

Smackdown – June 26, 2003: Old Guys Out

Smackdown

Date: June 26, 2003

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

Commentators: Tazz, Michael Cole

We're back in the World's Most Famous Arena with the blue show, including a likely six man tag after the end of last week's show. Odds are we're looking at Brock Lesnar/Kurt Angle/Mr. America vs. Big Show/Shelton Benjamin/Charlie Haas, which offers some interesting combinations. Of course it also offers Mr. America wrestling and that might not be the best thing in the world. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of last week's Zack Gowan/Sable/Vince McMahon/Stephanie McMahon issues, including Sable humiliating Gowan to Vince's amusement and Stephanie going on a rant about how her father treated her like garbage. In other words, it's still all about Vince and Stephanie.

Opening sequence.

Here's John Cena to brag about how awesome his rookie year has been. Eh it's been good, but when you're in the same class as Brock Lesnar, it's not much to brag about. However, none of it would have started without answering an open challenge. Let's have another open challenge right now.

John Cena vs. Orlando Jordan

Josh Matthews is ring announcer for some reason. Cena laughs this off and insults New York but Jordan takes him down to start fast. A belly to belly suplex gives Jordan two but Cena plants him with a release spinebuster. The FU is countered with Jordan landing on his feet and coming back with a dropkick. Jordan goes up for a high crossbody but Cena rolls through and grabs the trunks for the pin.

Undertaker comes out and chases Cena off before giving Jordan the respect pat on the ribs. I'm not sure this one is going to work as well.

Undertaker/APA vs. FBI

And you know Undertaker needs help with this one. Palumbo headlocks Undertaker to start but it's already off to the arm cranking. A kick to the face just annoys Undertaker and there's Old School. The Italians take over in the corner with Nunzio dropkicking him in the face but easily allowing the hot tag off to Faarooq.

Palumbo gets in a cheap shot and it's Faarooq giving the FBI their false hope for a bit. We hit a reverse chinlock until Palumbo crotches himself on Faarooq's knee. The hot tag (minus the fans reacting) brings in Bradshaw to clean house. Everything breaks down and it's a chokeslam for Palumbo, followed by the Clothesline From Bradshaw for the pin on Stamboli.

Rating: D. I'm not even sure what to say here. Undertaker regularly beat up all three Italians and now we're supposed to be impressed or interested when two other big brawlers beat them up too? The match was a glorified squash with the minute or so of Faarooq being in trouble not exactly making this thrilling. Can we please find something else for Undertaker to do now?

Jamie Noble and Nidia annoy some fans on the streets of New York when an attorney comes up. Apparently Jamie's aunt died and left him \$827,000. I'll ignore the questions about how the attorney knew they were there or why he did such official business on the streets, or at least in a parking lot. Nidia tries to take the attorney's pants off but they decide to go to a fancy dinner at Applebee's instead.

Wrestlemania Recall: the first edition.

Sable tries to make up for last week to Vince but he turns her down. He has something to do tonight.

US Title Tournament First Round: Matt Hardy vs. Rikishi

No one with Matt, who has better abs than Rikishi, this week. Matt is

also officially out of the cruiserweight division so the experiment is over. Rikishi shoves him over to start and Matt already has to bail from the threat of a Stink Face. A posting lets Matt crank on both of Rikishi's arms, which is about the extent of the offense.

Rikishi plants him with a belly to belly suplex and the Rikishi Driver knocks Matt silly. It doesn't knock him out for three though, which is a rather questionable knockout when Hardy's head bounced off the mat. The Rump Shaker hits raised knees though and the Twist of Fate gets two. Matt takes off a turnbuckle, avoids a charge into said buckle, and hits a second Twist for the pin.

Rating: D+. That Rikishi Driver looked great (as it did most of the time) but they really could have just ended it after the first Twist of Fate. The tournament isn't exactly setting the world on fire yet but it might get better with some brackets or at least a list of names in the thing. You know, assuming they know who is in the thing at the moment.

Billy Kidman, still out of action with an injury, is in the front row but wants to be back in the ring.

Tag Team Titles: Roddy Piper/Sean O'Haire vs. Eddie Guerrero/Tajiri

Eddie and Tajiri are defending as we need to wedge an MSG legend onto the card. O'Haire jumps Eddie at the bell but gets taken down for a quick slingshot hilo. It's off to Tajiri for the handspring elbow and a superkick for two. Piper has to break up a Tarantula and then comes in legally to a nice nostalgia reaction. After a few stomps and some slaps to Eddie, it's already back to O'Haire for a chinlock. A powerslam is countered with a reverse DDT and Tajiri brings Eddie back in. Everything breaks down and Piper gets misted, setting up the frog splash to retain the titles.

Rating: D. As usual, Eddie and Tajiri looked fine, albeit at the expense of someone who should be winning the US Title tournament. This push for O'Haire hasn't gotten him anywhere and, again, it's almost all about Piper. There's no benefit to the two of them being associated and O'Haire is floundering more and more by the day. Of course none of that matters as this was it for Piper in the company due to some comments he made in

an interview with HBO. Really, it's not much of a loss for WWE as Piper was barely worth keeping around at this point, save for the occasional good line in Piper's Pit.

We see the end of last week's show, which set up tonight's six man tag.

Here's Vince to call out Stephanie and Gowan. Vince sucks up to Stephanie, calling her the apple of her father's eye. She grew up in a hurry and when she was seventeen, he did have her, ahem, close some business deals for him. Those actions stole her innocence and it was as if Vince personally deflowered her (I know it's never flat out stated, but it's pretty clear what he's talking about and that's rather disturbing). He'll never forgive himself and that brings him to Gowan.

See, Vince wants to be like Zack, because it's the one thing he can't be. Therefore he wants an apology from Gowan, who says no. Gowan goes into a good rant about how he wants to be a wrestler and Vince is spitting on his dreams. All Gowan wants is a contract and Vince calmly gives him one. Well, with one condition: he has to join Vince's special club. Vince takes his pants down but gets hit low instead. At least they kept it shorter here and stayed closer to the point, albeit with Vince losing his pants.

Ultimo Dragon vs. Shannon Moore

This is Dragon's debut and Rey Mysterio is on commentary. Dragon spins out of a headscissors and a wristlock to start before kicking Moore away without much effort. Shannon gets sent outside so Dragon moonsaults back into the middle of the ring. Back in and Moore gets two off an elbow to the jaw before grabbing a chinlock.

Dragon fights up and hits a sloppy inverted hurricanrana/release victory roll (started in an electric chair and rolled forward). Shannon is sent outside again for an Asai moonsault and the New York fans are rather appreciative. A super jawbreaker sets up a standing backflip into a reverse DDT (basically a Salida Del Sol) to give Dragon the pin.

Rating: C-. This was way more competitive than it needed to be, especially with someone who has been hyped up as strongly as Dragon. I

was never the biggest fan of his but he had a good finisher and a great looking moonsault, which is often all you need. If nothing else the division needs some fresh blood and a top challenger for Mysterio.

Rey and Dragon shake hands post match.

Kurt Angle/Brock Lesnar/Mr. America vs. Charlie Haas/Shelton Benjamin/Big Show

The USA chants start up (Tazz: "I don't get this. Everybody in the ring is an American.") until Angle and Haas start things off. The chants shift to Angle as he takes Charlie down for a far too early chinlock. Haas drags him into the corner though and it's a good looking double dropkick to put Angle down. A crossbody gets Angle out of trouble as the fans want Hogan.

