

Monday Nitro – January 31, 2000: That's About The Dumbest Thing They Could Do

Monday Nitro #225

Date: January 31, 2000

Location: First Union Arena, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 7,514

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Mark Madden, Mike Tenay

We're officially in the Madden era now, meaning things are clearly dying all around us. The big story here is that Sid is World Champion again after winning it back from Nash after having it stripped earlier in the night after an off air referee's decision. Also, Ric Flair is back. Let's get to it.

We get a quick clip of the Nash vs. Sid three day saga from last week.

Nash isn't going to be here tonight but he's named Jeff acting commissioner.

Here's the NWO to get things going complete with their girls. Jeff repeats that Nash isn't going to be here tonight but he's in charge. Well done with already changing the power. Steiner rips on the women here in Wilkes-Barre and offers the Harris Brothers a spot on the team. Well you had to expect that would happen. It's back to Jeff, who says he's going to get the first shot at Sid at SuperBrawl. Tonight it's Jeff/the Twins vs. Sid/two partners of his choosing. Jarrett is open to bribes and that's it. They kept this short and got right to the point so well done.

Sid, Flair and Harlem Heat arrive in order.

Funk asks Arn to go get Flair but Anderson tells him to go find Flair himself.

Cruiserweight Title Tournament First Round: Lash Leroux vs. Evan Karagias

Lash makes the mistake of going after 3 Count to start and walks into a powerslam from Evan. The band takes him to the floor and Evan hits a big dive to take them out again. Back in and Lash knocks him off the ropes and does the Bourbon Street Blues (the punches into the splits) but 3 Count makes another save. Evan's full nelson doesn't work but Lash comes back with a Diamond Cutter Russian legsweep (Whiplash 2000) for the pin. Really, really dull stuff here.

The NWO sends their bad catering to Sid.

Dustin Rhodes tells us not to try this at home. That's not something you often hear in WCW.

David, Crowbar and Daffney are insane and Crowbar talks like Gordon Solie. Now this actually sounds insane instead of some of the other modern CRAZY wrestlers. The Mamalukes attack and the match starts fast.

Tag Team Titles: Mamalukes vs. David Flair/Crowbar

They head outside to start with Vito being backdropped onto a bunch of snow. That's about it for being outside as everyone comes inside with Crowbar carrying a shovel. I'm going out on a limb and guessing this is a street fight. Vito drives a trashcan lid into David's crotch and the other two come inside.

Cue Ms. Hancock to watch from the aisle as Johnny slams Crowbar a few times. Crowbar fights back with a slingshot legdrop onto a chair onto Johnny's face. It's table time but Crowbar, being a bit off, puts the table on top of Johnny instead of the other way around. Disco breaks up a moonsault, allowing Vito to splash Crowbar through the table to retain.

Rating: D. Another ECW style brawl with too many moving parts to have any really stand out. I'm sure we'll get one more pay per view matches out of these teams, even though they've pretty definitively eliminated any chance of the titles changing back. At least Crowbar and Flair are entertaining with how out there they've gotten.

Brian Knobbs has a bribe for Jarrett in exchange for putting Finlay in the ring against Luger later. Jeff promises they'll be in there at the

same time.

Here's Booker T. with something to say but his music stops halfway down the aisle. This brings out J. Biggs who says that music is the property of Harlem Heat, meaning only Stevie Ray and Big T. can listen to it. Instead, Booker can use this song instead. A generic rock song plays and Biggs calls it a meaningless song for a meaningless man.

Now we get to the infamous part of this story: Biggs says that the T, as in of Booker T., is also Harlem Heat property, so Booker can't use it anymore, or the flames on his attire either. So yes, somehow this feud is over Harlem Heat, which is apparently an entity instead of just a tag team, owning the rights to a letter of the alphabet. Harlem Heat leaves and Midnight shows up to go after Biggs, but Harlem Heat comes back out for the save. We're officially in one of the dumbest stories WCW ever did and you know how much ground that covers.

3 Count beats up Norman Smiley.

Jarrett tells Finlay that he'll be in the same ring as Luger, as he referees a match between the Total Package and Brian Knobbs.

Norman gets inside the Demon's casket and the lid closes. Instead of fighting for the US Title, he's inside a coffin to help him fight off a boy band.

Kidman vs. The Wall

Rematch of that Cell match they had a few weeks back. Kidman slugs away to start but gets kicked in the face. A backbreaker sets up some choking from the Wall, before he blocks a sunset flip with even more choking. Well no one ever accused him of being the most versatile guy in the world. Wall plants him with a clothesline but YOU CAN'T PUT KIDMAN ON THE TOP ROPE, as he kicks Wall away and hits a missile dropkick. His high cross body is countered into a powerslam though and Wall grabs him by the throat again. This brings out Vampiro to kick Wall in the back, giving Kidman a roll up win.

Rating: D+. That ends the run of match of the night for Kidman but given

who he was in there with, it's hard to argue against him being the hottest thing in the company at the moment. Kidman is trying really hard lately and was able to carry Wall to a passable match. That alone makes him into a more impressive performer than most.

Here's Flair for his big return speech. He brags about being bigger than the Steelers, Eagles and Pirates and lists off some hockey players who aren't as big a star as he is. Ten years ago there were some people who could run with him, but Space Mountain still has the longest line. A few weeks ago the Powers That Be asked him to be the commissioner, but he turned them down because he's the greatest wrestler alive today. He came up here because the deal was right and now he needs to say something to Terry Funk.

Flair can't believe that Funk has been implying that Flair would support him, because there's a big difference between Ric Flair and Terry Funk. This brings out Funk, who is loudly booed. He calls Flair banana nosed and horse toothed but praises him for all those World Titles. However, Funk senses some jealousy in Ric's voice. Maybe it comes from Mick Foley saying Flair isn't in Funk's league in his book? STOP PROMOTING OTHER COMPANY'S STUFF!

Anyway, Flair needs to grow up and help in the fight against the NWO, but then tells him to go be Governor of North Carolina and leave the fight to himself and Arn Anderson. Flair wants to fight, even though he's head to toe in Armani. Funk comes in, punches him down, and puts on the spinning toe hold until security comes out for the save. So yeah, they're fighting over who is a bigger legend and Flair seems to be a heel, even though the fans booed Funk. This is one of the top stories in the company at the moment.

Jarrett thinks Funk and Flair will be Sid's partners.

Sting is in some movie.

Sid isn't worried about the NWO.

Ms. Hancock wants to know why Lenny and Lodi haven't been wearing their suits but they say they're done. That's not cool with Hancock, who

reminds them of the West Hollywood Blonds stunt that almost got them fired. Lenny, and I quote: "Oh yeah, we're REAL lucky to have a job in WCW." They're sick of this stupid "gimmick" and tell Hancock to come find them when the bun is out of her hair. So much for the fourth wall.

Total Package vs. Brian Knobbs

Liz and Luger have the Sting stuff with them. Fit Finlay is guest referee here for no apparent reason. Knobbs jumps Luger to start and elbows him in the face. The Pit Stop is loaded up but Finlay pushes Brian's arm down for some reason. Knobbs responds by...doing it anyway. They head outside with Knobbs whipping him into the barricade, only to have Finlay blast Knobbs from behind.

Back in and Brian, apparently not hurt by a shot to the head, fires off clotheslines and drops some elbows as this is the most motivated he's been in years. Brian goes up for a splash but Finlay stands in front of him, allowing Liz to hit Knobbs with a bat. That's it for Finlay as he leaves, allowing Luger to Pillmanize Brian's arm. We get some smack talk about Hogan and I'm assuming it's a no contest.

Rating: D-. So we have Finlay vs. Knobbs in an actually interesting feud (gah that's hard to say) and then Luger wanting to fight Hogan for no reason other than the script says so. Knobbs now has a broken arm, so maybe he'll be off screen for a bit? Somehow this was better than I was expecting.

Norman Smiley comes out of a coffin dressed as the Demon. Egads.

Dale Torborg is mad that someone has stolen his outfit. So much for staying in character.

Shane Helms vs. Norman Smiley

Norman is the Demon because he's the original Santino Marella. Helms starts fast with a Russian legsweep but Norman pops up like a skilled guy stuck in a horrible comedy gimmick and slams Shane down. In the middle of this match of all things, we hear that Hogan will be on Thunder this week. That doesn't get a big segment of its own? Well of course it

doesn't. Helms busts out an airplane spin but Norman comes back with a giant swing. It's time to dance but the other 3 Count members have to be dispatched. The Norman's Conquest is good for the quick submission.

Cue Torborg with the cops to chase Norman off.

Page and Kimberly are in the back when the Mamalukes come up. Vito gets a quick feel of her but Kimberly thinks it was Disco, who calls her a bimbo for accusing him. Page beats Disco up out of principle.

Diamond Dallas Page vs. Disco Inferno

Page drags Inferno into the arena and they get all up in DJ Ran's area. DJ Ran still had a job in 2000??? They fight through the crowd with Page in control and the bell finally rings once they're inside. A top rope clothesline and Rock Bottom knock Disco even sillier (yet doesn't mess with that perfect hair) but he comes back with, what else, a low blow. Disco's usual neckbreaker and middle rope elbow set up the dancing, only to have Page plant him with a helicopter bomb. The Diamond Cutter ends this in a hurry, as it should have. I guess Page is a full on face again.

Jeff Jarrett/Harris Twins vs. Terry Funk/Sid Vicious/Ric Flair

And there's no Flair. It's a brawl in the aisle to start with Sid fighting the Twins and Funk not being able to keep up. Sid takes we'll say Ron inside and Funk throws in a chair, which the Twins quickly throw back out. You can hear a fan complaining about his eye hurting because the fans are that silent. Ron gets backdropped to the floor but Don breaks up a powerbomb on Jarrett. So the powerbomb is legal again?

Things settle down with Funk working on Ron's leg, only to get chaired in the back by Don. Off to Jarrett to hammer away in the corner, only to have Funk grab a quick piledriver for a breather. It's off to Sid to clean house and here comes Flair to go after Funk as we flash back to 1989. Actually that's a great thing. Security drags him away and Ron gets chokeslammed with Don making a save. That earns Don a powerbomb but Jeff comes in with the guitar to knock Sid cold for the pin.

Rating: D. So is Flair a heel? Because that would be about the dumbest

thing they could do right now. Therefore, we'll go with the idea that Flair is a heel at the moment. The match was there so Flair could come out and attack Funk to set up their match down the road, even though I'm not sure how much interest there is in the two of them fighting, as they're a combined 106 years old at this point.

Overall Rating: D-. So they bring Flair back and turn him heel, again leaving Sid and Funk as the top faces in this company. At this point, I really can't bother getting annoyed anymore. Between that and Finlay and Knobbs having one of the most developed stories on the roster, this company really is just melting before our eyes. On top of all that, it's becoming clearer and clearer that Jarrett is just going to hold the US Title without frequently, or even occasionally, defending it, meaning a big chunk of the roster is just running around fighting for no reason. It's such a waste but it's what we're stuck with.

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Monday Nitro – January 24, 2000: The First of Many

Monday Nitro #224

Date: January 24, 2000

Location: Staples Center, Los Angeles, California

Attendance: 12,106

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Bobby Heenan, Mike Tenay

It's actually a big show for once as we're crowning a new World Champion tonight because the idea of waiting for pay per view is a foreign concept in this company. Kevin Nash is already in the title match but Sid has to qualify by beating Jeff Jarrett, who I don't think is allowed to fight for the title. Let's get to it.

This show is dedicated to Bobby Duncum Jr. He had potential.

Nash, Jarrett and Steiner arrive in separate limos with their women for the evening, including Major Gunns and someone who looks a heck of a lot like Victoria/Tara. Scott Hall is here too.

Cruiserweight Title Tournament First Round: Psychosis vs. Kaz Hayashi

The finals are at SuperBrawl, Juventud is out with Psychosis and Kaz gets a jobber entrance. Presumably annoyed by this, Kaz shoulders him down to start and nails a nice release German. An enziguri knocks Psychosis to the floor and Kaz nails a plancha. Back in and Psychosis nails a clothesline before going after the knee.

After a few kicks, it's back to the floor where Juvy gets in a People's Elbow. So we have a fake Rock and a fake Road Dogg. I wonder who they're ripping off next. Back in and Kaz dives right back to the floor to take Juvy out. Psychosis goes up top but dives into a dropkick to the ribs. Well at least they're finally picking things up a bit. And they head back inside where Kaz misses a spinwheel kick and gets rolled up for the pin.

Rating: C-. Well the flying wasn't bad but Juvy's Rock impression, which still just makes me want to watch Rock, is taking away from everything else in the match. Psychosis, while not the best in the world, was clearly winning here because Kaz just isn't very exciting in the ring. At least the division is getting some attention for a change.

Terry Funk and Arn Anderson arrive.

Nash says Jarrett has failed his physical and can't go tonight, but the

boss has a plan.

After a break, Nash makes Funk vs. Bam Bam Bigelow in a hardcore match.

The Wall vs. Kid Romeo

Squash time. We hear about Nash putting out a \$15,000 bounty on Funk. This would be shocking, until you realize that Funk is probably the second biggest face in the company right now. Romeo fires off dropkicks to start and actually knocks Wall to the ropes. He doesn't knock Wall out to the floor as Wall jumps over the ropes to get there but at least Romeo got him halfway. Romeo's plancha barely works but he scores with an enziguri back inside, only to try a sunset flip and get chokeslammed for the pin. Wall barely had any offense until the ending.

Sid thinks something is afoot with the Jarrett absence.

Arn tries to talk to Bigelow but Bam Bam would beat up his mother for \$15,000. Anderson: "It's your funeral."

Scott Steiner and Hall offer the Power Plant guys a chance to fight tonight. Their pick: Al Greene. One of the guys who didn't get picked was none other than Christopher Daniels, who worked a dark match before the show.

Norman Smiley vs. Shannon Moore

Dang I don't know who to cheer for. Norman, in Dodgers gear, interrupts the song, therefore making him the instant heel. It also earns him a quick 3-1 beating until it's just Shannon in the ring. Norman fights up and hits a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker and IT'S DANCE TIME! Moore doesn't care for the spankings and tries a rollup, only to get countered into a front powerbomb.

It's time to get the rest of the boys involved but Norman is of course way too smart for them (meaning he has an IQ higher than a squid). Shannon is back up with an Asai moonsault to the floor though and Norman is actually in trouble for a change. Back inside and Norman slaps on the namesake Conquest for the submission. It's pretty sad that this is a major upgrade in feuds for Norman, but I'll take what I can get.

Post match it's time to sing again but Moore is still down. Instead, Norman clears the ring and dances for them.

Al Greene vs. Tank Abbott

Abbott knees him into the ribs, punches him in the corner, slams him down, and knocks Greene out with a big right hand for his longest match yet.

Tank yells at his former UFC bodyguard, who Heenan interviews after a break. The bodyguard, who isn't named, says Abbott is a sellout.

Here's Ernest Miller, now with blond hair, who promises to whip everybody as soon as he can get back in the ring. The fat boy in the front row can sit down and it's dance time. How many people in this company dance at the moment?

Greene is loaded into an ambulance and the NWO laughs.

Terry Funk vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

Anything goes of course. Bigelow jumps him in the back to start and drags the elder statesman to the arena for some choking with a well placed rope. Some chair shots knock Funk towards the ring but he's still able to avoid the top rope headbutt. They're quickly back on the floor and Funk busts out an Asai moonsault of his own to drop the big man. Now it's Funk with the chair but, ever the crazy man, he tries to headbutt Bigelow and just hurts himself even worse.

