brad comes back with some armdrags and right hands in the corner. They trade arm work because we haven't seen that enough lately. Curly offers a cheap shot from the floor and rakes Brad's back to validate his paycheck. Back in and Kendall mixes it up with a chinlock, slam and second chinlock to kill off ninety seconds.

Brad fights up with a variety of shots to the face, followed by a powerslam for two. Curly offers a distraction so Kendall can hit Brad low. That doesn't seem to do much so Kendall shoves Brad into the referee. For the love of all things good and holy this match needed a ref bump??? A boot shot goes bad and Brad's Russian legsweep is good for the pin.

Rating: F. Good grief just let them wrestle. Or actually wait don't let them wrestle as I can't handle two Redneck matches in one night. This is another bad match on a bad show which is a lame duck episode anyway and the last dying breath of the old regime before Russo and pal come in to destroy the house. That being said, END THIS SHOW ALREADY.

Halloween Havoc card.

Juventud Guerrera/Silver King vs. Blitzkrieg/Kaz Hayashi

When you need a filler, call Silver King. Juvy and Blitzkrieg start things off with some posing before Blitzkrieg nails some kicks to send Juvy over for a tag. For some reason the teams switch corners on the apron. Somehow that's the least illogical thing on this show so far. King misses a running dropkick in the corner and gets cradled for two.

Silver gets right back into things by launching Blitzkrieg into the air for a crash before stopping to do a dance. He's no Norman Smiley. Juvy and Kaz come in with Guerrera mocking a bow to Hayashi before kicking him down. They trade strikes until Juvy DDTs him down and hammers away in the corner. There's the crotch chop and it's back to Silver King who gets

caught in a spinebuster from Blitzkrieg. This is an incredibly fast paced match so far.

Kaz dropkicks his partner by mistake and Silver King adds an enziguri but still can't make the hot tag. An airplane spin into a faceplant finally allows the hot tag to Juvy, who comes in with a springboard double crossbody as everything breaks down. Blitzkrieg avoids a dive and hooks a chinlock for a well earned breather.

We take a break and come back with Juvy in a Hart Attack with Kaz playing Bret and nailing a missile dropkick. The tribute to 80s tag teams continues with Blitzkrieg playing Ax to Kaz's Smash, if Ax could hit a springboard legdrop that is. A standing corkscrew splash gets two on Guerrera but he comes back with a running kick to the face. Silver King kicks Blitzkrieg in the back but it's still not enough for the hot tag.

After some double teaming has him in trouble, Juvy bulldogs both heels (I think?) down and makes the hot tag. It's off to Silver King with a double missile dropkick but Blitzkrieg sunset flips him for two. Juvy springboards in again to cross body Blitzkrieg down and the referee just counts the cover anyway. Hayashi moonsaults down onto Juvy as Silver King electric chairs Blitzkrieg for good measure. King adds a double jump moonsault but Kaz makes a diving save. Kaz dropkicks Silver King and Blitzkrieg to the floor, only to walk into the Juvy Driver for the pin.

Rating: B. This match was WAY too good for this show. It's nothing they haven't done before a million times but my goodness they were moving around in there. It helps that it's on one of the worst shows I've seen in years so the expectations were really low coming in. Fun stuff here though and the only thing worth seeing on the show.

Rick Steiner vs. La Parka

Steiner babbles to start before taking La Parka's head off with a Steinerline. La Parka gets in a single hiptoss before Steiner suplexes him down and whips him into the barricade. Rick's reward for "wrestling" this way? A TV Title shot this Sunday. A release German suplex gets two back inside, followed by another belly to belly and the Steiner Bulldog for the pin. I'm so glad they had La Parka win on Monday so this could

happen on Thursday.

Clips of Benoit winning the TV Title for some reason.

Hogan vs. Sting video.

Highlight video from Nitro. This was like three minutes long but the show still didn't make sense.

Video on Luger vs. Hart.

Total Package vs. Buff Bagwell

No entrance for Buff, but to be fair he lost to La Parka on Monday. Hudson talks up that loss though, meaning the commentary was recorded later, likely due to the threat of Nash. In another casualty of the taped schedule, Bagwell is his normal self here instead of being uninterested like he was on Nitro. Luger hammers on his back to start but gets dropkicked out to the floor as things settle down. The announcers try to play it up as Bagwell getting a wakeup call on Monday, even though I'd assume he's back to not caring on Monday.

Luger tries to get back in but gets sent right back to the floor for another beating from Bagwell. Elizabeth offers a distraction so Luger can nail Buff in the back of the head before sending him into the steps for good measure. Now it's into the barricade before Luger slowly stomps away. Back in and Luger stomps in the corner, where you can see some of the mat coming up. Bagwell comes back by ramming him into the buckle pad over and over, only to get run over by a clothesline. Viva el chinlock for a bit before Buff makes his clothesline based comeback. Liz crotches him on top though and the Rack ends this.

Rating: D. So Bagwell's rebound from the loss on Monday is to lose in a glorified squash here as the continuity gets all screwed up. Luger looked better here than he has in a long time, but to be fair that really isn't saying much. I saw these two wrestle enough in 1997/1998 that I never thought I'd want to see them again, and it turns out I'm right. Oh and no mention whatsoever of Liz being guitared on Monday. Because, you know, it hadn't happened yet.

Overall Rating: F+. I wonder if I can get watching this show covered under my insurance plan. It has to be worthy of some hospitalization. I wanted to give it the lowest passing grade possible due to that tag match but my goodness this was horrible. It's literally the last TV show (aside from Saturday Night which meant jack by this point) from this booking era and it shows horribly. As bad as Thunder has been over the years, this is one of the worst episodes they've ever put on and that's saying quite a bit.

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