They'll have to settle for Mr. America though for a clothesline, only to have Brock come in for some REAL clotheslines. Brock gorilla presses Haas as Tazz tries to get Manster over as a nickname. It's back to America for a belly to back suplex and we take a break. Back with Lesnar cleaning house again and staring Big Show (who hasn't done anything yet) down.

Benjamin breaks up an F5 on Haas and it's the leapfrog over Haas and onto Lesnar's back. Now Show will come in and Brock can't slam him. Lesnar can however belly to back suplex him because physics are weird in wrestling. The hot tag brings in Angle to clean house with the release German suplexes (that's very un-American of him). Show has to break up the ankle lock on Haas and it's double teaming time again.

That lasts all of five seconds as Kurt gets in another suplex and brings America back in. Some right hands have Show rocked and Lesnar and Angle pull him outside. An F5/Angle Slam take out Haas and Benjamin, only to have Show come back in for a double chokeslam. That leaves America to take care of Show but here's Vince carrying Gowan. The distraction lets Show chokeslam America for the pin.

Rating: C+. Not bad here, mainly because they mostly focused on Haas/Benjamin vs. Angle/Lesnar. America and Big Show could have a passable five minute match but they're much better off saving them for

short bursts like this. They still need to find someone else for Lesnar to face besides Big Show though as it's getting repetitive. The other stuff was good though and that's what matters most. I'm sure Mr. America will find something fresh to do soon enough.

Vince makes Gowan/Stephanie vs. Big Show for Gowan's contract next week.

Overall Rating: C-. The first forty minutes or so were pretty dreadful but it picked up strongly enough in the second half to make it watchable. They're getting to a point with the main story but the rest of the card is kind of all over the place. We still have no idea who is in the tournament and O'Haire/Piper are the best they have for challengers to the Tag Team Titles. It's certainly better than Raw though and while that's not much of a bar to clear, it's better than nothing.

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Smackdown – June 12, 2003: It Broke

Smackdown

Date: June 12, 2003

Location: TD Waterhouse Center, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

It's a big night here as Smackdown has one of those pay per view main events on TV when Raw has the brand exclusive show. Tonight it's Brock Lesnar defending the title against Big Show, plus Vince McMahon vs. Zack Gowan in an arm wrestling match for Gowan's contract. Ok I didn't say it was a high quality pay per view match. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Rey Mysterio winning the Cruiserweight Title last week. You really would have thought it would be the Mr. America stuff or Brock Lesnar vs. Big Show but this is a nice surprise.

Opening sequence.

Cruiserweight Title: Matt Hardy vs. Rey Mysterio

Rey is defending and Matt, who is too handsome to wear a mask like Rey, tells the MF'ers to stay in the back. Matt goes right at Rey to start and whips him hard into the corner. An early 619 misses and Matt hammers away some more. A middle rope neckbreaker is broken up so Rey hits a super bulldog to put both guys down instead.

Rey's springboard seated senton gets two, only to tweak the bad groin on a leapfrog attempt. It's fine enough for the 619 though and a springboard legdrop gets two. Back up and Matt drops him onto the middle rope, messing up the injury again. Splash Mountain gets two on the champ but he blocks the Twist of Fate. A West Coast Pop from the top without the springboard retains the title in a hurry.

Rating: B-. They kept it moving out there and that's what this needed to be. Mysterio retaining again, despite being injured, makes it clear that he's the better man of the two and should wrap things up between them. As a bonus, it's a great way to open the show as they're in and out less than ten minutes into the show with the fans having something to cheer about.

It's time for Piper's Pit, but an international version. Piper has a table set up with sombreros, booze and various other things, all set up

for guests Eddie Guerrero and Tajiri. Eddie is very excited to be on the show and Piper seems equally happy. He talks about Eddie and Tajiri being all about lying, cheating and stealing, which Eddie says is them being honest.

Piper says the truth is Sean O'Haire will be the next World Champion, so Eddie should let him hold one of the Tag Team Titles. Eddie isn't going to do that, but Tajiri hands his over for a plate of sushi. A fight is about to break out so let's have some tequila instead. Tajiri spits his in Piper's face though and they steal the belt back without much effort.

Sable is in Stephanie's office and using her computer when Stephanie comes in. After claiming to have been looking for Zack Gowan's contract, Sable mentions that Stephanie is bringing back the US Title (well thank goodness). Stephanie says it's true and insults Sable a bit, saying that Sable will never be able to con her (Stephanie is too smart you see).

Billy Gunn vs. A-Train

Torrie Wilson is guest ring announcer here for no apparent reason. She introduces the returning Billy and seems to have a thing for him. Billy slugs away with some clotheslines, followed by the Stinger Splash in the corner. A bicycle kick cuts him off but the Derailer is countered, setting up a quick Fameasser to give Billy the pin.

Torrie lets Billy give him a quick spank post match.

Undertaker vs. Johnny Stamboli

Yes this is still going. Stamboli charges in and gets punched down in the corner for his efforts. The FBI distraction doesn't work as Undertaker punches them away without too much effort, mainly because he's the Undertaker and they're the FBI. Stamboli finally gets in a baseball slide for a breather and Palumbo's superkick takes Undertaker down. A slingshot legdrop and a suplex get two on Undertaker. Since he's an athletic freak, Stamboli jumps from the mat to the top and spins around with a legdrop that only hits mat. The Last Ride gives Undertaker the pin.

Rating: D. The more I see of Stamboli, the more impressed I am. He was

never going to be a big star because the basics weren't exactly great but some of the athletic feats he pulled off were very impressive. Of course when he's done those feats he's lost to Rikishi and Undertaker, at least one of which wasn't exactly necessary. This feud really needs to end soon though as it's not doing anything for anyone involved.

The FBI chairs Undertaker down.

Mr. America helps Gowan warm up for the arm wrestling.

Here's Stephanie to run the arm wrestling match. Naturally she has something to say but Sable comes out to cut her off. Apparently she's Stephanie's assistant, even though I thought they said she was Vince's last week. Eh it's not interesting either way so here are Gowan and Mr. America. Vince is out next and looks as jacked as he has in years.

We're not ready to go yet though as America challenges Vince to arm wrestle him instead. Sable whispers into Vince's ear and the boss agrees, upon two conditions. First of all, Gowan vs. Vince is still on for later. However, if Vince beats America, he leaves for the other arm wrestling. Why do I feel like I need legal representation for this? They go left handed to save Vince's arm for later and America flips him off at the same time. Sable accuses America of cheating so they let go, causing Stephanie to threaten to disqualify her father.

This time it's right handed and America is about to win until Sable flashes him to give Vince the win. Vince gloats about the win and compliments Sable's.....eyes as America and Stephanie leave. So Gowan and Vince go now with Vince being in some trouble until he kicks the bad leg out to win. Gowan is stunned and Vince tells him that he needs athletes, not freaks. I'm not going to be able to top that one so thankfully this is over. This was really long and I don't think it actually changed anything, making it a perfect fit for this story.

Post break America is consoling Gowan when Big Show comes in to gloat a bit.

Chris Benoit/Rhyno vs. Basham Brothers

The Bashams debut Linda Miles as their manager Shaniqua. Tazz recognizes her as Miles (it's not hard to miss) and wants to know why she has a riding crop. Rhino runs Danny over to start but a hair pull from the apron lets Danny put on a chinlock. That's shoved away without much effort and the hot tag brings in Benoit. Suplexes abound and Doug gets caught in the Crossface until Danny makes a save. Rhino punches Benoit by mistake and a Rough Ryder gives Danny the pin.