Bigelow throws it back inside and this time the top rope headbutt connects, but here are Finlay and Knobbs to help out their mentor (I guess?). That's fine with Bigelow who easily knocks both guys away and loads up another headbutt. He's a man of limited offense. This time though, Knobbs puts a chair over Funk and Bigelow knocks himself cold, giving Terry the pin.

Rating: D. So Funk is in a hardcore feud and a main event feud, thereby making this company more and more like ECW every single week. The match was exactly what you would expect from these two (both former ECW World Champions oddly enough) and the addition of Knobbs and Finlay doesn't

make it any better.

Funk promises reinforcements against Nash on Thunder.

Don Harris vs. Sid Vicious

If Sid wins, he faces Nash for the title later tonight. Harris is replacing Jarrett because....I have no idea why. Sid is smart enough to go after Don before he can even get his jacket off because you know there's going to be cheating here. They head outside with Sid in control, but he takes too long throwing Don inside and the twins are already switching. Ron clotheslines Sid out to the floor and it's another switch. We hit the reverse chinlock for a bit before the twins plant Sid with a double slam. Back up and Sid grabs a chokeslam on Don, who rolls outside for a switch, so Sid powerbombs Ron for the pin.

Rating: D. This is a thing that happened. I'm not sure what else there is to say about it but I'm sure that Nash will be able to tell the twins apart (or that he watched the match. Well in theory as not many other people were) and it's going to be a loophole. Boring match of course, but did you expect anything else from the Harris Twins?

Vampiro vs. Kidman

Torrie comes out wearing basically a zebra print bikini. Vampiro misses a kick to start and they circle each other a bit. A headscissors doesn't do much good for Kidman as Vampiro throws him down with a release powerbomb. We cut to the crowd and OH GOOD LORD NO IT'S DAVID ARQUETTE! Please cut away from him. Please. I can't handle it. Kidman reverses a powerbomb as only he can but he gets planted with a side slam for two.

Vampiro misses the top rope legdrop and Kidman hits a big plancha to take him out on the floor. Back up and Kidman dropkicks him to the floor, only to have a slingshot plancha caught. That's fine with Kidman as he slips down the back and sends him into the post to take over again. Torrie seems way into this. The BK Bomb gets two and Vampiro's DDT gets the same, much to the latter's shock.

A little miscommunication sets up a release Rock Bottom from Vampiro but

he gets dropkicked out of the air. That's fine with Vampiro who counters a hurricanrana into a powerbomb for two more. With nothing else working, Vampiro loads up a superbomb but you can't superbomb Kidman (that doesn't have the same ring to it), who hurricanranas Vampiro down for the pin.

Rating: B. Again, WHY IS KIDMAN NOT DOING SOMETHING IMPORTANT??? He just got done with three matches at one pay per view and he's had the best match on the last three TV shows, but he can't get anywhere near the US Title because that's Jarrett's and he can't get anywhere near the TV Title because it was literally trashed a few months ago. Such is life in WCW.

Arn Anderson is on the phone with champ. "Get your pants on. Can you be in Vegas for Thunder?"

Nash gets a massage, which is part of his plan to win the World Title.

Vampiro has something to say but his mic doesn't work.

Total Package vs. Booker T.

Liz does an over the top introduction for Luger, who then babbles on about Sting. Just get him back so he can crush Luger and be done with it. No one can compare to Luger, including Hulk Hogan himself. There's SuperBrawl I guess. Booker comes out and slugs away because he should be moving up the ladder but we need a Road Wild 1997 rematch.

An early Rock Bottom gets two on Luger and the ax kick (good looking one) knocks him silly but Liz offers a distraction. Cue Midnight to take care of Liz, allowing Booker to hit a big side kick, only to have Big T. sneak in with a slap jack to knock Booker silly, setting up Luger's Rack for the unconscious win. So glad to see Booker getting knocked cold again so the Rack can beat him one more time to set up the big main event Luger vs. Hogan feud that is happening for no apparent reason.

Post match Sting's music comes on and we have a shadowy figure with a bat on the stage. Smoke comes on and whisks him away however. Great. So now Luger is feuding with Sting, Hogan and Warrior.

Vampiro thinks the WWF sabotaged his mic and wants a rematch with Kidman.

David Flair, Crowbar and Daffney have an idea for the upcoming Tag Team Title match.

Tag Team Titles: Brian Knobbs/Fit Finlay vs. Mamalukes

The Mamalukes are defending but before either team comes out, David Flair, Crowbar and Daffney take over all three commentary spots. David takes over Tony's job and actually isn't terrible considering he's sounding normal with a twinge of crazy. Disco is suddenly fine with being with the Mamalukes after trying to make them lose more than once. Daffney thinks they're the Marmadukes and Marmalades. Crowbar: "I'm like Bobby Eaton and you have the mat skills of Sweet Stan Lane."

They shove each other around to start and the challengers get the early advantage. David: "This one time, at band camp, I hit someone over the head with my crowbar." Standards and Practices come out to watch but only Ms. Hancock sticks around. The camera stays on her for a bit before we see Vito working on Knobbs in the corner. Disco and Hancock stare each other down and Crowbar brings up the crimson mask. Crowbar isn't half bad as a play by play guy. "Double ax handle to the chest! That could cave in the upper thorax!"

Both challengers crush Johnny in the corner as David starts dancing on the table. Hancock leaves with David and Daffney following as Finlay hits the Regal Roll on Johnny. Disco offers a distraction so Vito can get in a belt shot for two as everything breaks down. Knobbs throws a chair at Finlay by mistake (Crowbar: "A FAUX PAS!"), setting up Vito's swinging inverted DDT to retain the belts.

Rating: D. Crowbar and Hancock were the highlights of the match. There's only so much you can expect from these four, but they're already better in the ring than Flair and Crowbar, almost by default. You could barely keep track of the match with all the shenanigans though, and that gets old in a hurry.

Here's Nash with something to say, though first he has to steal a fan's sign about Hall being afraid of O'Doul's beer (non-alcoholic). The fans want Goldberg but "he doesn't work here anymore." He and Sid are about to fight but since the powerbomb is so dangerous, it's banned from use

tonight. Well Nash already beat Sid in a powerbomb match without using a powerbomb so that really doesn't change much. The NWO is on it's way to Vegas so it's one on one.

WCW World Title: Sid Vicious vs. Kevin Nash

Thankfully Nash just stayed in the ring instead of leaving like so many people (including Nash in the past) have done before. Sid shoves him to the floor to start but Nash cheats to win a test of strength to take over. They head outside again as the announcers actually talk about Thunder being taped tomorrow night. I know it's not exactly a secret but it's not something you hear about that often. We hit the sleeper on Sid back inside because Nash needs to rest a bit.

Tony's logic on the match: a loss here makes the NWO even stronger. Sid's arm goes up after the second drop but he drives Nash into the referee in the corner. A big boot and legdrop set up the hand to the ear to see if the fans want a powerbomb. Cue Jarrett (Nash LIED???) but Sid takes the guitar away to blast Nash, but Sid is smart enough to play possum before crawling over military style for the pin and the title. BIG pop for that.

Rating: D. As I think everyone guessed coming in, this was a slow and mostly dull power match. The ending would have been better suited after a 10-15 minute match, but I don't think the world was ready for Sid vs. Nash getting that much time in the year 2000. I'll give them this though: the idea of Sid outsmarting someone is about as entertaining a bit of fiction as I've seen in a long time.

Confetti falls to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This show is getting downright tolerable. Above all else they now have a clear focus in the main event, which is more than you could say a few weeks back. Back then there were so many focuses that it was almost impossible to keep track of what was going on. Unfortunately that focus is on Sid, which isn't the most interesting idea in the world.

Other than that there's a more solid undercard being developed, but it would be nice to see some of the people move up the ladder and WAY less

emphasis on the hardcore stuff. We get it: you can hit each other with trashcan lids and chairs and Brian Knobbs is totally interesting and worthy of pushing at least in the general direction of the space shuttle. I'm scared to think of who Funk is going to get as a reinforcement, but I'm hoping it's just Sid so we don't have to have anyone else coming in. Or maybe it's Flair, which would work a bit better. Not a good show this week, but at least it's a few steps ahead of where they were.

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Monday Nitro – January 17, 2000: WCW Is Dead

Monday Nitro #223

Date: January 17, 2000

Location: Value City Arena, Columbus, Ohio

Attendance: 10,646

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Bobby Heenan, Mike Tenay

I have to say this way too often around here, but everything has changed again. Benoit won the World Title last night and that's the last you're going to see of him in WCW. Unfortunately that's also the case for

Malenko, Guerrero and Saturn, who all quit when Kevin Sullivan was announced as the fired Vince Russo's replacement. The Filthy tried to get out as well but didn't have such an easy escape. Now we get to see how everything falls out so let's get to it.

The NWO arrives and Nash leaves Jeff's hand hanging in a funny bit.

Kidman vs. Psychosis

We immediately start with a match and Kidman gets an early advantage off a headscissors and stops a charge by raising a boot. A high cross body gets two but Psychosis low bridges him to the floor and hits a big dive over the top. Thankfully the whole landing on Kidman's head part didn't cripple him. Back in and a nice top rope spinwheel kick gets two as the announcers promise to address all the major changes after last night's show.

They head outside again with Kidman being sent into the barricade but he's still able to dropkick Psychosis out of the air back inside. Psychosis counters a superplex into a super sitout gordbuster for two, only to walk into a wheelbarrow suplex. That earns Kidman a DDT and the guillotine legdrop for a very close two. YOU CAN'T POWERBOMB KIDMAN though and the faceplant gets the pin. This would be four Kidman matches in two days without a Shooting Star.

Rating: B. Off the top of my head, the best match WCW has had since the main event of Mayhem back in November. You can immediately see the cruiserweights being brought back to a respectable place as they were allowed to just go out and have a good match instead of being used as target practice for the heavyweights. They're already off to a good start.

Now we get the big fallout from last night in the form of a statement from Arn Anderson. Terry Funk got beaten up last night for doing what he believed in and that's what a real man does. Anderson has always tried to do what he said and last night he promised to call the match down the middle. Then he started watching the match instead of refereeing and he didn't notice Sid's foot under the ropes when Benoit made him tap out. Therefore the title is vacant.

To recap our title holders, we have David Flair, Crowbar (both of whom lost last night), Brian Knobbs and Ed Ferrara.

The Harris Brothers are in suits again and now guarding the NWO's locker room. I'm so glad we had them turn a few weeks ago just to turn back already.

Booker says he hasn't forgotten where he came from and apparently he and Stevie knew Big T. back in the day. They decided he was all wrong for them and Booker didn't know he was out of jail. That's already more backstory than we get for most new characters.

Here's the new Harlem Heat, with Stevie saying he and Big T. are willing to give Booker another chance. Booker and Midnight come out but Stevie wants Midnight to leave. Stevie mentions Booker borrowing his bike to go get candy as a kid but the brawl is on. The team takes Booker down and Stevie wants a referee in here right now.

Booker T. vs. Big T.

Both guys are in street clothes. A quick Pearl River Plunge drops Booker and a World's Strongest Slam does the same. Booker comes back with a forearm and ax kick followed by the Book End but Stevie throws in a slap jack to knock Booker silly for the pin. This was nothing.

Vampiro vs. Disco Inferno

The Mamalukes are out with Disco and tell him there will be no dancing. During the entrances, Tony basically begs the fans to come to the Thunder taping tomorrow night. Vampiro nails a spinwheel kick to start and another spin kick to the chest. Disco's monkey flip doesn't get him anywhere and Vampiro plants him with a release Rock Bottom, only to miss a corkscrew moonsault.

The Mamalukes validate their paycheck by attacking Disco as this is actually a faster pace than you would expect. It's like they're actually being allowed to try for a change. A swinging neckbreaker gets two for Disco but Vampiro avoids an elbow and hits another top rope spinwheel kick, followed by the Nail in the Coffin for the pin.

Rating: C. Nothing great here but like I said, they were trying for a change. It's such a different atmosphere already with Russo gone for one show and you can see the quality and effort going up. Vampiro looked decent here and I can see why they wanted to push him, but they need to do something with him already.

Scott Steiner presents Nash with some women for secretary interviews, including the yet to be named Major Gunns, Shakira and Midajah. Steiner wants to play Twister.

Tag Team Titles: 3 Count vs. David Flair/Crowbar

We get a 3 Count performance before the match to really make this show feel better. Evan is the odd man out here. 3 Count dives onto the champs to start and here are Standards and Practices to scout the match. We settle down with David suplexing Moore and dropping him with a belly to back for two. Daffney hisses at Evan on the floor so David runs over for the save. Helms superkicks Crowbar down and Shannon adds a top rope spinning splash for two. David low bridges Shannon to the floor, allowing Crowbar to hit a reverse DDT for the pin.

Rating: D+. I loved 3 Count and there's nothing bad about looking at Stacy Keibler but this really didn't work. At the end of the day, David Flair just isn't ready for this spot. He's trying, but it's very similar to Erik Watts in the early 90s: he needed a lot more seasoning before being thrown into this spot.

We get an encore!

Nash asks the ladies to leave so they can have some NWO business. Bret is nowhere to be seen. They need to get rid of the Old Age Outlaws but Arn can stick around for some reason.

Maestro vs. Tank Abbott

No piano, 13 seconds, one right hand for the knockout. This was a shoot fight, because the Brawl For All didn't teach WCW anything.

Norman Smiley comes out to stare down Abbott but Meng shows up to give Abbott someone a real challenge.

Most of the midcard is coming to the arena. Since this is WCW, it takes far longer than it should have. They couldn't have had them come out during the break? Nash and the Harris Brothers come out for the first official address of the roster. Nash praises himself but says he has goals for everyone out there. Tenay needs a personality, Knobbs needs a brain, Abbott needs a heart and Smiley needs courage. Nash: "I sound like Oz up here."

The fans cut him off with a Goldberg chant so Nash threatens to fire him. This brings Nash to his first real act: Jeff Jarrett is officially the US Champion again. Jeff: "HOLY SLAPNUTS!" Next up is health, which is why there will be mandatory rectal exams before every match with Dr. Jellyfinger. Also, everyone is going to be in the same locker room no matter what level they're on and no one can look at Nash but they all must call him Lord Master.

Nash will decide what happens with the World Title at a later date. He's rapid firing through these ideas. There will be no illegal substances in the locker room, including Viagra. Nash: "Sorry Lex!" He praises Bagwell and Page for their match last night. Nash: "Buff, you doing Kim or what?" As for the first main event tonight, it's Bagwell vs. Page in a rematch from last night with Kimberly as guest referee. They're the NWO, they're in charge, and they are gods.

Kimberly comes in to see the NWO and is given her referee outfit and asks if Page or Bagwell was better.

Team 2000 vs. Varsity Club

Team 2000 is Masahiro Chono and Super J (From what I can find it's Jeff Farmer, better known as NWO Sting). There's actually a story here: Rotundo was part of NWO Japan but left to reform the Varsity Club. Yeah this match is actually getting a story over a Japanese faction that most people didn't know existed.

It's a brawl to start until Chono starts driving knees into Mike's ribs to take over. Off to Steiner but Chono wants Rotundo back in, which the fans find boring. I can't say I blame them as there's no reason to care about this story. Steiner suplexes Chono down and easily takes J to the

mat. Steiner whips him into the barricade and Rotundo has a lame slugout as this just keeps going.

Rotundo chinlocks J as Steiner and Chono brawl in the aisle. Back in and Rick gets double teamed for a bit but they're quickly back on the floor to keep up the brawling. A big boot to the face out of the corner blasts Rick again but Chono dives into a belly to belly. Everything breaks down again and the referee misses a small package from Rotundo to Chono. J comes in and rolls it over to FINALLY give Chono the pin.

Rating: D. This is one of the first major cases of the show having to throw in ANYTHING else besides Benoit/Guerrero/Malenko/Saturn. There was no reason for this to be a nine minute match and the fans might have been on to something with the boring chant. It wasn't the worst match in the world, but like I said, there's no reason to care about these teams fighting. The match wasn't good enough to overcome that problem and it dragged on and on as a result.

Sid Vicious vs. The Wall

Sid runs him over to start and Wall bails to the floor for a breather. Wall is thrown over the announcers' table as this is full squash mode so far. That's it for the play by play right now as we cut to Disco and the Mamalukes coming in to say they'll get the NWO anything they need. Nash asks if they've ever heard of Vinnie Vegas. Their assignment: go beat up Sid. Then get some grinders. We cut back to the ring to see Sid chokeslamming Wall for the pin.

The Mamalukes come out but eat powerbombs.

Scott Steiner, in a Michigan jersey and flanked by Midajah and a girl in a Michigan cheerleader uniform, comes out and beats up the Ohio State (Michigan's big rival) mascot. Steiner does his usual stuff about how all the women want him and tells them to take a number and wait in the back. Michigan beating Ohio State was easy, just like the women in Ohio. An Ohio State fan argues with him from ringside and gets beaten down. Security quickly takes the bloody fan away as we're firmly in the Scott is nuts phase.

Total Package vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

Luger is finally out of the Sting attire. Bigelow elbows him out to the floor and pounds in some big forearm to the back. Back in and Bigelow slugs away, eats the metal forearm, and continues slugging away. The top rope headbutt connects but Liz distracts Bigelow to break up the Greetings From Asbury Park. Cue Kanyon but Bigelow nails him, only to take a champagne bottle to the head from Luger for the pin.

Rating: D-. Is there a point coming to this Bigelow vs. Kanyon feud anytime soon? They've been feuding, with Bigelow consistently coming out on the losing end, for weeks now and there's no real progression to the story. This was another match that didn't do anything for anyone and was just there to fill in time.

Diamond Dallas Page vs. Buff Bagwell

Kimberly's referee outfit is exactly what you would expect it to be. Page starts fast with a shoulder and spinning Rock Bottom but Kimberly takes her sweet time counting. Buff comes back with a clothesline and they fight to the floor then into the crowd. Time for the ECW phase of the show it seems. A trash can shot knocks Page back to the barricade and they head back inside.

Bagwell nails a hot shot onto the turnbuckle but he stops to hit on Kimberly. Page gets back up and crotches Bagwell against the post. The Diamond Cutter is blocked by grabbing a rope (and it actually works unlike last night) and both guys are down again. The double arm DDT from Buff (well maybe an arm and a quarter) gets another very slow two count.

Back up and they fight over a backslide before the Diamond Cutter connects but Page can't cover. Instead Buff gets up and loads up the Blockbuster, only to get crotched down. Page's superplex attempt is countered with a low blow and now the Blockbuster connects. Kimberly "accidentally" collides with Buff and knocks herself down, allowing Page to get up and hit the Diamond Cutter for a slow pin.

Rating: D+. This is another feud that is just meandering along with little development in sight. It's no longer about whether Kimberly slept

with Bagwell but rather if she's going to leave her husband for him. That's about all there is as far as advancement goes, but it's not enough to validate the boring matches that come with the feud.

Kimberly bolts from the ring and Page follows to end the show.

Overall Rating: C-. Suddenly Russo is out of power and this feels like a wrestling program again. It's certainly nothing great but we had storyline progression that you could follow, some watching wrestling getting time (three matches broke six minutes and with ten more seconds on the opener they all would have broken seven) and nothing horrible/insulting to my intelligence. In other words, it's a middle of the road wrestling show.

That's the key though: this show still isn't really good. A lot of the wrestling was uninspired at best and the stories were only ok. Nash as the power mad yet entertaining boss has potential and the lack of the focus on the mostly retired crew helped a lot. Unfortunately, I have a feeling the bottom is going to fall out very soon because they're going to have to find something to fill in the void left by all the people leaving, and it's not NWO Japan.

This is where the problems are going to crop up and there isn't much WCW can do about it. The Radicalz leaving at once was like taking the walls out from a building. No matter what was going on, you could count on those four guys to put on a decent wrestling match if you gave them the chance. Now that they're gone, there isn't much left to take their places.

What's supposed to make up for those guys missing? Page and Bagwell having lame matches? More Varsity Club? Ahmed Johnson? Jeff Jarrett cutting the same promo with the same slap nuts line every single week? WCW has lost the meat of their company and there isn't much they can throw in there to fill in the gaps. That brings me to the big point here: the Radicalz leaving was the point of no return for WCW.

Now here's the thing: WCW was going to die no matter what. In the long run, there was too much money being burned and too much of a mess to possibly fix the place. Somewhere along the line it was going to go under

and Vince would be left smiling. However, as long as you had those four guys (or at least a young core group of wrestlers who could one day take over), there was always a hope. It may have been just a glimmer, but it was there.

However, all that went away when they left. Those four leaving took the hope away from WCW fans. Any chance they had to see something fresh come in and take the company back from the Good Old Boys network at the top was gone and the hope was destroyed. Now there's just the old guys hanging around at the top, collecting their paychecks and putting on the same pitiful matches that no one wants to see except for the diehard fans.

Benoit finally got to the top last night and it felt like yet another Dusty Finish. Yeah he got there, but never mind because we need to take the title away from him and just let it sit around until we find some other old guy to put it on so he can talk about having some big match but never be able to live up to those promises. The fans have no reason to believe it's possible now and once that happens, the faint chance that WCW could turn it around was gone.

WCW was already a very wounded animal before those four left, but there was always the chance that they could tape themselves up, get on their feet and nail one big right hook to knock the WWF back and have one more chance in this fight. Instead, and no one knew how bad it was going to get in just a few weeks when they showed up on Nitro, WWF just cut off WCW's arms and punched them with their own fists. WCW may appear to still be alive and trying to come back, but at this point, without the core talent that they built up being around anymore, there is no more hope. WCW is dead.

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Monday Nitro – January 10, 2000: That Old Feeling

Monday Nitro #222

Date: January 10, 2000

Location: Marine Midland Arena, Buffalo, New York

Attendance: 8,990

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Bobby Heenan, Mike Tenay

How can this already be the last Nitro before Souled Out? With all the nonsense that goes on around here these days, it's very hard to keep up with the time frame. It doesn't help that they keep changing things around as Russo continues to lose influence. Oddly enough that loss has power has coincided with my headaches subsiding after these shows. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Terry Funk getting beaten up over and over by the NWO. Suddenly Ric Flair is the smartest man in wrestling.

Terry Funk, Larry Zbyszko, Arn Anderson and Paul Orndorff arrive. This is really their big solution to Goldberg's injury? A lineup of wrestlers who were veterans eight years earlier?

Tag Team Titles: Dean Malenko/Perry Saturn vs. Kidman/Konnor vs. David Flair/Crowbar

Flair and Crowbar are defending. Falls count anywhere, likely due to this being close to ECW territory. The Animals and Revolution start brawling before the champions get out here so David and Crowbar are late to the

fight. With Shane sitting in on commentary and demanding to only be referred to as the Franchise, Crowbar lays Kidman out with a sitout gordbuster.

It's time to get the weapons and they might as well start piping in the ECW chants already. Flair and Crowbar take over with their weapons as the Revolution destroys Rey in the aisle. In the insanity, Douglas and Malenko put Mysterio on a table so Saturn can channel his inner New Jack for a splash from the balcony. Saturn is broken in half (though nowhere near as badly as Rey) so David comes over and pins him to retain.

Rating: E. I think you know what that stands for. Let's see: no wrestling in sight, a bunch of weapons, falls count anywhere, a huge dive out of the balcony through someone on a table. As usual, WCW has no idea what it's trying to be so it just rips off another promotion's ideas step for step.

Tony tells us that Terry Funk is booking the show on the fly tonight so they have no idea what the matches will be. I actually kind of like the idea as they often make matches throughout the night so why not just admit that you're doing it?

Recap of Harlem Heat splitting. That would be the 2000 split in case you're confused with all the other splits they've had over the years.

The NWO gives Scott Steiner some women of questionable character for a birthday present.

We look back at the ending to the opener. Mysterio leaves in an ambulance, along with the Animals.

Steiner goes into a room with three of the women, promising the rest will have a turn later.

Here's Oklahoma to continue his anti-woman crusade. Oh geez can we go back to the New Jack imitations? He insults women and wants them all to stay in the kitchen where they belong, except for an open challenge right now.

Oklahoma vs. Asya

Well who else was it going to be? She shoves him down and knocks off his hat so Oklahoma nails her from behind, knocking it out to the floor. Asya slams him down and here's Madusa, with blue hair, as Oklahoma nails Asya with a bottle of barbecue sauce. Madusa takes a broom to the head and Oklahoma takes the belt.

Juventud Guerrera, Psychosis, Kidman, Rey Mysterio, Dean Malenko, Lenny Lane, La Parka. There's no reason I'm listing these names off. They just happened to come to my mind.

Here are Funk, Zbyszko, Anderson and Orndorff with something to say. Funk says Nash's powerbomb on Thunder is nowhere near enough and he pulled these three men off the unemployment line to help him fight this battle. They're the Old Age Outlaws (egads) but they're more than young enough to take care of the NWO.

Arn talks about wanting to get some revenge the old fashioned way, Zbyszko bores the crowd by talking about tradition and Orndorff talks about the talent from the Power Plant that he helped train. Why the Power Plant guys aren't in this spot isn't exactly clear. It's also not clear why this story continues as the crowd is eerily silent.

Cue the NWO to make the obvious old jokes. Nash is looking forward to being the Commissioner on Sunday but Funk says he's still in charge tonight. Like for instance, tonight Jarrett, in a Tennessee Titans jersey for some cheap heat, is going to be in three matches: a regular match, a Bunkhouse Brawl and a cage match. The title won't be on the line or anything, but I guess that's out of respect for Benoit. Speaking of Benoit, he'll be refereeing all three matches, which will be against some of Funk's close friends.

As for the rest of the NWO, Hart will defend against Nash and if they don't fight, both guys are suspended for a year. Hart and Nash don't mind the threat and say they'll take the year off. You know, because they don't care about wrestling. Steiner swears a lot, but since he isn't cleared to wrestle, Funk is going to wash his mouth out with soap.

Let's stop and take a look at this for a bit. Here's what we have in this story:

NWO

Bret Hart – Debuted in the WWF in 1985, fifteen year veteran on the national stage

Kevin Nash – Debuted in WCW in 1990, ten year veteran on the national stage

Scott Steiner – Debuted in WCW in 1989, eleven year veteran on the national stage

Jeff Jarrett – Debuted in the WWF in 1993, seven year veteran on the national stage

Now let's look at the old guys.

Old Age Outlaws

Terry Funk – 54, debuted in 1965, lost the NWA World Title twenty five years ago

Arn Anderson – 41, debuted in 1982, retired as a regular wrestler three years ago

Paul Orndorff – 50, debuted in 1976, retired as a regular wrestler four years ago, hit his peak thirteen years ago

Larry Zbyszko – 48, debuted in 1973, retired as a regular wrestler five years ago, hit his peak twenty years ago

So we have Terry Funk as the only active wrestler, with Larry Zbyszko probably being the healthiest as he retired from active competition in 1994 and has wrestled three matches since. Anderson and Orndorff can't wrestle and Zbyszko didn't, so we're left with Terry Funk, who first retired in 1983, fighting the entire NWO. This is their main event storyline with Benoit as the young guy fighting the midcard champion instead of fighting for the World Title.

How is this supposed to appeal to younger fans? I get how the older generation would appeal to older fans or really big time fans, but even they can only hang with this for so long. The younger fans though see

these old guys hogging the spots that the younger guys should be having.

Orndorff mentioned training eight people at the Power Plant. Why not bring them up? You have one of the best talkers of all time in Arn Anderson and two very good talkers in Funk and Orndorff. What WCW needed was a fresh batch of main event talent. You might even say they need a revolution to take over that part of the card.

Instead, guys like Benoit, Malenko, Saturn and Douglas are busy chasing Janitor Jim Duggan around and trying to make him denounce America because they view themselves as a sovereign nation and hate this country while Oklahoma is chasing the Cruiserweight Title and a freakshow tag team like David Flair and Crowbar holding the Tag Team Titles because David is nuts after something about his dad sleeping with Kimberly. Booker T. on the other hand is busy splitting up with Stevie Ray again.

There is no one to cheer for right now and the best solution is to bring in people who used to be over and have them give the rub to...themselves. Yeah Benoit is around and they mentioned him, but you don't see them working together or helping each other out because the solution is to just have them talk about tradition, much like Vince McMahon did in the early days of his war against Steve Austin. That's WCW's big solution to get people to cheer: act like one of the greatest heel characters of all time against the cool heels. It's like they're taking every possible bad idea and running with it.

Post break, Funk tells Arn to go find someone.

Arn looks into a limo but finds Kimberly instead of whomever he was looking for.

Video on Page vs. Bagwell.

Gene calls out Page and Bagwell but the control room can be heard telling him that they need a bit more because the intro didn't go long enough. Is that some massive rib that I just don't get? That stuff only started when Russo arrived and I have no idea how it's supposed to be interesting or how the production team could possibly be that inept. Anyway, Gene asks them to be civil for five minutes and we have a countdown clock on the

screen.

They talk a lot of trash and Buff insists he and Kimberly are just friends. Apparently Buff and Kimberly have great sexual chemistry (Buff's words) but Page has been hearing that Buff has been telling the boys that Kimberly has a sexy birthmark. That's for Page's eyes only, but Buff says everyone has seen it. That earns him a right hand to the jaw so Buff pulls out a police baton that he just happened to have with him. So much for the countdown clock.

Nash and Bret insist that they won't sit down. I'm sure there won't be a swerve whatsoever.

Arn finds another car.

Jeff Jarrett vs. ???

Benoit is guest referee and this is a Bunkhouse Brawl because this show can't remember the match order Funk made fifteen minutes ago. The mystery opponent is....George Steele, age 61 and with five nationally televised matches since 1988. Steele brings weapons to the ring and swings away to keep Jeff from getting in. George stops to eat a turnbuckle but gets guitared in the head. Not that it matters as Arn Anderson comes in and plants Jeff with a spinebuster to give George the pin. As in a single spinebuster is enough to pin the United States Champion. Benoit served no purpose here.

After a break, Jarrett tells Nash to throw Hart off the team.

Here's Stevie Ray to tell Gene to leave so he can do the interview himself. He talks about the history of the team and how Booker won the TV Title because that's all WCW wanted him to have (huh?). Stevie wants to fight his brother one on one on Sunday because the show is already named after Booker. This brings out Booker and Midnight with Booker saying he'll never fight his brother. That earns him a slap to the face and Booker agrees to the match.