Rating: D+. More angle advancement here as we move closer to Benoit and Rhino finally splitting. The Bashams aren't much yet and Shaniqua really doesn't need to be there but that's never stopped WWE before. The tag division does need some fresh talent and it's not like they're as dull as the FBI. At the moment the Bashams don't have any real characters so they're already better than the stereotypical gimmicks.

Benoit and Rhino argue in the back.

John Cena vs. Funaki

Before the match, Cena raps about Cole loves boy bands, including O-Town. Cena charges into a boot, blocks the tornado DDT and finishes with the FU (much more like the modern version) in less than a minute.

Here's Kurt Angle for a chat. After promising to be a champion again soon, Kurt wants to talk to Team Angle. Kurt wants to know where they were last week but Team Angle says they were sick. Benjamin: "Sick of being in your shadow." Where was Kurt when they needed him to be part of the team? Angle yells at them for not responding to a setback before telling them to think about how to get the Tag Team Titles back.

Haas says hang on a second and points out the loss at Wrestlemania where he broke his neck (not exactly). They fought Lesnar and didn't break their necks, meaning Angle is a loser! Kurt says the YOU SUCK chants have been earned, which only he can make sound like a positive.

Haas says Kurt can still be on the team, but they're the leaders now. That's not cool with Kurt, who throws both of them off the team. Angle even kicks dirt on them like an umpire and they actually leave. Kurt was hilarious here but Haas' line about not breaking their necks was the best

in the whole thing. Good stuff here and funny, as Angle can always do.

During the break, Haas and Benjamin beat Angle down. Cole: "Is that how you handle things? You get fired and you beat up your boss?" Tazz: "Well yeah. I did."

Smackdown World Title: Big Show vs. Brock Lesnar

Brock is defending and gets clotheslined down early on. Show blocks a belly to belly without too much effort but gets low bridged to the floor in a rather large crash. A whip sends Brock into the steps and a side slam gives Show two. Show's half crab has Brock in some trouble but he makes the rope, as expected.

Lesnar shrugs it off but can't hold him up for the F5. The chokeslam is broken up but Show runs him over and drops a leg for two. Now the chokeslam connects for another two and Show is frustrated. He loads up a super chokeslam but Lesnar reverses into a superplex...and they break the ring. They're both pretty much dead so the match is thrown out.

Rating: D+. I'm rather sick of seeing these two fight but that was quite the visual to help move things along. It's certainly a great crash and a unique finish but it also likely means a rematch. Lesnar sold a bunch here and Show's stuff was fine, though once you've seen these two fight once, you've seen it every time and that's not good for the champion and almost perennial #1 contender.

Doctors come out (with Cole getting in the of "trainers, referees, EMT's down", which was used on the Do Not Try This At Home announcements for years) and check on them both to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. Really weak show for the most part here with only a big visual and a good opener on the positive side. They need something fresh around here and while the US Title coming back will open up some possibilities, Lesnar vs. Big Show and the Mr. America stuff just isn't going to get them very far. Bad show here, but not a hopeless disaster.

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Smackdown – June 5, 2003: America First, And Then Lord Littlebrook

Smackdown

Date: June 5, 2003

Location: Arrowhead Pond, Anaheim, California

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

This week is almost all about Kurt Angle, who is back from the rather ridiculous two months off after having another major neck injury. To be fair, he's long been established as a crazy man anyway so it's not like this is out of character. As for an actual match, Rey Mysterio is challenging Matt Hardy for the Cruiserweight Title. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Here are Roddy Piper and Sean O'Haire to get things going in Piper's Pit. There's a legend in the back named Zack Gowan, who has fought against all the odds to get here. Piper makes fun of Gowan by calling him special over and over again. Instead it's Vince McMahon power walking to the

ring. Vince has been blinded by his hatred for Mr. America and Hulk Hogan, which is why he wants to make things right. It's time to congratulate a great American success story like Gowan. Therefore, Gowan will have the chance to earn a contract.

Cue Gowan, albeit flanked by Mr. America. Vince isn't pleased again and accused Hogan of faking the lie detector test last week. As for Gowan, he has the chance to get his contract next week, in an arm wrestling contest against Vince. America insults Vince a bit more as this takes longer than it needs to. Vince shoves Gowan down and gloats a lot.

We get a great Kurt Angle moment in Milk-A-Mania. Eh yeah that worked.

Undertaker vs. Chuck Palumbo

Yes this is still going. Palumbo headlocks him to start and actually shoulders Undertaker down. Undertaker is right back up with a leapfrog of all things and Old School connects (on the second attempt that is). An FBI distraction lets Palumbo get in a spinebuster to take over and a running right hand knocks Undertaker outside for the cheap shots. Back in and Undertaker grabs a suplex for a breather but Palumbo knocks him right back into the corner. You don't see Undertaker sell this much in a match like this...and as I say this he hits the chokeslam for the pin.

Rating: D+. Palumbo got in some offense here but it wasn't exactly a thrilling match. I'm still waiting on the FBI to go away though as they don't have anything special for a gimmick and it's not like there's a star for the team. I have no idea why Undertaker is stuck with them, but at least WWE isn't wasting any potential big stars on him.

Post match the FBI goes after Undertaker but is dispatched in short order.

Rey Mysterio's family is in the front row for his title shot later tonight.

Quick look at Big Show laying out Brock Lesnar last week.

Show vs. Lesnar for the title next week. At least it's not on pay per view.

We get a video tribute to Freddie Blassie, who passed away earlier in the week. This is edited off the Network version due to music issues, though an RIP graphic is there so it's better than nothing.

Eddie Guerrero/Tajiri vs. Basham Brothers

Non-title. Tajiri takes him Doug down with some armdrags to start and Eddie chases him into the corner for the first tag. That's fine with Eddie who rolls some suplexes but Doug breaks up the frog splash. Again, it doesn't seem to bother Eddie who wristdrags Doug and headscissors Danny at the same time. We hear about Team Angle calling in sick tonight as Doug gets in a suplex of his own for two on Eddie.

Another suplex gets Eddie out of trouble and it's off to Tajiri for a superkick. A DDT gives Tajiri two on Danny and we hit the Tarantula (with Tajiri crossing Danny's legs instead of pulling back like a Boston crab). With the referee trying to break it up, Eddie adds a frog splash to Doug's back, setting up the Buzzsaw Kick for the pin.

Rating: C+. The more I see of Eddie and Tajiri together, the more I like them. Tajiri is always smooth in the ring and that's what makes them work so well. Eddie can do all the talking and technical stuff while Tajiri can come in and kick people really, really hard. That's quite the combination. I'm not sure what the point is in having the Bashams come in and lose like this after a single win over the makeshift team of Rikishi and Spanky.

Another great Angle moment: singing songs with Austin while playing ukulele.

Here's Angle, to quite the face reaction. He says it feels great to hear people tell him that he sucks so PLAY THAT MUSIC AGAIN! Angle is so overwhelmed that he lays on the mat listening to the chants. Things settle down a bit and Angle talks about wanting to be the World Champion again. As for his recovery though, there was one person who came to see him in the hospital and became a true friend. That person....will be named later as here's Big Show to interrupt.

Show doesn't care that Angle is back because Angle hasn't earned his

respect yet. Show gets right in Angle's face and says if Angle wants to be champion again, he can come face Show after he wins the title next week. Angle better pray that doesn't happen though because Angle won't come out of the hospital again. Kurt pulls out some breaths strips and reminds Show that he took the title from him back in December. Oh and he won a gold medal with a broken freaking neck.