Arn goes to another car. I'm assuming these are Jarrett's opponents.

Jeff Jarrett vs. ???

It's Tito Santana, a spry 46 here and just six and a half years from wrestling on a major national stage, in El Matador gear. This is a Dungeon Match, meaning it's pin, submission or your opponent leaving the ring. Jeff beats up Orndorff on the way to the ring and mocks the Buffalo Bills.

Tito takes over to start with a nice dropkick and the flying forearm before going after the knee. Jeff kicks him away and Tito has to try three times to jump over the top rope to the apron. I love Santana but this is just pitiful. Benoit and Jarrett argue before Jeff nails Santana with the Stroke, only to stop to argue with one of the Bills. The distraction lets Orndorff hit the piledriver (great looking one too) to give Tito the pin.

Here's Tank Abbott to call out Doug Dillinger. ARE YOU SERIOUS??? It's bad enough that we have to put up with this goon who Russo loves for no apparent reason but now we get the big showdown with the head of security? Abbott tells Dillinger to take a shot, Doug does, Tank drops him and Jerry Flynn comes out for the save.

I'm sure you already know the story of what's going to happen to the World Title situation in the next few days. Tank Abbott was Russo's big idea to get the World Title, straight off a feud with Doug Dillinger and Jerry Flynn. Putting Rick Steiner over Ric Flair back in 1988 looks BRILLIANT now.

Jimmy Snuka arrives. To save some space in the match, 56 here and other than a one off appearance at Survivor Series 1996, last appeared with a major national promotion (ECW was still regional during his run) in 1991. The youngest opponent for Jarrett tonight is a 46 year old who hadn't wrestled in the WWF or WCW since 1993. The Revolution, the Filthy Animals, Booker, and any other young and talented wrestler aren't important enough for this story.

Benoit is out cold in the back.

Jeff Jarrett vs. Jimmy Snuka

In a cage. Jeff hammers away to start and sends Snuka into the cage a few

times. Cue referee Benoit but Jarrett shoves him away from the cage door. That earns Jarrett some chops and a whip into the cage but Jeff sends him into the buckle. Jeff goes outside and gets the guitar but Zbyszko and Orndorff come in to clean house. Snuka and Benoit go up to the top of the cage for a Superfly Splash and swan dive, giving Jimmy the pin.

Rating: N/A. This was a segment disguised as a match and yeah the dives looked cool, but Jeff's concussion wasn't so great. This would knock him out of the US Title match on Sunday, but at least we got three WWF legends out there in their old territory so Russo could relive his childhood. Having the US Champion lose three times in one night to three guys who won't be there next week while getting beaten up by a bunch of guys who can't/won't wrestle a match is just the price you pay for Russo's entertainment.

WCW World Title: Kevin Nash vs. Bret Hart

Bret is defending, but first of all we have to cut to the back where Funk actually does wash Steiner's mouth out with soap. How Zbyszko and Orndorff managed to restrain Steiner isn't clear. I'm so glad we got to see this segment. It just made the entire show. Bret is in an NWO shirt, tennis shoes and jean shorts. And he's known for five moves? Dang who knew Cena stole so much from Bret?

Nash goes after him to start and drives knees in the corner but Bret comes back with right hands. This is already one of the longest matches Nash has had in weeks. A lot of choking ensues until Bret gets in a kick to the leg. Snake Eyes stops him again for two but a low blow puts Nash down again. Bret misses the middle rope elbow and both guys are down. The side slam plants Bret and Nash bails to the floor for a chair. Cue Arn with a steel pipe and a referee shirt to nail Nash in the back, which I think means a no contest.

Rating: D+. And that's it for Bret as his concussions were so severe that he wouldn't wrestle another match for over ten years. In true Bret fashion though, he carried Nash to a watchable match and worked at the leg a bit before the non-finish. This actually wasn't terrible and was by far the longest main event in a few weeks.

Post match here's Sid (remember him?) as the cage is lowered. Bret is planted with a chokeslam and powerbomb so Arn can do a fast three count. Funk comes out with a flaming branding iron to burn Nash right on the singlet to end the show.

Overall Rating: F. This show comes down to how do you like your bad booking. You can have total insane booking that makes absolutely no sense and goes so far off the rails that you forget you're watching a wrestling show, or you can have the booking that appeals to the over 50 audience without a good payoff and the US Champion getting pinned three times in an hour and a half.

This show didn't make me want to see Souled Out, as the majority of this episode was to build up two stories for Sunday, one of which will comprise three matches. The fact that it's going to be two out of three falls wasn't mentioned, but why should a little detail like that get in the way of seeing the US Champion lose three falls in a night? This company is in a creative free fall at the moment, but they seem to think they're going the right way and everyone else is crazy.

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

Monday Nitro #221

Date: January 3, 2000

Location: BiLo Center, Greenville, South Carolina

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Bobby Heenan, Tony Schiavone

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

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

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

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

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

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

A motorcade is leaving the airport.

There's going to be a new commissioner tonight.

Nash thinks Tom Zenk is getting the job.

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

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

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

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

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

The motorcade arrives.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Total Package vs. Tank Abbott

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

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

The NWO takes their ball bats to the limo.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

you expecting here?

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

The old guys and the NWO look for David.

Funk and Anderson find Daffney in the boiler room.

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

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

Jarrett kidnaps Daffney.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Flair and Crowbar can't find Daffney.

US Title: Jeff Jarrett vs. Sid Vicious

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

Standard beatdown and spray painting follows.

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

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

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

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

the show. The new champs were complete afterthoughts here.

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

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of Complete Monday Nitro Reviews Volume III at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00X0UNBEA>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

Monday Nitro – December 27, 1999: The Fingerpoke of Doom Doesn't Look Bad

Monday Nitro #220

Date: December 27, 1999

Location: Houston Astrodome, Houston, Texas

Attendance: 16,640

Commentators: Bobby Heenan, Mike Tenay, Tony Schiavone

We're finally done with this year and it's not a moment too soon. While Thunder was better, last week's Nitro may have been the worst show I've ever seen. The NWO is on top again but, due to Goldberg punching a limo, they don't have a top opponent to deal with so things are a big complicated. Let's get to it.

We open with a clip from Thunder of Goldberg clearing out the NWO.

The NWO walks through the back until the director tells them it's clear.

Opening sequence.

Tenay tells us about Goldberg shredding a tendon in his arm and already undergoing surgery.

If that's not enough, here's a major update: WCW Senior Executive Vince President Bill Busch is sick Ferrara and Russo's direction (Tony uses their real names here) and if Scott Hall doesn't show up by 7pm tonight, the Tag Team Titles are vacated. That time has come and gone, so the Powers That Be have booked (his word) a Lethal Lottery Tag Team Title tournament to start this week and end next week. So the big boss is sick of the booking but is letting the bookers keep going. Makes as much sense as anything else around here.

Apparently Scott Steiner has had another back surgery and his career is probably over. That sounds like a swerve.

Brian Knobbs vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

Kanyon is at ringside and has a wireless mic on. Bigelow goes after him to start but Knobbs gets in a trashcan shot to take over. The announcers ask Kanyon about a title belt he had with him on Thursday as Bigelow and Knobbs fight into the crowd and we hit the ECW production style. Kanyon tells the marks in the crowd to move as he follows them, which is in no way, shape or form like the time Road Dogg did this for Al Snow vs. Big Boss Man in a hardcore match in the WWF. You can't see a thing going on but apparently Knobbs pins Bigelow. Seriously you could see their arms and that's about it.

Sid arrives with Benoit.

There's a monster truck in the back.

The NWO has JJ Dillon in a chair and Nash throws the Tag Team Title on a table. Bret knees JJ in the ribs and that's it.

The NWO looks at the monster truck, which has an NWO logo on the side. They walk a few feet away and find Sid's still running car.

Here's Sid to yell about the NWO. Sid knows that he, Goldberg and Benoit have to watch each others' backs with the NWO around stabbing everyone in the back. I can barely understand what Sid is saying but I think he wants to beat up all four members of the NWO. What happened to Goldberg is unfortunate, but it's time for Sid to step up to the plate and go after the World Title. Sid promises to powerbomb Bret through the ring at Souled Out so I guess that's the main event.

Benoit comes out to join Sid (with a much clearer voice) and talks about wanting to get his hands on the Chosen One Jeff Jarrett. The last few weeks have made Benoit lose all respect for Jeff Jarrett and at Souled Out, Benoit will let out some of the frustration. He wants something called Triple Threat Theater, which means a 2/3 falls match with different rules for each fall.

Up first is a Dungeon Rules match, meaning pinfall or submission only with no rope breaks and if you leave the ring, you lose the match. Second would be a Bunkhouse Brawl, or street fight. Finally, it's Caged Heat, which means the Cell. Jarrett is the Chosen One to be lead to the slaughter. Cool idea actually.

We cut to the back where the NWO has spray painted Sid's car, complete with Bret's caricature of Sid on the hood. He's not a bad artist.

ZZ Top is here.

Sid and Benoit find the car and aren't happy.

Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Buzzkill/Mike Rotundo vs. Dean Malenko/Konnan

Buzzkill is now a full on Road Dogg knockoff, complete with the same hook

to open his song. "It's me, it's me, it's that B-U-Double Z." Also, WE'VE GOT WACKY TAG PARTNERS!!! Dean and Mike get things going and hit the mat for what could be an entertaining exchange. It's quickly off to Konnan vs. Buzzkill with Konnan taking over, only to have Dean deck his partner. Everyone gets in a fight as Jim Duggan comes in to lay out Dean with the 2x4 to give Buzzkill the pin to advance.

Jarrett and Hart pull the power to the production truck and the feed cuts out. Ok then.

Back with the picture a bit snowy and a white limo arriving, containing Scott Steiner who is met by Rick Steiner with a wheelchair.

The NWO destroys catering. Is there a point to this coming anytime soon?

Tank Abbott vs. Shane

Shane is in dress clothes and gets knocked out in less than a minute. He must have tried to get \$20 out of Tank for a posed picture.

Career retrospective on Scott Steiner.

Rick wheels Scott out to the ring to the old Steiner Brothers theme. Can we just get to the swerve that WE NEVER SAW COMING already? A tearful Scott tells a story of his doctor telling him that his back will never heal and he's going to have to retire. Scott cries about never being able to wrestle his brother again and asks for the fans to say a prayer for him.

Before the Steiners can leave, here's the NWO. Bret wants a washed up nobody like Scott out of the ring, but to be honest, Scott was never that good anyway. You would think Rick would come out to protect his brother here. There are things more important than Scott Steiner, like the fact that Bret still has his belt. Jeff pretends to cry over Steiner's announcement so Nash takes over the talking. A tech guy tries to send them to a commercial so Jarrett blasts him with a guitar.

Back with the NWO still in the ring because that's what this show is about anymore. Nash isn't cool with someone taking their bats. On top of that, they're not cool with Bill Busch trying to interfere, so stay in

your office and let them handle the wrestling stuff. He promises that Nash will be here tonight to wrestle in Houston. As for Goldberg, the game is about to become deadly. Bret thinks it's 4-0 Hitman over Goldberg so Goldberg can consider himself stopped.

That brings Bret to Sid, who will be destroyed even worse than his car. Jarrett rips on the town a bit as this segment just keeps going. Benoit is on for his Triple Threat Theater at Souled Out...and here are Sid and Benoit in the car with ball bats. This brings in Curt Hennig of all people to get beaten down by Benoit and Sid as the sacrificial lamb. Sid throws him onto the hood of the car.

Hennig is put in an ambulance after a break.

Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Harlem Heat vs. Midnight/Lash Leroux

What are the odds??? Booker and Lash get things going with Leroux getting two off a victory roll but walking into a Rock Bottom for the same. Stevie comes in and hammers Lash with a vengeance before slamming him down. Off to Midnight and it's time for something resembling a showdown. Stevie runs Midnight over with a clothesline and looks away, leaving Midnight to nip up.

A snap suplex to Stevie is treated like Hogan slamming Andre and Booker tags himself in. Booker can't bring himself to kick Midnight in the face and they do a very light sequence with Booker not wanting to hurt her. Midnight takes a backbreaker and Stevie is livid. He pulls out the slapjack and nails all three people in the match with Lash falling on Booker for the pin. That would be two matches with a weapon shot and brawling partners.

Rating: D-. Another storyline disguised as a match. I'm not sure why we needed to see yet another Harlem Heat split. More importantly than that though, this was a clear indication that we're going to be sitting through wacky tag partners and screwy finishes for all eight matches tonight because that's all Russo knows how to book. These sort of things can be done well with Starrcade 1991 as proof, but Russo isn't good enough to figure out something as simple as "let them wrestle."

The Scream mask guy attacks Chavo.

The Revolution is at the Washington Monument and Shane wants to ask an average American a history quiz. Shane rips on the guy for not knowing that it's the anniversary of the Monument going up. I'm not sure what the point of this was supposed to be.

Some Power Plant students are in the front row. Chuck Palumbo, Elix Skipper, Mike Sanders and Reno among others are visible.

WCW World Title: Bret Hart vs. Jerry Flynn

Flynn is in street clothes because it's more realistic or something. No announcement or teasing a World Title match and it's given the treatment that a TV Title match might receive. Tony announces Bill Busch deciding that the title can change hands on a DQ at Souled Out. Bret hammers him into the corner to start and runs the eyes across the top rope.

They head outside with Jerry whipping the champ into the barricade, drawing out Jarrett and Nash. Back in and Jerry fires off kicks in the corner but eats a DDT. Another spinning kick drops Bret but Nash distracts the referee, allowing Jarrett to come in with a ball bat to set up the Sharpshooter to retain the title.

Rating: F. Jerry Flynn in street clothes just gave Bret Hart a run for his money in a bad match with the NWO having to save the title in an unannounced match in the middle of the second hour of the show. This company really doesn't have any idea what they're doing do they?

Flynn gets the NWO treatment. He might have worn the street clothes so he doesn't have any paint on his skin. The NWO leaves but Tank Abbott comes out and knocks Flynn out again. You would be WCW World Champion a month from now people.

The Revolution is at the Library of Congress and Saturn pulls out his copy of How the Grinch Stole Christmas.

Nash is on the phone with Hall but theme music muffles the chat.

Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: PG-13 vs. Rick Steiner/Berlyn

PG-13 is wearing Houston Oilers jerseys (team that recently left town) and rap about how they don't care if people don't like them. Rick shakes his head to start as Berlyn spinwheel kicks Wolfie. Tony reads out the most beautiful announcement I've ever heard: Nitro returns to two hours next week. PG-13 double teams Berlyn and stomps him in the middle of the ring as I'm just waiting on the WACKY way someone will advance. Rick gets the hot tag and cleans house with Steiner Lines before planting both of them upside down on the buckles. Berlyn walks out and a belly to belly is enough to pin Wolfie.

Rick keeps beating them up and the decision is reversed. In other words, the newcomers are left laying but advance on a technicality. As stupid as WCW has become, it's good to know that some things never change.

Saturn comes up to Duggan and says they're teaming together tonight against Norman Smiley and Asya. Apparently it's mutually beneficial if they win. Well yeah that's normally how a tag match works. I can't do this line justice, so here's Saturn's statement verbatim: "Besides, brother, as optically challenged as we are, there's no way that jacked up hootchie or that sissy in a football uniform can blindsides us if we stand side by side." Again, Saturn is the best part of this show and fits in perfectly because he makes just as little sense as the booking.

The Revolution rants about the White House and Bill Clinton and kidnap a guy in a Clinton mask. Somehow this is more effective than their last few weeks of material.

Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Asya/Norman Smiley vs. Perry Saturn/Jim Duggan

Duggan's family is at ringside as he beats up Saturn before the match starts. Norman gets in some easy shots, including the swinging slam. The spanking dance connects but Saturn breaks up the Big Wiggle with a suplex. Saturn slams him down and drops the top rope elbow onto the chest protector to hurt his own arm. Asya is tagged in and shoves Saturn from behind, followed by a low blow and clothesline. A superplex drops Saturn and Duggan drops a knee on his partner (complete with counting his own pin for reasons of dumb), allowing Norman to get the pin to advance.

Rating: D-. Can we go back to the part where the Powers That Be literally had the fourth wall broken and screw up everything in sight? I'm starting to think it might be easier to sit through than the night of the wacky tag team partners. This was another bad match with a screwy finish because that's all we have here.

Duggan, the loser, brings his family in to celebrate.

US Title: Kidman vs. Jeff Jarrett

Kidman is challenging and gets jumped from behind to start. A hotshot stops Kidman's comeback and the announcers ignore the match to talk about Triple Threat Theater. Jeff turns around and eats a Bodog and dropkick, only to catapult Kidman out to the floor to stop him again. Cue Nash and Hart because you think we can go a full half hour without the NWO? Kidman rolls through a high cross body for two but gets caught in a quick sleeper. Say it with me: Kidman reverses into one of his own for a few arm drops, followed by the BK Bomb for two.

That's about it for the NWO not being the focus of the match though as Nash low bridges Kidman to the floor, only to have the Filthy Animals run in to lay out Jarrett with a crutch. It's only good for two, but it draws one of the loudest reactions of the night. Jeff tries a powerbomb and gets the standard counter. Heenan: "I've never seen anything like that!" Kidman goes up top but takes a ball bat to the ankle, setting up the Stroke for the pin.

Rating: D+. This was one of the better matches of the night, but my goodness it's ok to let a champion look strong instead of needing help all the time. It's nowhere near as bad as the Jerry Flynn mess but at least let Jeff do his own cheating to win. Watchable match, partially due to getting some time, but it was too bogged down as usual.

Gene brings out Luger and Liz for a chat but Luger is dressed as Sting and comes out to Sting's music. Luger imitates Sting and talks about how awesome Luger really is and how severe the beating Luger gave him was. The lights go out and come back on to show black roses in the ring. So yeah, this feud is CONTINUING.

Nash gives Hall directions over the phone.

Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Ron Harris/Don Harris vs. Meng/Finlay

I'm not even going to bother calling this stupid. Finlay and Meng fight so the Twins, ever so brilliant, attack them both. Just let them beat each other up then pin the scraps. Why is that so complicated? A double big boot puts the hardcore guys on the floor and they fight until it's a countout to advance the Twins. This was, again, a waste of time.

David Flair and Daffney call themselves Natural Born Killers. That was a disturbing movie.

Here's 3 Count to pick things up. They do their dance but Vampiro comes in and cleans house. As luck would have it, he and Evan are up next.

Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Evan Karagias/Vampiro vs. David Flair/Maestro

Scratch that last team as Crowbar, who debuted last week, attacks Maestro in the aisle and takes his place. Sure why not. Ignore the fact that he worked at a gas station and has no wrestling license or training as far as WCW knows. Anyway he starts with a German suplex on Vampiro (good looking one too) before it's off to David for a suplex (not so good looking one) of his own.

It's so lame that Vampiro pops up and plants both psychos (yeah Vampiro is the sane one here) with a double DDT. A Rock Bottom to Crowbar allows Vampiro to make the hot tag to Evan, who is promptly knocked off the top and down onto Crowbar. Back inside with Vampiro "hitting" a top rope clothesline for two on David but the other 3 Count members get in to go after Vampiro. The partners implode but Vampiro fights both of them off with ease, setting up the Nail in the Coffin on David. No referee though as Crowbar nails Vampiro with a crowbar, giving David the pin.

Rating: F. This was the sixth match of eight tournament matches tonight and they're now six for six in having at least one team implode. I know I say Russo only has a few ideas in different forms, but he's done the same

idea six times in less than three hours. Suddenly Oklahoma makes so much more sense.

3 Count loads up the song post match but Flair and Crowbar clean house. This brings out Lenny and Lodi as Standards and Practices, complete with the yet to be named Miss Hancock (Stacy Keibler) in a skirt shorter than your local vanilla midget. They promise to take Flair and Crowbar off TV if this violence keeps up. This of course earns them more violence.

Jarrett is told not to worry about Hall not being here yet.

Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Disco Inferno/Big Vito vs. Buff Bagwell/Chris Canyon

The Italians have Johnny the Bull and Tony Marinara with them. Everyone but Disco head to the floor to start before Canyon slides back in, earning him some knees to the back. A Russian legsweep drops Disco but Canyon heads back outside to get the Italians away from the girls. Canyon leaves with the girls to split up ANOTHER tag team. Buff fights back but Vito nails him with a great looking superkick to take over again. Disco gets caught in a neckbreaker but there's no partner (Tony: "Chris Champion Canyon") to tag. Disco accidentally hits Vito with a chain, setting up the Blockbuster for the pin.

Rating: D-. They're seven for seven in teams splitting and almost half have had a weapon spot. I would ask if this was the best they could do, but yes, this really is the best they can do: the same match over and over and over. In a weird way, I'm actually hoping they manage to do it again one more time in the last match because it would be one of the most amazing things ever to see them do the exact same plot point eight times in one night.

Buff gets laid out post match.

Here's the NWO to say Hall isn't here yet but his arrival is imminent. Nash asks for a brief delay to let him get here.

Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: The Wall/Sid Vicious vs. Outsiders

Remember that Sid and Wall seemed to form a friendship last week. Nash

gets in on his own and does a Hogan shirt rip to start against Wall. Kevin slugs away but Wall punches him down and scores with a belly to back suplex. Wall hits a big boot but Bret nails him in the back with a bat to let Nash take over. Sid chases Bret and Wall is suddenly putting Nash in a chinlock. He no sold a ball bat shot from the World Champion? Sid comes in and shoves the referee down before cleaning house, only to have Bret nail Wall with the bat for the pin to advance Nash.

Rating: F. He no sold a baseball bat shot. A shot from Liz put Sting out for months but Wall is back on offense fifteen seconds later? How can anyone actually think that's acceptable? This was more NWO interference dominating the entire match with no one having a chance against the heel stable. And now I'm disappointed with the lack of the partners fighting. I was looking forward to that.

Benoit comes in to save Sid from a powerbomb but here comes a limping Scott Steiner (presumably the Scott that Nash has been meaning all night. I was hoping for Riggs) with a ball bat of his own....and of course he's NWO because what else would he be? As usual, there's no value to a scam that was set up and paid off in the span of two hours. NWO propaganda falls from the ceiling and an NWO banner is lowered. Sid car is brought out and Sid is put in the back. They drive him to the back where the monster truck crushes the car to end the show.

Overall Rating: F. Somehow, this is miles better than last week's show. The wrestling was nothing special (Kidman vs. Jarrett was decent before it fell apart), the booking has been covered already, the ending was stupid, and this whole show was a mess. You can tell Russo has lost some authority though and that's the best thing that could possibly happen to this company.

That's it for WCW in 1999 and I don't think there's a need to explain all of the disasters in this company over the year. Here's the most telling part though: the Fingerpoke of Doom is looking more and more like a high point every day. I'll leave you with this: I'm fairly certain I'm right when I say this was the worst calendar year in the history of any wrestling promotion ever.

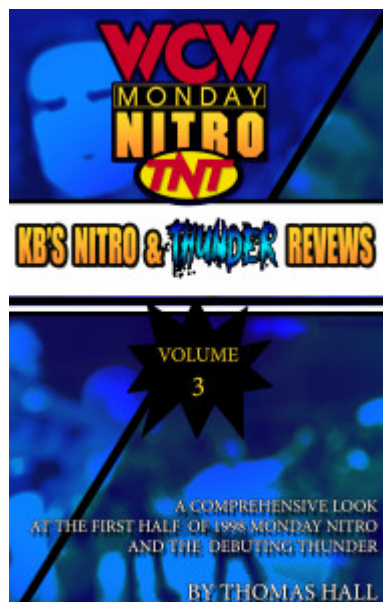
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New E-Book: KB's History Of Monday Nitro Volume III (Including Thunder!)



When we last left WCW, they were the undisputed kings of the Monday Night Wars and that's certainly still the case as they come into 1998. Things were so good that they decided to more than double the amount of television they were airing per

week. To say this might have been too much too soon is an understatement but WCW had done stupider stuff before.

In this book, I'll be looking at every episode of Monday Nitro and Thunder from January through June of 1998. This is the time where the Monday Night Wars finally started to get competitive again after nearly two years of being completely one sided. Having two shows a week was a fresh idea as well, making this a very important time in wrestling history. As usual I'll be providing play by play, historical context and analysis of every show.

Also remember that I've already covered 1995-1997 Monday Nitro in case you don't want to jump right into the later stuff. Both books are available from my Amazon author page.

The books runs over 300 pages on a Kindle and only costs \$3.99, or the equivalent in other currencies. If you don't have a Kindle or e-book reader, there are several **FREE** apps you can use to read it on pretty much any electronic device. You can find those from Amazon [here](#).

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Or if you're in another country with its own Amazon page, just search "KB Nitro 1998" and my book will be the first thing that pop up.

Also you can still get any of my previous books on the WWE Championship, Monday Night Raw from 1998 and 2001, Monday Nitro from 1995-97, In Your House, Summerslam, Starrcade, ECW Pay Per Views, Royal Rumble, Saturday Night's Main Event, the

WWF and WCW pay per views from 1998 and Clash of the Champions at my author's page [here](#).

I hope you like it and shoot me any questions you might have.

KB

Monday Nitro – December 20, 1999: This Is Rock Bottom

Monday Nitro #219

Date: December 20, 1999

Location: Baltimore Arena, Baltimore, Maryland

Attendance: 8,915

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Bobby Heenan, Tony Schiavone

We're just past Starrcade and.....I have no idea what we're supposed to do now actually. Bret is still World Champion, Sting is out of action again and the rest of the show was pretty much a big waste of time with short matches that went nowhere or that only Russo and company care about. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Piper calling for the bell on Goldberg to end the title match against Bret. Yes, that's their big idea: Montreal part 58.

So you might be asking how the big fallout show starts. After last night, we're ready to start on the new road forward for WCW. I promise, I'm not making this up. This is really how this show began.

Here are Madusa and Spice for a chat. Madusa brags about being the first female Cruiserweight Champion and how the women of WCW are taking over with their T&A. Right now she wants any man in the back to come out here so she can neuter him. As luck would have it, Buzzkill is in the crowd campaigning for equal rights, so Madusa calls him to the ring for a title

match right now.

Cruiserweight Title: Madusa vs. Buzzkill

Madusa takes the sign and blasts Buzzkill in the head, followed by the missile dropkick for two. The German suplex is blocked though and Buzzkill dropkicks her down. The Russian legsweep should have the title won (because it's a Russian legsweep) but Spice has the referee. In the distract, Spice throws in a foreign object and Madusa knocks Buzzkill silly, setting up the German suplex to retain.

I need a minute here. After last night's disaster of a Starrcade, Vince Russo, the man who actually takes credit for the Attitude Era, decided that the big idea was to open Nitro with a match between a comedy character and Madusa, who is flat out saying she has one of the most popular titles (well at least it used to be) in the company because of how she looks. That's their big way to open the post-Starrcade Nitro. Imagine if the night after Rollins cashed in Money in the Bank or after Bryan overcame the Authority, we opened with a Nikki Bella promo and match. That's basically what they did here and it's making my head hurt.

The announcers talk about Goldberg getting screwed last night. I'll set the over/under for use of that word in this story at about 6,000.

Russo tells Curt Hennig to get rid of Hugh Morrus tonight. Why Russo has issues with Morrus isn't clear, but I'd bet it's a nuance of a plot point that I missed in Russo's 19 segments a night. Creative Control is sent to find Piper.

Speaking of Piper, he arrives with his assistant and son because of reasons I don't want to be told. The kid tapes Piper's wrists and Creative Control comes to collect him.

Hugh Morrus vs. Curt Hennig

Before we get started, it's time for an another angle that no one will care about but we need to force it in there anyway. This time it's Shane being beaten down by a guy in a Scream mask with what looks like a pipe. As for the match, here's Tony's take on it: "I've never been so confused

coming out of a WCW pay per view." I can't believe I'm saying this, but preach it Tony. Morrus slugs Hennig into the corner to start as the announcers don't explain Hugh's issues with the Powers That Be, likely because they don't exist.

After a big running splash in the corner, Morrus gets distracted by some old guy in a hospital gown who wanders from the crowd to the ramp. For the love of.....JUST HAVE A WRESTLING MATCH! Morrus goes outside and helps the man he calls Pop to the ramp so he stays out of harms' way. Hennig gets in a few shots as Pop comes back down to ringside. In the distraction, Hennig hits the PerfectPlex for the pin.

Rating: D-. I would ask why this is happening and what this is supposed to mean, but I really, really don't care. Hugh Morrus is getting a story now? Apparently about his father who just wanders around ringside after leaving a hospital? As usual, Russo doesn't get that you have to make us care about a person before you just throw them into a story that makes no sense on the surface. I don't care about Hugh Morrus because he's never done anything worth caring about. Therefore, I don't care about his Pop or whatever they're doing with him. Again, just let them wrestle and THEN come up with a story.

Pop checks on his son, who is still down after a devastating suplex.

Piper is in Russo's office where Russo talks about Piper making some sort of deal with the devil, meaning Piper can't touch Russo. It's not over though because Piper has to go out there and tell everyone that he sold out and that Russo had nothing to do with it. So who did he sell out to if Russo wasn't involved? That question is immediately wiped from my memory as Russo says that Piper will take his heat. Piper talks about going out there to "shoot on the marks" and how he and Hogan built this sport. The audio screws up so I can't hear the rest of it but do I really need to?

So to recap: Russo is the mastermind behind screwing Goldberg out of the title and gave Piper something in return for ending the title match last night and now Piper has to go and take the rap for it. This is going to be a SHOOT, because all those times where Piper was evil and made his big

name were just him acting and we should believe how much he cares for wrestling? Can we go back to Hugh and Pop?

And now, a word from Tony Schiavone about how Vince McMahon screwed Bret Hart out of the WCW Title. Russo worked for McMahon at that time, so rumors are speculating that Russo scripted the ending to that match. I don't even know how to respond to that so we'll move on to Tony talking about how Kevin Nash is defending Goldberg in the locker room. You know, the SHOOT locker room.

This brings out Kevin Nash, who talks about living by a code in wrestling. There are certain rules you have to live by no matter what happens. Yes people, KEVIN NASH is talking about ethics in wrestling. Just go with it and maybe it'll be over soon. There are two groups of people behind the curtain: the boys and the office. The boys are all a fraternity and the office doesn't care about any of them. Nash doesn't care about Goldberg, but what happened last night was....a word they don't actually censor. TV-14 it is I suppose. Hart screwed one of the boys and now he has to pay.