Angle does a quick fan poll on whether they want to see him beat Big Show up tonight, asking for a YOU SUCK. Cue Lesnar so Show bails, leaving Angle to say he could have handled that himself. Angle says Show has been getting the better of Lesnar as of late (Huh?) and thinks Brock is losing the title next week. Lesnar promises to keep the title and offers Angle a shot down the road. That sounds good to Kurt, but he's glad Lesnar came out here. It was Brock who was visiting him in the hospital and being a friend. That means a big best friends hug and we have the latest version of the mega powers.

Ultimo Dragon is coming.

John Cena vs. Chris Benoit

Before the match, Cena rips on the cruiserweight division and thinks they don't deserve any air time. We even get a Lord Littlebrook reference, making this even more awesome than usual. Benoit goes straight at him to start and drops Cena with a hard shoulder. Cena's charge in the corner misses and Benoit easily takes him down into a failed Crossface attempt.

They head outside where Benoit gets posted and it's off to a chinlock. Benoit pops back up and elbows Cena in the face before countering the FU into a DDT. The Swan Dive gets two but the ref gets bumped. That really doesn't need to happen in a match that hasn't run three minutes yet. Cena gets in a low blow but here's Rhyno to take the chain away. Unfortunately he hits Benoit in the head by mistake, giving Cena the easy pin.

Rating: D+. Not enough time to do anything here but it was more about setting up the Benoit/Rhyno split anyway. That being said, it's not like Rhyno and Benoit are guys in need of a big time split in the first place. It's also not like the division is deep enough to be burning off teams, but why let that get in your way?

Jamie Noble/Nidia vs. Torrie Wilson/Rikishi

The guys take turns twirling their partners around before we're ready to go. Nidia slaps Rikishi so he shoves her down, which Cole says she deserved. Torrie shows off her ability to do some not great armdrags before sending her into the corner. It's off to Rikishi for a Stinkface attempt but Noble comes in instead.

Rikishi misses a sitdown splash but knocks Noble around without too much trouble. Nidia is brought back in to face Torrie, meaning the announcers get to talk about her outfit. Some bad clotheslines set up a high crossbody for two on Nidia but Noble trips Torrie. That earns Noble a superkick and Nidia a Stinkface as this is still all about Rikishi. Torrie finishes with a neckbreaker.

Rating: D-. Total filler here and mainly a way to look at Torrie for a few minutes. I've heard worse ideas but it's getting annoying having to watch her horrible matches while acting like she's something great. Throw in the WAY too strong support for Rikishi and it's not my favorite time of the show.

Rey says he's healthy and ready to take the title. Eddie comes in and gives him a pep talk.

We recap the opening segment.

Vince is in Stephanie's office where she asks what's up with him lately. She threatens to give Gowan a contract anyway, but Vince promises to fire her if that happens. Yet he didn't do that for Mr. America? Why not make it one of those Iron Clad contracts then? Anyway, Vince brings in his new assistant: Sable, who has seemingly forgotten the whole Torrie angle.

Stephanie brings up Sable's lawsuits against the company (which I don't believe has been acknowledged before) and suggests that Vince is only looking at Sable's body. After Stephanie's Stating the Obvious Segment of the Week, Vince says she's just jealous of Sable's looks.

Cruiserweight Title: Matt Hardy vs. Rey Mysterio

Matt, who is taller than Rey Mysterio and despises traffic, is defending

with Crash and Shannon Moore in his corner. We get the staredown and my goodness it's weird to see Matt towering over someone. Matt works on a wristlock to start as we hear about various people holding the title over the years. You mean like Mysterio?

Rey gets bent around the ropes but comes right back with a slingshot dropkick through said ropes. A springboard is broken up with a forearm though and the goons get in their shots. The referee finally wakes up and we have a double ejection, which should make things a little bit better. The disgruntled Matt gets taken down by a springboard seated senton and we take a break. Back with Rey escaping Splash Mountain but getting caught by a low blow. Eh it worked for Cena so it can work for Matt.

The champ starts in on the recently injured groin (well, hamstring in this case) as Rey's family is starting to panic. We hit a half crab for a bit until Rey dives for the ropes. He can't run for the 619 though and gets taken into the corner to continue the beating. The Tree of Woe goes badly for Matt as his charge hits the post, followed by a spinning DDT for two on the champ. Rey heads up top but gets pulled down with a super Side Effect, which isn't as impressive of a crash as you would have expected.

Back up and Rey grabs a Twist of Fate of his own before hobbling into a 619. They fall out to the floor though with Matt slowly remember what planet he's on. The referee checks on Matt though, allowing Shannon and Crash to run back in for a double reverse suplex drop. The top rope legdrop gives Matt a close two. Hardy is livid and it's a quick rollup to give Rey the pin and the title.

Rating: B. Good enough here, but it certainly didn't feel like a cruiserweight match. Instead this came off like a regular heavyweight match which happened to have Mysterio involved. Not that Mysterio and Hardy can't work that style, but if they can wrestle the regular style, what's the point in having them in the cruiserweight division? Oh right: there's no midcard title.

Rey's family comes in to celebrate to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. Better show than usual here, partially due to having

the main event focused on ANYTHING other than the Mr. America nonsense. Mysterio winning the title felt like a big deal and Angle coming back was cool, though the bottom half of the card continues to feel completely unimportant. Good enough show though and miles better than anything Raw has produced in a very long time.

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Smackdown – May 29, 2003: One Lies, the Other Punches

Smackdown

Date: May 29, 2003

Location: Pensacola Civic Center, Pensacola, Florida

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're closing out the month with...a lie detector test! Yeah that's the big draw this week: Mr. America is being forced to take a lie detector test after losing to Sean O'Haire last week. Somehow this was probably viewed as a big win for O'Haire, even though he's already coming off as little more than a detail less than a week later. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the Vince vs. America shenanigans setting up tonight's lie detector test.

Opening sequence.

Here's Sable to introduce the first match, but only after a quick shout out to...Tazz?

Torrie Wilson vs. Nidia

They're never following up on Torrie kissing Sable are they? Before we get going, Zack Gowen is shown in the crowd. Torrie shoves Jamie Noble off the apron and chops away at Nidia to start, earning herself a knee to the ribs. Nidia grabs a suplex for two as they've already done more wrestling than I was expecting.

A shot to the knee has Torrie in trouble and Jamie shouts at Nidia to stay on her. The knee is slammed onto the apron and wrapped around the rope for good measure. Back in and they do the roll over the referee spot so the referee poses on the ropes. Jamie trips Torrie though, allowing Nidia to grab a rollup with tights for the pin.

Rating: D. This was their best way to open the show? I know it's mainly for the visuals and I'd rather go with this than more of Vince vs. Hogan but they didn't have any other options here? At least they got it out of the way I guess, but this really isn't the best way to set the show off on a good foot.

Post match Tazz punches Jamie out and Torrie rips off Nidia's shorts. Sable throws water at Tazz and bails to end this head scratch inducing segment.

Vince is annoyed that his limo driver has to move the limo out of a handicap zone. He orders said driver to stay right there because this shouldn't take long.

Stephanie McMahon tests out the lie detector.

Team Angle wants to regain their titles in preparation for Kurt Angle's return next week.

Eddie Guerrero has Tajiri in Guerrero gear and thinks he can feel some Latino Heat. Tajiri has even stolen his first car! He can even speak English too (which may be a first).

Tag Team Titles: Eddie Guerrero/Tajiri vs. Team Angle

Eddie and Tajiri are defending. Tajiri gets sent outside early on and it's a double beating until Eddie elbows his way to freedom. A pop up dropkick puts Shelton down and it's off to Tajiri for those hard kicks. Again: it's a very simple style of action but he does it well enough to make it work.