Creative Control says Nash is the biggest politician in the locker room. So yeah, it's clearly a big worked shoot (in case it wasn't obvious before) and the audience, after sitting through Madusa vs. Buzzkill and Hennig vs. Murrus/Pop gets to hear a lot of stuff that is probably going over their collective heads while Russo jerks off to this nonsense because it makes him feel so much smarter than everyone else. I understand what they're talking about and it's just so dumb.

Tank Abbott vs. Jerry Flynn

No holds barred of course. They trade slaps/punches before shoving the referee, drawing out security to break it up. Flynn is put in handcuffs and Tank knocks him out cold. This didn't last a minute and the fans are rightfully booing it out of the building.

Goldberg arrives.

Here's the Revolution for what is actually the most interesting part of the show so far. Douglas talks about how the Revolution was proven right

at Starrcade, but we pause for a word from Saturn about Tootsie Pops. He calls out Jim Duggan to denounce America, but Jim doesn't want to do it. Instead, Duggan says he lied and gets beaten down. The Revolution goes to burn the American flag but the Filthy Animals (minus Eddie) return for the save. Great. It's this feud again. Shane's look of shock when the Animals came out (walking at about half a mile an hour) is great.

Here's Piper for his big explanation as Goldberg and Hart watch from backstage. Piper lists off some of the evil things he's done in the past before going into a mini rant against Russo's writing. Couldn't they just call it like, match making? Anyway, Piper knows people just want to see the wrestlers fight. After listing off his accomplishments from the 80s, Piper says he's a real fighting and quits. His son comes out to walk to the back with him, but Goldberg comes out to block their way.

Goldberg has stayed up all night trying to make sense of this (now THAT is probably a shoot comment). He's looked up to a few guys all his life and until last night Piper was on that list. Piper made the wrong decision last night but Goldberg doesn't think Piper would ever sell out. Roddy apologizes and things seem to be a bit better until Bret comes out to pick it up all over again. As far as he's concerned, there's no point in blaming Piper and the title is vacant. Bret goes to the back to tell the Powers That Be what they can do with their title. Keep shooting people. You'll hit something eventually, though it's likely your own foot.

Post break, Hart yells at Russo, but the boss says that was an attempt at making up for Montreal. Yes seriously, THAT'S THEIR BIG STORY. Bret throws the belt at Russo so he makes Hart vs. Goldberg for tonight. Nice to see them continue their tradition of airing the same match the night after Starrcade. I mean, it's gone so well before.

Meng/Norman Smiley vs. Fit Finlay/Brian Knobbs

Hardcore of course. So why would Meng want to team with Smiley here? My question is quickly answered as Meng goes after Smiley before their opponents come out. Knobbs and Finlay come out to watch as the announcers try to explain the psychology. Apparently Knobbs and Finlay want Norman

to keep the Hardcore Title so they can take it from him with less of a fight.

Therefore, we're supposed to ignore the two of them knocking Smiley out cold with a pipe so Norman could pin him with one hand last night, proving that they could beat Meng with ease. As for the match, Norman gets chased through the crowd, objects are thrown, a bathroom is invaded, Norman's head is put in a toilet and Knobbs gets the pin.

Rating: F. We're over an hour into this show and this is the second best match of the night so far. I'm not sure if it's good or horribly stupid that they're trying to add psychology to this division. Yeah there's an idea to it, but the idea is stupid. The joke isn't funny though and Meng was just kind of there most of the "match" as everyone else was "fighting."

Piper tells his kid to wait in the limo and gets a ball bat.

Video of the Artist Formerly Known As Prince Iaukea's recording session where he doesn't actually sing. Somehow this sounds like one of the more logical things on the show.

Hart is walking and runs into Piper. Bret tries to talk but Piper is back to babbling to himself.

Maestro vs. Evan Karagias

It's a flashback to the NWO days as the announcers ignore what's going on in the ring to talk about the backstage stuff. Maestro runs him over to start but Evan hits a springboard spinning cross body. Evan rains down right hands in the corner until he gets dropped throat first across the top rope. We get a bit of a tease as Maestro loads up a chinlock but slaps Evan in the face with both hands instead.

The announcers talk about Montreal with Tony saying it's unbelievable that Russo wants to make up with Hart. Evan fights up and counters a hurricanrana into a powerbomb. Symphony gets shoved onto the apron but Evan has a quick change of heart to check on her. The distraction lets Maestro hit a knee to the back for the pin. Symphony is of course fine.

Tony: "She sold that knee."

Rating: D. Total mentions of Evan losing the title last night: zero. Then again it's fairly clear that there's no future to the title so losing the belt might have been the best thing possible for Evan. Maestro and Symphony are a nothing pairing but at least they're not victims of a stalker anymore.

Piper literally destroys the Powers That Be's office. Piper: "How about Adrian Adonis and Gorilla Monsoon?" And yes, he breaks the fourth wall.

Chavo Guerrero tries to sell Evan a book on how to pick up chicks. Thankfully, this ends in a beating.

Chris Kanyon vs. Bam Bam Bigelow vs. Diamond Dallas Page

Kanyon says this isn't Hollywood and talks about destroying the Triad. Bigelow and Page come out and double team him with Page hitting a Rock Bottom and Bigelow adding a headbutt. A clothesline and another headbutt have Kanyon reeling but Page and Bigelow argue about which finisher should end Kanyon. Page offers a handshake but pulls Bigelow into a Diamond Cutter. It's angle time though as Page drops to the floor, kisses a fan, and leaves. J. Biggs throws Kanyon a briefcase but the referee cuts him off, allowing Kanyon to hit Bigelow with a champagne bottle for the pin.

Rating: D+. Well that happened. They spent the entire summer building up the Triad and then the blowoff (I guess?) match takes four minutes with no announcement on a Nitro? Sounds appropriate to me. At least Kanyon has a new character and he's getting as close as he can to thriving in it.

Bigelow is busted way open and Kanyon is bleeding from the hand. Were they stupid enough to use a real bottle???

Creative Control vs. Kevin Nash

There's no referee so I don't think this is a match. Actually that makes sense given how things worked earlier. Hall accompanies Nash on crutches. Since this isn't a match (no bell), the twins tag. Nash slugs away at Patrick in the corner and kicks Gerald in the face as the tagging part is

already done.

The numbers catch up with Nash and Gerald takes him down for a cover but there's no referee. Heenan praises Nash for having the guts to say what he said earlier in the night. They start going after Kevin's knee and the tagging starts up again. Hall gets bored and comes inside for some crutch shots to the twins. Creative Control walks out to end whatever this was.

Luger and Liz are amused at Sting having a broken jaw. Why they're in the rafters and why Luger is dressed as Sting isn't clear but I don't think I want to know.

US Title: Chris Benoit vs. Jeff Jarrett

Another ladder match with Benoit defending because there's no reason not to do it again twenty four hours later. At least it was good last night so maybe it works again here. They slug it out to start and Benoit takes over with a pair of dropkicks. Benoit ties him in the Tree of Woe for a running dropkick but Jeff crotches him against the post to take over. Back up and Benoit is the first to the ladder but he has to side step the baseball slide.

Benoit throws him into the chair in the corner before nailing the back and knee with the same chair. Jeff stays on the floor and holds his leg as Benoit breaks the ladder by stepping on the rungs. Tony: "Someone has gimmicked this ladder!" Tenay: "You know who it is!" Heenan: "Kidman?" The other side's rungs break as well and it's a guitar shot to Benoit as Jeff's leg is fine. He grabs a fresh ladder and wins the title because SCREW YOU BENOIT FANS! YOU'RE GETTING JARRETT WHETHER YOU CARE OR NOT!

Rating: D+. They said the word gimmick for the ladder about ten times in two minutes near the end as the levels of obnoxiousness get higher and higher every single week. Benoit winning the title last night and being in the main event of a pay per view last month already seem to be nothing but memories.

After a bunch of replays, Curt Hennig tells Jarrett that the Powers That Be need to see him.

Sid Vicious vs. The Wall

Sid kicks him in the face to start and takes it outside for some right hands to Wall's face. Back in and Wall hits him right back, only to eat a chokeslam. Cue Berlyn for a distraction, allowing Wall to load up a chokeslam of his own. Not that it matters as Berlyn missile dropkicks Wall for the DQ.

Sid powerbombs Berlyn and shakes Wall's hand to complete the face turn.

Russo tells Jarrett that it's going to happen tonight.

Disco offers to pay the mafia but Tony Marinara's dad tells him he can join the Family or spend the rest of his life in a coma.

Harlem Heat vs. Varsity Club

Rotundo/Steiner here with Sullivan on commentary, where he spends the whole match referring to Rick as Robbie (Rick's real name) because SHOOTING IS COOL AND HIP AND MAKES US SMARTER THAN YOU SO HA! Stevie quickly runs Rotundo over to start before it's off to the partners. Booker kicks him in the face a few times but it's too much to ask Steiner to sell so it's a big clothesline to put Booker on the floor. Things get a bit confusing as the Varsity Club decides they're the Freebirds (they're from the right time period) and start changing places with Rotundo going to commentary.

That lasts all of eight seconds before Mike runs back in and misses a charge, allowing Booker to plant him with a Rock Bottom. Stevie comes in off the hot tag and cleans house but there go the lights because it's Midnight. Ever the genius, Stevie yells at her, allowing Mike to roll him up for the pin.

Rating: D. More mindless brawling here with Booker doing everything he could to make it a match. I still have no idea why the Varsity Club is back as Rick was the only one doing anything, even though he's one of the least likeable people on the roster. I'll give them this though: at least this felt like a match, even with the screwy ending.

PG-13 runs in and attacks the Varsity Club. They can't be serious.

The yet to be named Daffney is getting a Surge when the Misfits come up to hit on her. For reasons of crazy, she knees Jerry Only low and runs off.

Here's David Flair for a chat but he beats up David Penzer first. Flair calls out Vampiro, who says he has no problem with David. Vampiro yells at Daffney but eats a crowbar shot. Jerry Only comes out and takes a beating as well, leaving David and Daffney to kiss.

Buff Bagwell comes out with something to say. He's had a good career in WCW but now he wants some gold around his waist. Gene goes way out in right field and asks about rumors regarding Bagwell and Kimberly Page. Buff pushes the mic away and whispers to Gene, but Okerlund says that sounds like an admission of guilt. Bagwell admits that Kimberly is a knockout and if Page wasn't a factor, he would, and I quote, "put his stuff all over Kim." He mentions his bed and Page comes out to jump Bagwell.

Piper says goodbye to the locker room and calls Sid a kid. He rambles on about how hard wrestling has been on him and wants the boys to fight back against the Powers That Be.

WCW World Title: Bret Hart vs. Goldberg

The title is officially vacant coming in and Jeff Jarrett is watching on a monitor in the back. Goldberg hammers him in the face to start and chokes with a boot in the corner. They head outside with Goldberg hammering away even more as Bret has been on defense almost all match. Back in and a powerslam drops Hart but he grabs the ropes to break up a leg lock.

Bret starts going after the leg with kicks to the knee before wrapping it around the ropes. The referee goes down because of course he does and Bret slaps on the Figure Four. Cue the Outsiders with ball bats to beat up Goldberg. Bret lets go of the hold and beats on Goldberg as well so Piper comes back to try and protect Goldberg as the referee calls for the bell. There was a cover in there somewhere and Bret has won the title.

Jeff Jarrett comes out with spraypaint and.....THE BAND IS BACK TOGETHER!

Bret tries to say something but his mic doesn't work. Everyone celebrates with their new titles to end the show.

Overall Rating: W. That's W for waste. I've watched a lot of wrestling shows in my day (upwards of 4,000 last I checked). In the course of my time as a fan, I don't remember a show that felt like a waste of my time. That has changed after this show. I can live with a show where nothing happens. I can live with a show full of bad matches. I can live with a show where the company loses its way for a night.

That's not what happened on this show. This show was about eliminating every single concept and idea of logic and common sense from what used to be World Championship Wrestling. I'm not going to go into the long, long list of things this show did that made no sense, as A, I don't have that much memory on this computer and B, I don't think my blood pressure can take it.

Let's sum up the major flaw in logic on this show. The idea is that Russo and company are in charge of booking the show and have turned it into a shoot. Ignoring how absolutely stupid that is to point out (from a kayfabe perspective, wrestling is always supposed to be a shoot), let's go with Russo's theory (I'll ask for forgiveness later). Let's say that Russo has complete authority and is writing himself into this position.

If that's the case, why have any of his guys ever lost a match and why did we need some big conspiracy? Why didn't Russo just book his boys on top the second he debuted? Why are we having some big conspiracy with Jarrett having to win the title back? Why am I supposed to believe anything that happens if Russo is just in charge of the whole thing? Did he book Nash to fight back against his authority or is Nash going into business for himself?

I get that it's what Russo is going for, but it leaves so many ridiculous holes in the story and makes the whole thing so completely illogical that you can't buy into anything going on in this company. Ninety percent of the show is scripted but THIS RIGHT HERE is real? Why should I believe that? At the end of the day, this is wrestling. I shouldn't need a scorecard and a flow chart to keep track of what's going on, nor should I

have to hear all these insider terms. This is the definition of too much going on and making things way too complicated.

This stopped being wrestling and became Russo having fun and deciding to make this show his big personal playground. He's removed logic and common sense from this show in order to turn it into some insider fest. I know I say this a lot, but I literally do not think it can get worse than this. They've taken away any the basic core principles of wrestling and made this a B movie. There is however one bright spot to this whole mess: Jim Cornette suddenly makes so much more sense to me.

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Monday Nitro – December 13, 1999: Brace Yourself Starrcade

Monday Nitro #218

Date: December 13, 1999

Location: New Orleans, Arena, New Orleans, Louisiana

Attendance: 6,835

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Bobby Heenan

How is this already the go home show for Starrcade? Goldberg vs. Hart

feels like a midcard match instead of the main event. Based on the amount of time given to each match, it would seem that the Mamalukes vs. Disco/Lash is headlining the card. I'm not even sure what all is on the card at this point. Let's get to it.

We open with Benoit winning a fight against Jarrett in the back.

Opening sequence.

The Artist Formerly Known As Prince Iaukea vs. Maestro

Between the piano being lowered to the stage (with Symphony back) and Iaukea's slow artsy entrance, we're ready to go at nearly ten minutes into the show. Maestro throws him to the floor to start before planting him with a spinebuster back inside. The girls get into it and Prince grabs a rollup with a handful of tights for the pin.

Post match, here's Jarrett with the guitars to knock out both guys. Jeff wants a Bunkhouse Brawl (another name for hardcore of course) with Benoit tonight.

Nash is looking for Hall.

Evan Karagias hits on Spice but Madusa comes up to get in a catfight.

Here's Bret Hart with something to say. He talks about how much he respects Goldberg, but guarantees a win this Sunday. Cue Goldberg, complete with the full security entrance. How did they know to knock on the door at that point? Goldberg wasn't scheduled for a match, so did Dillinger just think "he might want to respond here?" He thinks Bret is going to be next on Sunday. I'm so glad it took two minutes to get to that point. This brings out the Outsiders who want their Tag Team Titles back. Hall wants to fight now but Nash has to go finish his coffee.

Gene looks down at Madusa's chest as she promises to hurt Spice tonight. This is another of those jokes that are only funny to Russo and Ferrara so we're getting it on national TV.

Terry Taylor tells Luger that he has a tag match against Diamond Dallas Page/Sting with David Flair as his partner. This was announced earlier in

the night, which explains why Luger is so surprised. I wouldn't watch the show either.

David Flair chases off a delivery man for reasons of general insanity.

Madusa vs. Spice

Madusa quickly takes her down to start and hammers away but Evan comes in to say calm down. Spice is helpless as Madusa wants Evan to slug her, but Evan won't do it. Madusa gets in a cheap shot and covers Madusa (with two limbs in the ropes) for the pin. Your #1 contender everyone.

Post match Madusa kisses Evan and suplexes him.

Hennig is ready for Bagwell tonight. Those two are fighting again? Rhonda Singh comes in and Russo makes fat jokes. He won't talk to her unless she has an agent.

Revolution recap.

Jim Duggan comes out to say he has three mystery partners on Sunday. He survived surgery to fight for this country and spend time with his wife and children. The lights go out and come back on to reveal Duggan out cold.

Roddy Piper is going to referee Bagwell vs. Hennig. Russo tells him to do the right thing.

Curt Hennig vs. Buff Bagwell

Roddy Piper is guest referee and makes it a No DQ match just because. Buff throws Hennig down a few times and poses before planting Curt with a slam. This leads to Hennig arguing with Piper for some reason, allowing Buff to grab a rollup for two. Buzzkill is in the crowd and wants to save baby seals. Again I ask, why is this supposed to be funny?

Curt comes back with right hands and chops, followed by the namesake neck snap. Piper counts slowly to start another argument. He begs Curt to slap him but the distraction lets Buff fight back with a swinging neckbreaker. Buff's splash hits knees, but Piper and Hennig get in a fight, allowing

Buff to grab a rollup for the pin with a very fast count.

Rating: D. What is this storyline? Russo and Piper hate each other because Piper has to be on TV (because he was big in the 80s you see) and now Piper is on TV as a referee but he's being told to do the right thing, which sounds like Russo speak for let his guys win, but I think Piper is rebelling against him? Oh and Piper seems to be schizophrenic because he keeps talking to the voices in his head.

An unhappy Creative Control is on stage.

Luger goes in to see David Flair and is scared by what he sees in the locker room.

Chris Benoit vs. Jeff Jarrett

Bunkhouse match, meaning a come as you are street fight. Jeff brings a cowbell, a guitar and a bar stool so Benoit comes out with a ladder. The brawl starts in the aisle with Jeff getting the better of it and getting the cowbell because cowboys are awesome. They're like boys, but with cows. Benoit comes back by choking with the bullrope and taking Jeff inside for two off a backbreaker. It's ladder time but Jeff baseball slides it into Benoit's face.

A whip into the ladder has Benoit in even more trouble but he throws Jeff into it as well to make things even. Benoit pulls him off the ladder but Jeff pulls him down with the rope. Cue Dustin Rhodes but Charles Robinson breaks up Shattered Dreams. There's a guitar to Dustin, at the exact same time he kicks Jeff low. Benoit goes up top but Dustin is shoved into the ladder to send Benoit down in a crash to give Jarrett the pin.

Rating: D+. There were some decent spots here but the ending was, of course, a mess. I don't know why Dustin Rhodes is here as the man in black, especially when he's fighting because they've moved on from the idea of Dustin fighting because the Powers That Be fired Dusty. Instead it's just Dustin Rhodes being Dustin Rhodes which isn't interesting.

Luger doesn't have much to say about the tag match but David Flair has a headless teddy bear.

A sports car arrives.

Piper goes into Russo's office with a ball bat but Hennig nails him with a chair. So Curt is La Parka?

Meng vs. Tank Abbott

Oh sweet merciful goodness. This is a hardcore match because would you want to see them try to wrestle? They slug it out to start as this is designed to look like a shoot. Abbott takes him to the mat and they fight to the floor for a quick double countout. This is the guy Russo wanted to put the World Title on a month later?

Kanyon was in the car and seems to now be a pimp.

Police stop Piper from going after the Powers That Be.

Meng and Abbott are still fighting in the back.

Revolution vs. Harlem Heat/Midnight

Before the match we get the usual "we hate America" jazz. Dean: "We've got heat tonight." Saturn: "Yeah listen to these people." Dean: "No. Harlem Heat." I'm not sure how to feel about that exchange. The lights go out for Midnight and come back with Saturn going after Malenko, presumably out of confusion. Booker takes Dean down to start and it's already Spinarooni time. Off to Stevie for a slam but Booker tags himself back in.

That's not cool with Stevie as he wanted Midnight to get the tag for reasons not entirely clear. The Revolution quickly takes over with Saturn stomping away in the corner and tagging in Dean, who walks right into the Bookend. Stevie gets the tag but Booker tags himself back in after just a few seconds. Saturn hits Asya by mistake as Stevie tags himself back in to fight Dean and Saturn at the same time. Everything breaks down and Midnight injures her knee on a leapfrog. Booker checks on the knee, leaving Stevie to get rolled up for the pin.

Rating: D+. This was an angle instead of a match but I'm glad we're starting the latest Harlem Heat split. There's nothing left for the two

of them to do together and it means we might get to the long overdue Booker push. The match was nothing special but at least we got more man vs. woman.

Stevie yells at his brother.

Luger says Liz won't be there with David tonight because Liz works for him alone. So we have female property.

Rhonda Singh asks Kanyon's agent (J. Biggs, Clarence Mason from the WWF) to represent her. It turns out she can sing and dance. The agent isn't interested, but Chavo comes up to sell Singh dancing gear. I don't see this ending well.

Paul Orndorff is here and summoned to see the Powers That Be.

The Nitro Girls dance when Rhonda joins them in glittery attire. She's horrible of course and shrugs off an attack by the Girls. So in the span of ten minutes, we have man vs. woman, Liz as Luger's property and now this. How long until Russo gets fired?

Finlay is still training Knobbs on how to be hardcore.

Norman Smiley and Jerry Flynn fight in the boiler room. That goes nowhere until Meng and Abbott wander in. Norman and Meng get out while Abbott and Flynn fight.

Orndorff is in the office, where Russo fires him for training Midnight. Paul yells, so he's put in a match with Creative Control.

Sid has a kid named Seth who he calls his coach. Seth says Sid is his favorite wrestler in the world. I think the kid has Downs Syndrome. If he does, I have no issue with this segment whatsoever.

Steve Williams vs. Sid Vicious

Oh man. Imagine this one in 1989 with JR on commentary. Instead it's 1999 with Oklahoma. Before the match, Oklahoma says the Powers That Be have made this a suplex vs. powerbomb match, which I assume means the first person to hit that finisher wins. Dr. Death jumps Sid as he's sitting the

kid down at ringside because he's really evil. Back in and Williams hammers away as Oklahoma lists off the resume. Sid blocks some suplexes and hammers away but Oklahoma slips his boot to Williams. He knocks Sid out but Vampiro appears to chase Oklahoma, allowing Sid to powerbomb Williams for the win.

Post match the Outsiders run in and lay out Sid to make sure the kid doesn't get to smile any longer than he should. Sure the kid has a horrible disease, but is that any reason for the Outsiders to not look good?

Post break, Sid is looked at by a doctor and the Outsiders think it's funny.

David Flair/Total Package vs. Diamond Dallas Page/Sting

Did Page turn face again and I missed it? I know he's been going after David but heel vs. heel is hardly unheard of under Russo. David has the headless bear with him but takes a Stinger Splash in the first 45 seconds. Sting tags Page in with a right hand to start a fight between the two of them. Now it's Page taking a splash but Luger sneaks in with a running clothesline to Sting, followed by some crowbar shots. Liz sneaks in to take the crowbar away before laying over Sting to stop some chair shots. David hits Luger with the crowbar so Liz puts Sting over Luger for the pin (from the referee who saw ALL OF THIS). What a mess.

Singh comes up to Champagne Canyon and the agent in the back and asks if they liked her dance. This goes nowhere so Bam Bam Bigelow comes up and gets in Canyon's face. The agent offers a distraction so Canyon can beat him down. Canyon: "Triad that!"

After a break, Bigelow comes to the ring and demands Canyon come out here for a match.

Kanyon vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

Before the match, Biggs wants to talk about legal ramifications and gets shoved to the side so Bigelow can punch Kanyon in the face. Some biting and stomps to the head have Kanyon in even more trouble but he comes back

with a swinging neckbreaker. A suplex sets up a World's Strongest Slam to Kanyon and there's the top rope headbutt a bit low. Kanyon is up and fine ten seconds later with the Flatliner (now called That's A Wrap) connecting for a clean pin.

Rating: D. Did...did that match just end clean? Did I just see a match without any interference or cheating? You always hear about these things but you never expect to actually see them happen. It was boring stuff though and the ending came out of nowhere with Kanyon just popping up and hitting his finisher for the pin.

Norman hides from Meng.

The Mamalukes have a body bag for Lash.

Piper babbles about his chair match later.

Lash Leroux vs. Big Vito

This is a body bag match, which I'm assuming is like a casket match. Lash sucks up to his hometown to start. Vito pounds away to start and nails a superkick for two. Back up and Lash nails a backdrop followed by an elbow to the jaw to send Vito into the corner. A side slam and legdrop get two more, followed by a Disco Inferno style middle rope elbow drop. Disco and Johnny fight on the floor as Lash nails the Whiplash. He puts Vito mostly in the bag which is enough for the win, even though you can see Vito's head and shoulders.

Rating: D+. Was there any point to this being a body bag match? I certainly don't think so, but I'm just a wrestling fan and therefore don't understand such nuances. Nothing match here as the tag match is still set up, even though it's not likely going to be anything special to see. At least this story has gotten some consistent TV time though and I can see what they're going for.

Post match the Mamalukes destroy Lash and put him in the bag, eventually taking him out to their car.

Paul Orndorff vs. Creative Control

So yeah, Orndorff is back and in a match. I'll set the over/under on runs here at 5.5. Paul kicks Patrick in the knee to start and puts him down with a knee lift. Gerald gets suplexed for trying to come in and an elbow drop gets two. Orndorff chokes him with a rope but Patrick makes the save to start the obvious beatdown. Cue Anderson (you remember him Paul. He's the guy that broke your neck and ended your career) and Zbyszko to help beat up the twins, allowing Orndorff to piledrive Patrick for the pin.

Rating: D-. I've never been the biggest Paul Orndorff fan (I don't dislike him but I never got the massive appeal) but you just had him hold his own and beat last week's Tag Team Champions. Yeah he had help, but the Harris Brothers should have a lot less trouble beating up two guys who retired due to neck issues and a commentator who has wrestled like four times in three years.

Slick Johnson reverses the decision and names Creative Control the winners by DQ. Good for them I suppose.

The Mamalukes open the body bag and find...Norman Smiley. Their reactions are actually funny.

Curt Hennig vs. Roddy Piper

Chairs match and another pairing that would have rocked in 1989. Piper apparently has a torn bicep so Hennig goes right after the arm. Roddy comes back with some chair shots and Hennig leaves after about 70 seconds. I see zero point to this match existing.

Bret Hart has been attacked and Goldberg checks on him.

Tag Team Titles: Bret Hart/Goldberg vs. Outsiders

Hall and Nash are challenging. Goldberg comes out to fight alone and does just fine to start with the superkick dropping Nash and a right hand sending Hall to the floor with him. Back in and Hall officially starts for the team with a wristlock but gets put down with the AA's second cousin. A pumphandle slam sends Hall running to the corner and it's off to Nash. Kevin tries his luck by running the ropes but walks into a

powerslam for two.

The numbers game starts catching up with Goldberg though and Hall's cheap shot lets Nash take over. The running crotch attack to the back gets two on Goldberg and Hall plants him with a chokeslam. Hart limps down and slugs away for the save. Nash gets caught in the Sharpshooter but Hall makes the save. Everything breaks down with Hall getting kicked down, right before Nash brings in the title belt. Bret punches him down but his knee goes out, despite Nash not touching him, allowing Nash to get the pin and the titles, just before Goldberg Jackhammers Hall.

Rating: D. Angle instead of a match here, but thank goodness they managed to get the World Champion pinned six days before Starrcade and give Hall a second (or third if you consider the TV Title still around) title. This is the problem with having the World Title match participants as champions, but giving it to them for four days made it even dumber.

Trash fills the ring to end the show.

Overall Rating: F+. Well let's see: #1 contender for the Cruiserweight Title loses to a non-wrestler, Sid gets beaten down again, the World Champion gets pinned, Jeff Jarrett still isn't interesting and Hennig and Piper set up and blew off an angle in one night with a match barely breaking a minute. Somehow, this is their go home show (Thunder hasn't meant anything in ages) for the biggest show of the year. Russo booking Starrcade scares the heck out of me and this didn't do anything to make it better.

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Monday Nitro – December 6, 1999: This Is Them Trying

Monday Nitro #217

Date: December 6, 1999

Location: Milwaukee Arena, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Attendance: 7,250

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Bobby Heenan

The big question this week is can WCW somehow manage to make the shows even less coherent than they already have. Last week's show had its moments, but for the most part it was all over the place to the point where I can barely remember what happened just a week later. Starrcade is thirteen days away and we've barely touched on the card. We actually have a title match announced from Thunder as Bret will defend against Luger. Let's get to it.

We open with Gene bringing out Jeff Jarrett for an interview. Jeff doesn't need Slapnuts Okerlund and will do the interview himself. Jarrett also doesn't need the Powers That Be or the Outsiders but he does need the WCW World Title. The fans start swearing at him and the attempted beeping out is laughably awful. He wants to get rid of Dustin Rhodes for screwing up his destiny and he'll do it in a Bunkhouse Stampede match at Starrcade.

This brings him to Mike Tenay, who won't come near him anymore. Jeff threatens Gene with a guitar shot but Tenay comes out and says he'll take matters into his own hands. Jeff doesn't care and puts Tenay in the Figure Four until Goldberg runs in for the save. Hopefully that ends the Tenay angle but I doubt it does.

The Mamalukes and Tony Marinara arrive with Tony yelling at them for letting Disco and Lash get the better of them. Tonight, they meet the boss.

Curt Hennig brings Curly Bill in to see Russo with a new gimmick in mind: Shane. Russo says it's as bad as Vincent but at least he's thinking. Shane is hired. Hey, I'm not sure if you knew this, but there are people named Vince and Shane in the WWF. It's not clear why mentioning them is supposed to be amusing or entertaining, but those people do in fact exist. Rhonda Singh comes in and asks for an opportunity.

Fit Finlay has Brian Knobbs in the woods, training him to be a REAL hardcore wrestler. This has potential, but Norman would be far more entertaining.

Hardcore Title: Norman Smiley vs. Rhonda Singh

What is the deal with Russo having men fight women? It happens almost every week. Before the match, Smiley says he would take Finlay apart if he was here tonight. The fat jokes begin as Singh throws weapons into the ring and nails Norman with a trashcan. She tells him to be a man and hits another trashcan shot, followed by a splash in the corner. Norman comes back with a fire extinguisher blast and sends Singh face first through a table in the corner to retain.

Rating: F. I feel sorry for women who sign up with WCW, thinking they might be able to do something serious on the show. Instead, they're there so Russo can either have them treated as sex objects or there to be fat and stupid. As usual, this show is Russo's playground and the idea of it being anything resembling a wrestling show is purely coincidental.

Maestro is complaining that his piano is out of tune. He looks inside so David Flair can come up, slam the lid on his head, and kidnap Symphony. This is the stupid stuff that is dragging this show down. We've spent about a month explaining that David Flair is a psycho who keeps kidnapping/stalking women, and NO ONE HAS DONE ANYTHING ABOUT IT. On top of that, this doesn't seem to be leading to a match or any kind of storyline resolution, but it keeps happening week after week like a bad TV show. If it sets up a match then fine, but stop wasting my time otherwise.