Tajiri grabs a sunset flip and rolls Shelton around the ring to really dizzy him up. A double kick to the head gives us a double knockdown though and we take a break. Back with Shelton kicking the knee out (two matches in a row with knee work) to take over. Charlie comes in for a modified Indian Deathlock before it's back to Shelton for a leglock of his own.

Eddie finally breaks up a half crab but the distraction just lets Shelton come back in sans tag. A headscissors finally gets Tajiri out of trouble and the hot tag brings in Eddie for a monkey flip. House is cleaned in a hurry and it's time to roll some suplexes. The frog splash crushes Charlie with Shelton making the save. A double DDT takes Team Angle down and it's the not as hot tag to Tajiri for kicks using the good leg.

Charlie reverses a tornado DDT into a northern lights suplex for two with Eddie making another save. Tajiri superkicks Charlie down and Eddie dives off the top onto Shelton. The Haas of Pain has Tajiri in trouble and the bell rings...because Eddie rang it himself. As the referee yells at the timekeeper, Eddie misses a belt shot. Charlie grabs the belt so Eddie drops to the mat, drawing a phantom DQ to retain the titles.

Rating: B+. I was digging the heck out of this one and the screwy finish was the best way they could have gone as it gives them a reason for another match. Tajiri is an upgrade over Chavo and plays a great partner to Eddie. The tease of a submission at the end worked very well and Eddie was feeling it here, which makes for a nearly instant classic.

Zack Gowen talks about wanting to live his dream but being here as a fan to watch the lie detector test.

The lie detector is set up in the middle of the ring and here's Vince. McMahon recaps the whole double contract situation and mocks Gowen, who will never be allowed to wrestle here if America fails the lie detector. Here's America with Vince ordering that he be strapped into the chair. It's a simple system: ding means true, buzz means no.

We get straight to the questions: he's Mr. America, he's in a wrestling ring in Pensacola, Florida and he's employed by Smackdown. Vince demands the question but America would like a drink of water before answering if he's Hulk Hogan or not. He says no and that comes up true as well. They ask him again and it's still not what Vince wants to hear. Vince: "It's Hogan, Hogan, Hogan, Hogan, Hogan!" America: "NO NO NO NO NO!" Machine: "DING DING DING DING DING!"

That means he officially passes the test and Vince freaks out. He agrees to take his own test but America is getting to ask the questions. Vince is apparently a horrible pervert, a disrespected businessman who doesn't do things for any fans all over the world, enjoys himself with Torrie Wilson's Playboy (including in the limo on the way to the arena) and fantasizes about Mae Young. Vince is unhooked and America punches him out. See, now this is the kind of goofy, over the top comedy bit that the story should have been about. It's not great but I've seen far less entertaining bits. More of this, less of America having matches.

Post break, Vince blames Stephanie for the whole thing. Things will change next week.

Chris Benoit vs. Sean O'Haire

Sean walks way in front of Roddy Piper, looking like he wants nothing to do with his mentor. Some early shots to the ribs have Benoit down in the corner but he grabs a dragon screw legwhip for a breather. That's fine with Sean who takes Benoit down again into a chinlock. Back up and a DDT gives Benoit a breather, followed by a German suplex for two. Piper grabs the leg and actually gets caught in the Crossface. Sean makes a save and grabs a rollup with tights for the pin.

Rating: D. That's a nice win for O'Haire but he desperately needs to get away from Piper. The pairing isn't all that interesting in the first place and now Piper isn't adding anything in the slightest. At least he got a big win here though and wasn't squashed until the ending, which is somehow an improvement.

We look back at Rey Mysterio defeating Crash and Shannon Moore to earn a Cruiserweight Title shot, which will take place next week.

An injured Rey says he'll be Cruiserweight Champion next week. He's all fired up but here's Matt Hardy to jump him from behind with a low blow.

Kurt Angle is back next week.

Ultimo Dragon is coming.

Rikishi/Spanky vs. Basham Brothers

This would be Doug and Danny's debut and I still have no idea which is which. Doug and Rikishi start things off with Bashman being sent over the top in short order. Rikishi keeps cleaning house and it's off to Spanky for a running forearm in the corner. Thankfully the Bashams finally take over and start hammering away with their pretty generic style of offense. An enziguri allows the hot tag to Rikishi, who cleans house with superkicks. The Bashams take a double Stinkface and it's back to Spanky. A charge into the corner is countered though and Doug rolls him up with Danny adding extra leverage for the pin.

Rating: F. This was more about pushing Rikishi than anything else. He cleaned house multiple times and hit his embarrassing signature move on the newcomers. The Bashams look like a pair of clowns who won on a fluke while Rikishi looks like a world beater. Terrible debut and the team is in trouble from the start.

Vince's limo is towed and Gowen shows up to gloat. Who knew that regular fans had access to Vince's limo?

Undertaker/Brock Lesnar vs. FBI

This is your main event people. Hang on a second though as this is a

handicap match but Nunzio is in street clothes. He's injured after last week so we have a replacement Italian.

Undertaker/Brock Lesnar vs. Chuck Palumbo/Johnny Stamboli/Big Show

Undertaker slugs Show down to start but it's Palumbo stomping at Undertaker in the corner. That just earns him Old School so it can be off to Lesnar for the house cleaning. Brock shrugs off some double teaming and hands it back to Undertaker to work on Stamboli. The running DDT plants Stamboli again so it's off to Show for the real showdown.

Brock comes in instead and takes a heck of a clothesline to the chest. It's too early for a chokeslam but Brock has to beat up the Italians. The chokeslam gets two on Lesnar and it's the Italians double teaming on the floor. Back in and the beating continues as Lesnar is selling too much for the FBI.

A clothesline takes Palumbo down and it's a hot tag off to Undertaker to dominate. Snake Eyes and the big boot drop Palumbo and there's the dragon sleeper on Show. Nunzio's save with a chair only annoys Undertaker so there's a chokeslam. Palumbo breaks it up so it's back to back for the Italians, only to have the chokeslam end Lesnar.

Rating: D+. So yeah, we're actually heading towards Lesnar vs. Show again, just in case we didn't get the point last time. They really need to elevate someone already as this isn't getting anyone anywhere. Where does this leave Undertaker? Facing the Italians? That's the best they've got? The match was fun while it lasted at least, but Show vs. Lesnar again does nothing for me.

Overall Rating: C+. The tag match more than carries this one and the lie detector segment was a lot better than I was expecting. Smackdown is in a better place than Raw at the moment as they have some pieces to put together but they don't know the order yet. I'll take that over thinking Kevin Nash is their best option any day.

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Smackdown – May 22, 2003: Prelude to a Test

Smackdown

Date: May 22, 2003

Location: Greensboro Coliseum, Greensboro, North Carolina

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

We're past Judgment Day and that means it's time to get ready for...well that's not clear actually as we have Bad Blood as a Raw exclusive pay per view for June. Brock Lesnar is in need of a fresh challenger after vanquishing Big Show, which opens the door for a lot of people who don't seem ready for the spot. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Mr. America vs. Roddy Piper on Sunday with America and Zach Gowen getting one up on Vince McMahon.

Vince is in the back and marches to the arena. He sounds livid as he talks about being sick of all these mistakes going on around here. It all started when Mr. America got an iron clad contract and has snowballed from there. While he's failed to prove that America is Hulk Hogan, tonight Vince is taking over and you'll see his fingerprints all over the show (his words).

Opening sequence, now in black and white and a slower paced theme. Rather catchy one indeed.