Psychosis and La Parka are in Russo's office. Apparently Juvy has hurt his arm and can't defend the IWGP Junior Heavyweight Title in his rematch

against Liger tonight. One of the two of them will take Juvy's place, and it's going to be whoever gets out of the office first. Psychosis nails Parka and leaves first. This is what Vince Russo thinks of cruiserweights.

Luger comes up to Liz's door with champagne and says this is the night that defines their careers.

Disco and Lash invade Marinara's dressing room with promises of pizza.

IWGP Junior Heavyweight Title: Psychosis vs. Jushin Thunder Liger

This is the second time in a year that Psychosis is defending a title he didn't win. Feeling out process to start with Liger taking over with a headscissors. A backdrop sends Psychosis to the floor but let's stop to look at Buzzkill in the crowd. Liger nails a plancha but Psychosis snaps his throat across the top for a breather.

Psychosis hits a missile dropkick for two and yells at Charles Robinson for the near fall. Back to the floor with Liger being whipped into the barricade, setting up a top rope hurricanrana to give Psychosis two back inside. A quick Liger Kick stuns Psychosis and Liger throws him into the ropes for a crash. Out of nowhere, a majistral cradle gives Liger the title back.

Rating: C. The fans didn't care, but a lot of that is likely due to most of them not being familiar with Liger or the title. Both Liger and the title have been thrown out there two weeks in a row with no real explanation of who they are or why they're here. I'm sure some fans remember Liger from his occasional appearances, but the majority seem to think of him as just another guy fighting for a title that isn't the Cruiserweight belt.

La Parka chairs Psychosis post match to make sure Liger gets zero focus.

The Nitro Girls play cards when the Mamalukes come in and make it a strip poker game.

Liz will have nothing to do with Luger's apologies.

Maestro looks for Symphony.

Gene keeps staring at Mona's chest, prompting Mona to say she's more than T&A, unlike Madusa.

Evan Karagias vs. Mona vs. Madusa

If either girl wins, they get a title shot at Evan at Starrcade. If Evan wins, he gets Starrcade off. The girls shove Evan away and go at it themselves with Madusa kicking her in the face for two. Evan sits in on commentary because EVERY MATCH NEEDS COMMENTARY. Mona comes back with a cross body and missile dropkick but Evan throws her down, only to get small packaged by Madusa for the pin in like 80 seconds.

Jeff Jarrett comes out and guitars Madusa because men beating up women is funny right? He challenges Goldberg for later.

Lash and Disco have tied Tony up and promise him a surprise.

Liz pours champagne on Luger's head.

Maestro is still looking for Symphony and doesn't notice when he walks past David.

Vampiro and Jerry Only are going to take out Dr. Death tonight.

Oklahoma/Steve Williams vs. Vampiro/Jerry Only

Oklahoma has a wireless mic on, no shirt, and is going to call the match as he starts with Vampiro. To the shock of no one, Oklahoma runs away from the threat of violence and tags in Dr. Death for some three point tackles. We hit the spinning toehold before it's back to Oklahoma, who can't do the same hold. Vampiro comes back with a kick to the head, which makes me smile far more than it should.

Off to Williams vs. Only with Jerry getting caught in the running press slam. Oklahoma gets in a chair shot to Jerry as Williams hits the Stampede but pulls Vampiro up. That goes well for Vampiro as he superkicks Williams down, only to have Oklahoma nail him with a boot. Williams clotheslines Vampiro down and it's off to Oklahoma for a bottom

rope elbow and the pin.

Rating: F. The unfunny parody beats the wrestler the fans want to see in a match where the musician doesn't have to look bad. It's another case of WCW having no idea how their priorities should work and the show being about making the writers laugh instead of delivering what the fans might want to see.

The Nitro Girls cheat to beat the Mamalukes in the poker game.

Disco and Lash get ready to tar and feather Marinara. In the middle, Disco draws what looks to be a Hitler mustache on Tony.

The Outsiders are ready for their matches tonight.

WCW World Title: Bret Hart vs. Total Package

This is the opener of the second hour because the REAL main events are still to come. The champ jumps Luger during the removal of the pants and takes the fight outside. Hart goes after the back and then the knee as we continue this brief resurrection of the old Bret Hart style. Luger goes after the eyes for an escape and here are Sting and Liz. Sting yells at Liz and asks who she's going to represent. The distraction lets Bret hit a quick Russian legsweep followed by the Sharpshooter to retain.

Rating: D. I love seeing Bret work the body parts like he did in the old days, but can we get a World Title match to close the show instead of giving it less time than the Oklahoma match? I'm sure I just don't get the appeal of the comedy stylings of Oklahoma and that I'm over thinking the importance of the WCW World Heavyweight Championship, which has been reduced to a plot point in the Sting vs. Luger feud.

Here's the Hennig/Shane/Singh segment from earlier. Not a repeat mind you, but the same segment which is presented like first run footage.

Russo offers La Parka the position of Chairman, meaning he's supposed to chair anyone that stands in front of Russo. Harlem Heat comes in and are given a title shot at Starrcade, but La Parka nails Booker with a chair and Creative Control comes in for the beatdown.

Roddy Piper is here. Tonight he's refereeing Creative Control vs. Roddy Piper. That's not a typo.

David Flair talks to the voices in his head as Symphony wonders why she took this job.

Jerry Flynn issues an open challenge for the Block.

Asya vs. Midnight

These two might be the exception to Russo's horrible treatment of women. The Revolution is now in full black attire with Shane ranting about how people tell him he can't desecrate the flag. The fans' chants have to be censored again and it's another failure. Shane displays the Revolution flag and Saturn says they're like the Black Panthers. The far bigger Midnight attacks to start and gets two off a dropkick. Asya gets two off a suplex but gets caught in Ricky Steamboat's double chicken wing. A delayed vertical suplex gets two for Midnight but the Revolution comes in for the quick no contest.

Jim Duggan comes out for the save but gets beaten down and covered with the Revolution flag.

Larry Zbyszko talks to Mike Graham about an upcoming meeting with Russo and company.

We get the return of the Nitro Party tapes, but this one includes a "fan" (soon to be known as Daffney), saying that David Flair is really cool.

Creative Control vs. Roddy Piper

Piper is guest referee. Before the match, they have to do everything he says. Why don't they have to do everything he says during the match as well? Or am I looking too deeply into this. Piper pats them both down and grabs one's crotch (Piper: "I'm having a ball!"). This is an I Quit match, so the first rule is you win by making someone say they quit. The second rule is a kick between one of the twins' legs, followed by the bell ringing.

Piper's hand lock has no effect so the twins hit a pair of double

gutbusters. Piper won't give up so they load up a spike piledriver, drawing out Goldberg for the save. He botches the Jackhammer as Piper chokes the other one with a tie to win. So Bryan stole it from Piper? Also, nice job of having the Tag Team Champions lose.

Tony Marinara is tarred and feathered. He offers threats of his father.

The Mamalukes offer a winner take all hand in the poker game.

Maestro finds Symphony's shoe.

Dustin Rhodes vs. Meng

Meng vs. Smiley for the Hardcore Title is announced for Starrcade. I'll skip Meng no selling the offense and get to the meat of the "match": Jarrett runs in, Meng is sent to the floor, Outsiders run in, Meng no sells a guitar shot, Nash kicks Meng to the floor and powerbombs Rhodes. This has been another non-match.

Larry is in Russo's office. Russo: "Why does Thunder suck now?" Well at least someone finally said it. Larry blames it on the lack of A-list stars on the show, so Russo says they'll be there from now on. He's firing the announcer though. This makes Larry insult Hennig because the script says he should, setting up a loser leaves town match for later with Zbyszko vs. Hennig. If Larry wins, Russo is gone but if Curt wins, Larry is gone.

Prince Iaukea is now dressed as the Artist Formerly Known As Prince.

Curt Hennig vs. Larry Zbyszko

Larry comes out to the Nitro theme but Hennig has Shane with him. This is quite the showdown. Larry starts (on time!) with his basic wrestling stuff and gets two off a swinging neckbreaker. The referee goes down and Hennig starts a comeback (a minute and a half into the match) with knee lifts and an abdominal stretch. Larry counters the PerfectPlex into his guillotine choke but Shane makes the save. Cue Arn Anderson to lay out both bad guys (I guess that's the closest thing we'll get to an Enforcers reunion), giving Larry the surprise pin.

Rating: 0. For oh of course it's not going to stand. The match was nothing to see of course but that's what you have to expect these days. The only other note here: people often forget Larry's age. He turned 46 the day before this match and was still in good shape so it wasn't the biggest stretch. It's weird to think of him in his mid 40s when he was the old veteran during the NWO's heyday.

Creative Control comes out and shows Robinson the replay so the finish is reversed, meaning Larry is gone.

Disco and Lash put an apple in Marinara's mouth. The Mamalukes see this, throw on their clothes, and go after them.

Chris Benoit vs. Kevin Nash

Hall, carrying a ladder, comes out with Nash and sits in on commentary. Nash takes Benoit into the corner to start and elbows him in the head. As Nash walks around, Hall sits on top of the ladder for a better view. Benoit stomps him down in the corner and cannonballs onto Nash's leg. They head to the floor with Nash no selling the leg work and sending Benoit into the steps. Back in and the side slam gets two for Nash (Hall: "SUCK ON THAT BENOIT!") but Chris dropkicks the knee out and cranks on the leg.

Benoit slugs away in the corner but charges into a boot to the face. There go the straps and Hall gets off the ladder, only to see Benoit slap on the Crossface. Hall decks the referee and throws in the ladder but Benoit dropkicks it into Nash's face. A cross body off the ladder puts Hall down and Benoit hammers away until Nash gets up with the Jackknife. Hall loads up the Edge onto the ladder until Sid comes out to make the save. No contest.

Rating: C-. I liked this better than I was expecting to. Nash is underrated as a big power guy as he can make his offense look damaging while also having someone like Benoit break him down. This wasn't a great match and of course got bogged down by all the nonsense, but I had a better time with it than I was expecting to.

Sting tells the Outsiders to bring it.

Here are the Mamalukes to call out Disco and Lash but gets the girls from the club last week. Vito rants about how he didn't want to sleep with them, but Disco and Lash sneak up on them and attack. This brings out the tarred and feathered Tony Marinara to nail them with a pipe, allowing the Mamalukes to take them away.

The Mamalukes throw Disco and Lash into a car but the car drives off without them. What

is Russo's obsession with this story? It gets as much airtime as anything else on the show.

Maestro staggers into the boiler room to find Symphony but gets beaten up by Jerry Flynn. So Jerry is the modern day Mankind? Jerry goes to a door, finds David and Symphony, and eats a crowbar to the face.

Nick Patrick says everyone is banned from ringside unless they have business out there because it's time for the referees to take power back. Normally I would complain about a line like that but a lot more structure around here would be an incredibly welcome sight.

Liz has a contract in her hands.

Scott Hall vs. Sting

Non-title, which might have something to do with Hall not bringing the belt with him. Liz comes out with Sting and Nash jumps in on commentary. Hall finds the toothpick throw hilarious but Sting would rather hit him in the face to take over. They quickly head outside with Nash choking Sting with a cord, allowing Hall to get in some cheap shots.

Back in and we hit the abdominal stretch on Sting, followed by a sleeper so neither guy has to do much other than stand there. A belly to back suplex finally gets Sting out and he slugs away, including ten punches in the corner. Sting gets all the way up to twenty but Scott pokes him in the eye for a breather. Liz gets on the apron to pepper spray Hall, setting up the Deathlock for the submission.

Rating: D. I guess it helps that Hall didn't lose clean, but maybe you could like, not have a champion lose on TV. It was nice to have something

resembling a clean match until the ending, which felt tacked on, but somehow that's an upgrade in the Russo era. To be fair though, at least the title doesn't mean anything these days anyway so it can't be hurt too badly.

Here's David Flair to his dad's music and holding Symphony by the hair. Maestro has ten seconds to come out here and get her, but here's Page instead. A crowbar shot misses and Page lays him out with a Diamond Cutter before telling the Powers That Be to make this a pay per view match. Oh and contrary to rumors, he's NOT going to the WWF because he's loyal to what brought him here. Thanks for that totally unnecessary name drop, but to be fair they are closing the ratings gap. Last week they lost by 3.4 points and this week it would only be 3 even, meaning Raw doubled Nitro up. Page calls out Sid and their match is on.

Sid Vicious vs. Diamond Dallas Page

Sid shoves him out to the floor to start and drops Page throat first across the barricade. Back in and Page grabs a quick neckbreaker but Sid launches him off at two. A top rope clothesline puts Sid down again but he breaks up the Diamond Cutter by, say it with me, knocking Page into the referee. There's the powerbomb to Page but the Outsiders run in for the beatdown. This brings out Benoit to help fight back but Jeff Jarrett comes in for the save until Bret Hart runs in to make it even. Page walks out and the match is a no contest because of course it is.

As everyone brawls, Nick Patrick grabs the mic and says the referees and security haven't been in charge all night so the main event can be a lumberjack match because they're out of here. So yeah, they're not even trying to call it wrestling anymore as there won't be any referees. It hasn't been a wrestling show in weeks so it's nice to see them finally confirm it.

Back from a break with the Outsiders, Jarrett and now Creative Control still destroying everyone until Goldberg comes out for the save. The four good guys stand tall and Jarrett says no way, so here's Roddy Piper to say he'll referee and everyone else can be lumberjacks. Jeff tries to leave again so the Green Bay Packers show up to stop him, allowing Dustin

Rhodes to throw him back in.

Jeff Jarrett vs. Goldberg

A big shoulder gets two for Goldberg and he starts hammering Jeff in the face. Jeff tries to jump over him in the corner but gets caught in a powerslam as this is one sided so far. Jarrett rolls outside and gets beaten up by the lumberjacks. He rolls back inside and gets caught in an armbar, so it's right back to the lumberjacks. Everyone outside gets in a brawl so Jeff sneaks in a chair to take over behind Piper's back. A high cross body gets two for Jeff and it's time for the sleeper as the fight has finally calmed down.

Goldberg fights up and slams out of the sleeper because he's Goldberg and it was just a sleeper. Both guys collide and go down, which looks way off as you wouldn't expect Goldberg to go down off a Jeff Jarrett shoulder block. Piper counts to ten without anyone getting up and nothing changes as a result. Nash grabs Goldberg's foot to break up the spear and pulls him to the floor for a beatdown. In the melee, Bret brings the belt in and nails Jarrett (mostly off camera), setting up the Jackhammer for the pin.

Rating: D+. Well they tried. This match was the attempt to make Jeff Jarrett seem like a legitimate main event guy but it really didn't work. The insanity of the match held it down because we can't just have Goldberg and Jarrett have a match where Jeff outsmarts him before falling to the Jackhammer, but that might be asking for too much.

Overall Rating: D. This show was all over the place, as has become WCW's custom. First and foremost, what is with the obsession over the mafia story? That angle got more time than anything else all night with David Flair and the Maestro in second place. The wrestling was what you would expect from WCW with the longest match not even breaking eight minutes. There's stuff going on for sure, but you have to take notes to remember why people are doing what they're doing with only thirteen days left until Starrcade. Oh and Thunder sucks and is apparently going to be a plot point going forward. How nice.

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