Tag Team Titles: Eddie Guerrero/Tajiri vs. Team Angle

Team Angle is challenging in their rematch from Sunday. Tajiri and Benjamin start things off with Shelton taking him down in short order. Back up with Tajiri sliding his way out and dropping a knee on the now legal Haas. Eddie comes in to break up a double suplex and a double backbreaker puts Team Angle on the floor. It's off to Eddie to clean house, including a middle rope spinning armdrag that he can make look perfectly smooth.

Tajiri comes in and kicks at Charlie's back but Charlie hits something like a spear. Not that it matters as it's back to Eddie almost immediately. That means a bunch of suplexes as everything breaks down, including Tajiri diving onto Team Angle as we take a break. Back with a sunset flip/neckbreaker combination getting two on Eddie, followed by a cravate to keep things slow.

That goes nowhere so they head up top where Eddie breaks up a superplex attempt but the frog splash hits knees. We hit the abdominal stretch on Eddie until Charlie's takedown (kind of like a spinebuster) gets two. Shelton jumps over Charlie onto Eddie's back for two but he fights up with a wristdrag/headscissors combination to put both of them down.

The hot tag brings in Tajiri to clean house and a tornado DDT gets two on Shelton. The dragon whip drops Tajiri but Eddie hits the referee with a chair, only to throw said chair to Haas. That's enough for a DQ from the somehow conscious referee and the titles are retained.

Rating: B. Really good match here with the ending being the right call. Having Eddie cheat to retain the titles makes the most sense, especially since it's hard to imagine them losing the belts this early. Tajiri is a fine replacement partner and they have the chance to set up someone else as big time challengers.

We look back at Zach Gowen debuting last week.

Vince runs into Stephanie and promises that things are getting out of control.

Here's Vince for another chat as I'm noticing a theme here. The boss is disappointed in the lack of America unmasking on Sunday and that means he wants an apology from Roddy Piper. Cue Piper and Sean O'Haire with Roddy actually apologizing in short order. Vince slaps him in the face and the coat comes off, only to have Sean cut things off. He'll take the blame for Sunday but tonight, he wants Mr. America. Piper LOVES the idea and Vince makes the match, but with a stipulation. If O'Haire loses, Piper is fired.

Kurt Angle is back in two weeks.

John Cena vs. Spanky

Before the match, Cena doesn't think much of Spanky ripping off his gimmick. Spanky charges at him and hits a one footed dropkick Cena slams him down though and grabs a snap suplex for two. A hard throw sends Spanky into the corner for two more and Cena scores with a delayed vertical suplex. Spanky scores with an enziguri for two but it's the shoulder block and an FU to give Cena the pin.

Rating: C-. Spanky was energetic as usual and that's what matters more than anything else in his case. When you have someone who is willing to do pretty much anything you ask him, it's quite the valuable asset. Spanky has gone from annoying to a fun character where I want to see what he does every week. Cena winning was the right call though as he's going to be a bigger deal in the short and long term.

Stills of Sunday's stretcher match.

The FBI is ready to face Brock Lesnar later tonight.

Chris Benoit vs. Matt Hardy

Opening sequence. Rey Mysterio is on commentary while Matt, who likes his steak medium well and has more teeth than Chris Benoit, makes his entrance. Matt slaps Benoit's hand away and we have a very loud screeching reaction. Benoit knocks him into the corner though and it's

time to crank on the arm. With Chris in control, that little MF'er offers a distraction though and Matt a Side Effect for two.

We hit the chinlock for a bit before a suplex gets two on Benoit. A neckbreaker gets two more for Matt and we hit the front facelock. That goes nowhere so the non-yodeling legdrop gives Matt another near fall. Back up and a double collision puts both guys down for a bit. Benoit grabs a snap suplex for two and a catapult sends Matt into the post. There's the Swan Dive and Rey takes care of Shannon, allowing the Crossface to give Chris the clean win.

Rating: B-. Matt loses again but at least it was in a good match. Working the neck made perfect sense and was a fine story to build things around, though Benoit needs something to do. Matt vs. Rey seems to be set in stone for the near future but Benoit is just kind of there at the moment, which isn't the best use of him.

Post match Matt says Rey can have a title shot if he beats Shannon and Crash right now.

Rey Mysterio vs. Shannon Moore/Crash

Joined in progress with Rey sending Shannon outside and headscissoring Crash down as well. Shannon breaks up the 619 and Crash backdrops him out to the floor. Something like a double flapjack gets two on Rey but he comes right back with a double DDT. Shannon is sent outside and a top rope seated senton takes Crash down. Back up and Rey seems to be favoring his groin and is having trouble running the ropes. The 619 sets up a middle rope West Coast Pop to get rid of Shannon, despite his foot being on the ropes. Since this is apparently under elimination rules, a quick hurricanrana pins Crash as well.

Rating: D+. There's a chance that the injury slowed things down here but all that matters is Rey being able to face Matt and win the title in the near future. This hardly felt like a challenge for Mysterio anyway as he absorbed the duo's offense and winning the match without breaking much of a sweat.

Post match Matt beats up both guys as Rey is carried out.

Stephanie has a sitdown interview with Zach Gowen, who receives an apology for what happened last week. Gowen had cancer when he was a kid and the leg was amputated to prevent it from stretching. He grew up with his mom as his father bailed when Gowen was four. Make-A-Wish came to him when he was in the hospital and he would have wanted to meet Hulk Hogan but he (Gowen) declined because he was going to live. Next up though: he wants to be a professional wrestler. He's been training as of late and hopes to wrestle here on Smackdown. Stephanie says anything can happen.

Vince is seething.

Post break, Vince comes up to Mr. America and says if he loses tonight, he has to undergo a lie detector test next week. America says no but Vince calls him a coward, which makes America change his mind. Vince goes into a RANT, shouting about how America will be proven to be a liar next week. That's more intense than he usually gets and it worked quite well.

Brock Lesnar vs. Johnny Stamboli

The entire FBI jumps Johnny to start until it's one on one for the opening bell. Brock drives him hard into the corner and scores with a fall away slam. The rest of the team gets in a little offense on the floor though and Stamboli stomps away for two. Brock misses a charge into the corner and Stamboli grabs a cross armbreaker to keep things slow. Lesnar fights up with a powerbomb and gets all fired up, drawing in the rest of the FBI for the DQ.

Rating: D. This was short and there wasn't enough time for it to go anywhere. Well that and the match being Brock vs. Stamboli. You can't get anywhere with someone like that challenging a monster like Lesnar and for the life of me, I have no idea why the FBI is getting protected like this. Haven't they run their course yet?

The beatdown is on post match until the Undertaker makes his return for the save.

Here's Sable for a chat about being in Raw Magazine and then about...Tazz? She's not cool with Tazz picking Torrie Wilson as the winner of the bikini contest and gets on the desk to look down at him. After gyrating a

bit, Sable pours water over his head and Tazz is REALLY not cool with that one.

Vince tells O'Haire to take his time tonight and explains the lie detector concept.

Mr. America vs. Sean O'Haire

America has Gowen with him and O'Haire has Piper. O'Haire shoves him down to start and does it again to prove his point. Back up and America does the same, meaning it's time for some posing. American's offense is cut off by Piper grabbing his boot and a slam gets two. Some kicks to the chest set up a chinlock on America and we're stuck there for a good while.

America fights up and no sells a spinning kick to the face, meaning it's America Up time. Piper gets knocked off the apron and the legdrop connects but Piper grabs America's leg again. Cue Vince with a bunch of cops to arrest Gowen for his actions on Sunday (egads) so America goes outside to help his buddy. That's enough for a countout though as O'Haire wins to end the show.

Rating: D-. If this is the best they can do to elevate O'Haire, they're in more trouble than I thought they were. Almost half of the match was spent on the Vince angle and the other stuff wasn't all that good in the first place. Vince didn't need to be back again but when he's the focus of the show, he's REALLY the focus of the show. Terrible main event here, as you kind of had to expect.

Overall Rating: C+. The wrestling helps a lot here but there's not much of a way around the Mr. America stuff dominating the show. Lesnar vs. the FBI and Sable vs. Torrie aren't any better but at least we had some good matches to carry things. This was far better than anything at the pay per view and that's a nice breath of air for the show.

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Judgment Day 2003 (2017 Redo): Judge Not Lest Ye Have To Watch This Show

Judgment Day 2003

Date: May 18, 2003

Location: Charlotte Coliseum, Charlotte, North Carolina

Attendance: 13,000

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz, Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

Let's get this over with. I don't remember a time when the TV leading up to a pay per view has been this miserable and the mere idea of this show is making me cringe. Sometimes a show can throw in a surprise or two but I can't think of a single match that actually gives me hope on this one. Let's get to it.

The opening video is a shot of gallows with kids reciting a rhyme about evil (it's the same one from the Biker Taker vignettes). Basically everything leads us here and it ends tonight.

Here's Steve Austin to open things up with an interview instead of a match. I'm so thrilled already. He's not out here to run his mouth and waste your time because there's a bunch of great matches tonight. Are we

looking at the same card? Austin is going to watch in the crowd with the fans...in a sky box, with a bunch of beer. Lawler seems to think a sky box means sitting in the cheap seats as Austin gives Tazz a beer and heads into the crowd.

John Cena/FBI vs. Spanky/Chris Benoit/Rhyno

Cena says that being he's with the FBI giving out black eyes, he'll have the people cheering the bad guys. It's Palumbo/Stamboli with Cena here as this is a bonus match. Spanky dives onto everyone but gets decked by Cena as we start fast. Cole says he knows all about rapping because he's a shoelace. The FBI plants Spanky with a double slam and cranks on his legs for good measure.

Palumbo slaps on a bearhug as Tazz and Cole discuss beer. A hard clothesline cuts Spanky off but he headscissors Palumbo into Stamboli. That's enough for the hot tag to Benoit, meaning it's time for the German suplexes. Nunzio comes in and eats a Gore but he's still able to break up Sliced Bread #2. The distraction is enough for Stamboli and Palumbo to hit the Kiss of Death (Demolition Decapitator with a legdrop instead of an elbow) for the pin.

Rating: D. The match was energetic while it lasted but that's the problem: it wasn't even four minutes long. Why in the world did we need a pay per view opener that lasts as long as a TV match? The people involved in this match deserve a little more than this, though at least they were on the pay per view card.

Austin is in the sky box having a woman make him a hot dog when Eric Bischoff comes in. Everything they have is split between them so Austin gives him the hot dog. Bischoff is annoyed that there's no scotch so he'll have a beer. In a glass that is, which Austin doesn't appreciate.

We recap La Resistance vs. Test/Scott Steiner, which is all about the Iraq War and how horrible you are if you don't completely support it.

Test/Scott Steiner vs. La Resistance

Test and Rene Dupree slug it out to start until a backdrop puts Rene

down. It's off to Steiner for some more aggressive offense, including a push-up elbow. Dupree sends him outside though and Sylvan Grenier drives him back first into the apron. The announcers debate France vs. America as Grenier's chinlock doesn't get him very far. A middle rope clothesline gives Grenier two but Steiner suplexes his way to AMERICAN freedom.

The hot tag brings in Test to clean house to silence. Test steals the beret and gets rolled up for two as everything breaks down. The pumphandle slam plants Rene but Stacy Keibler gets on the apron for no logical reason. Dupree dropkicks Test into Stacy, who lands in Steiner's arms. After putting Stacy down, Steiner tags himself in for the reverse DDT on Dupree for no cover. Test boots Steiner by mistake and gets sent outside, leaving Steiner to take the double spinebuster for the pin.

Rating: D. Another TV match here but in this case keeping it short was the right idea. This feud isn't interesting and Test vs. Steiner isn't likely to be much better. Fighting over Stacy is fine, but it would be better if they could have anything resembling a good match. The tag division needs La Resistance though, even if they're not all that interesting of a team.

Stacy stays behind to check on Steiner.

Mr. America arrives and runs into Gregory Helms, who has been told that he's Hulk Hogan. America's sources have told him that Helms is really the Hurricane. They agree that their sources are idiots. Clever idea but it's hard to buy Hogan's push meaning much when he's having a match with Roddy Piper.

Eddie Guerrero has found a replacement partner for the injured Chavo. It's Tajiri, who gets a gold medal and knows that they lie, cheat and steal.

Tag Team Titles: Team Angle vs. Eddie Guerrero/Tajiri

Eddie and Tajiri are challenging in a ladder match. The brawl starts in the aisle as the champs aren't happy with Eddie destroying their framed picture of Angle earlier in the week. Eddie gets sent into the ladder, leaving Tajiri to get double teamed inside. A gorilla press drop onto

Haas' knee has Eddie in more trouble and it's time for another ladder. Tajiri seems to mess up a dive over the top so Eddie dives over the top onto Shelton to get the focus back.

The champs go for the belts but Tajiri breaks it up with the handspring elbow. Haas gets crotched by the ladder in the corner and it's time for a second ladder. Shelton pulls Tajiri off the ladder, sending him face first into one of the rungs for a scary looking crash. Thankfully he's ok, though Eddie isn't quite as good thanks to a powerslam into the ladder in the corner. In a creative spot, Haas puts Tajiri across a ladder and bridges it over the top, leaving Shelton to jump off the ladder, over Haas, and onto Tajiri's back.

Eddie has to make a save with Haas falling out to the floor in a heap but then wedges the ladder in the corner instead of going up. Naturally he gets sent into the ladder for his efforts, satisfying wrestling rule #3. Tajiri is back up with the hard kicks to the face and he runs them over with the ladder for good measure. The Tarantula has Haas in trouble but it's Shelton making the save with a shot from the ladder.

Back in and the champs beat on Eddie but Shelton gets monkey flipped into the ladder into Haas to put everyone down again. Eddie sends Benjamin outside but the champs are back up for the save. Benjamin is knocked right back down, only to have Eddie frog splash him instead of going for the belts for no apparent reason. Charlie and Eddie go up and this time it's a sunset bomb to bring Haas right back down. Tajiri is finally back up to mist Shelton, allowing Eddie to pull down the titles for the win.

Rating: B-. Good though not a great match here. This would have been a much better match with Chavo involved (As in it would have made more sense. Tajiri's work was fine.) but as it is, it feels kind of thrown together. That's not on the wrestlers of course, but at least they made it work as well as they could.

Bischoff and Austin think they should sign Eddie but Austin makes Bischoff eat a hamburger and have another beer. Hang on though as Austin has to make fun of the way Eric drinks, including opening the box to get the crowd even more on his side. This eats up way too much time.

Chris Jericho thinks he'll win the Intercontinental Title when Roddy Piper comes in to make fun of him. They insult each other's talk shows and Chris brings up Piper ripping the kid's leg off on Thursday. That was an accident though, just like Jericho being born. They both promise to win their matches tonight and that's about it.

We get a very nice video on the history of the Intercontinental Title before the battle royal to bring it back. They cover a good chunk of the title's history and show off some great moments. As usual, WWE knows how to do its history well.

Intercontinental Title: Battle Royal

Booker T., Christian, Lance Storm, Chris Jericho, Goldust, Kane, Val Venis, Test, Rob Van Dam

The title is vacant coming in and only Booker isn't a former champion. Naturally, Pat Patterson gets to come out and hold up the title. And yes it's Venis, as the Chief Morely gimmick is officially gone. After some VERY long entrances, we're ready to go. Everyone goes after Kane to start (well duh) but he shrugs them off without much effort and gets rid of Storm. With Van Dam down, the others are able to get rid of Kane but he comes back in to beat everyone up.

Booker is up first and dumps Test, followed by Goldust doing the same to Venis. Jericho tosses Van Dam and we're down to Christian, Goldust, Booker and Jericho in about two minutes. Then why not just do a four way for the title? It turns into a glorified tag match with the good guys fighting back so Goldust can hit Shattered Dreams on both guys. Booker does a Spinarooni to celebrate but Goldust tries an elimination. That's fine with Booker, who dumps him out without too much trouble.

That leaves Booker and the Canadians and the double teaming is on in a hurry. Booker fights off an elimination attempt though and throws Jericho over, only to have him skin the cat in an always impressive move. Back in and the now bloody (not bad) Jericho forearms Booker down but Christian shoves him over the top during a Lionsault attempt.

Booker kicks Christian down and scores with a flapjack but the referee

gets bumped. If you can't book a nine man battle royal without a ref bump, you might just kind of suck at your job. As you might expect, Booker dumps Christian but no one sees it, leaving Christian to deck Patterson. Booker gets belted as well and Christian tosses him to win the title. As you might expect, Austin does nothing to fix this and the fans' chants for GOLDBERG go unrequited.

Rating: D. That ending actually made my head hurt. How in the world do you overbook a battle royal that doesn't even last twelve minutes? Christian winning is fine, but there are other ways you can make it work. Have he and Jericho as the final two and then have Christian dump Jericho out. That's not even cheating but makes him look like a villain at the same time. Why is that so complicated?

Sable and Torrie get catty before the bikini contest. I think this is supposed to be Sable hitting on her again. If Sable wants one of the Divas this badly, go after Dawn Marie who seems to be more into it.

We recap Sable vs. Torrie, which is as obvious of an idea as you can get.

Tazz is hosting, which is only slightly better than Lawler. Lillian Garcia sings Torrie to the ring as they're putting a little too much thought and effort into this. She sings the chorus three times as this is going on WAY too long already. Anyway, both get fifteen seconds to disrobe and gyrate.

They both do their thing and the fans say it's a tie, even though Sable's reaction was clearly louder. The fact that her swimsuit was smaller has no bearing on this at all I assure you. Actually hang on though as Sable takes off the swimsuit she's wearing to reveal a smaller one, which is enough for Tazz to give her the win. Torrie gives Sable a rather passionless kiss to end things.

Austin torments Bischoff with more food and beer.

Piper rants to Sean O'Haire about Jericho when Vince McMahon comes in. Roddy better be ready because it's a big night for the boss. Without Piper there would be no Hogan and now Piper is the epitome of ruthless aggression.

We look at Piper attacking the fan who Mr. America had waving the flag, resulting in the fan's artificial leg being ripped off. Piper seemed upset but Vince didn't buy it, which was all the proof he needed to send Piper after America's mask. As usual, there is so much wrong/stupid about that idea, I don't even know where to start so we'll move on.

Roddy Piper vs. Mr. America

America brings out a chair, presumably to counteract Sean. Actually it's for Zack Gowen, the fan whose leg was ripped off. So to clarify: this story is now about Vince, Stephanie, Piper, Mr. America and Gowen. After those five people is Sean O'Haire, whose lone match in this whole thing was a less than five minute match with Rikishi, where Piper had to help him win. And people wonder why this period is so loathed. America gets double teamed to start until Sean is sent outside.

Some right hands get America out of trouble and as the referee yells at O'Haire, the mask comes up to bite Piper. So I'm assuming Vince isn't watching the match and can't see 90% of Hogan's face there? O'Haire pulls America to the floor for some right hands, allowing Piper to whip him with the weightlifting belt. We hit a terrible sleeper until it's time to America up. The big boot connects but here's Vince so Piper can get in a low blow. O'Haire brings in a pipe but hits Piper instead, setting up the legdrop to give America the pin as Gowen holds Vince back.

Rating: F. Of course it was terrible but at least they kept it fairly short. As anyone could have guessed at the beginning of this thing though, it's not doing anyone other than Hogan and Vince any good. Unfortunately that includes O'Haire, who has gone from what should be a can't miss prospect to a bumbling lackey who can't do anything right.

Stephanie McMahon tells HHH to be careful.

We recap HHH vs. Kevin Nash, which is over Nash coming back and not liking HHH and Shawn Michaels fighting. HHH then attacked Nash for not picking the right side and we have a World Title match as a result, despite Nash making Roman Reigns like Hogan in the 80s.

Raw World Title: HHH vs. Kevin Nash

HHH is defending and Ric Flair and Shawn Michaels are the seconds. I'm not sure who was thinking it's a good idea to have Flair come out in his own entrance in Charlotte if they want Nash to be cheered but this show has bigger problems to deal with. The brawl is on in the aisle before the bell with Shawn and Flair fighting to the back. I doubt we'll be seeing them again.

Nash and HHH slug it out on the floor with the bell ringing shortly thereafter. A backdrop has the champ in early trouble as JR is already saying this isn't going to be the highest quality match. Nash hits a big forearm and flips the hair so you know it's serious. HHH finally gets in a neckbreaker to get us up to about five moves in the first three minutes. Nash is back with more right hands and a shove to the referee, who pulls him off by the hair. He'll never referee in this town again.

HHH gives us the required ref bump and a low blow before taking the turnbuckle pad off. Nash comes back with the usual but gets sent into the exposed buckle. The Pedigree gets two with the kickout earning a slightly disturbing positive reaction. A backdrop puts HHH on the floor and he comes back in with the sledgehammer to knock the referee down for the DQ.

Rating: F+. Only because it was slightly more watchable than Hogan vs. Piper. The match didn't even last as long as their brawl a few weeks back and now the feud gets to keep going because they're friends. Nash showed that he was washed up in 1999 and has only gotten worse in the years since. It was as bad as you would expect and a World Title match going less than eight minutes on pay per view is pretty unacceptable.

Nash beats up HHH because THIS MUST CONTINUE. He grabs the hammer and stalks HHH up the aisle, setting up a Jackknife through the announcers' table.

Austin makes Bischoff eat jalapenos and vomiting ensues.

Women's Title: Jazz vs. Victoria vs. Trish Stratus vs. Jacqueline

Jazz is defending and this is one fall to a finish. It's a brawl to start until the villains are sent outside, leaving Trish to counter an early wristlock. Victoria and Jazz come back in with with the champ hitting

some double chickenwing facebusters. Trish gets caught in the STF and Jacqueline puts Victoria in the half crab at the same time.

It's Trish getting to the rope first so Jazz can kick Jacqueline for the save. After a Matrish to avoid a clothesline (Lawler: "Trish just got reloaded!"), the Chick Kick gets two on Jazz. The Stratusfaction is broken up with Trish being thrown over the top and landing face first on the floor in a scary crash. Back in and Jacqueline suplexes Victoria, only to get DDT'd to retain Jazz's title.

Rating: D. That Trish landing looked great (and rather scary) but the time and a lack of a story killed whatever they could do here. What are you supposed to get out of a sub five minute match that you could probably see on Raw? The division is still dying for some fresh blood as these four can only fight so long. We passed that point months ago but it's still the same lineup every month.

Trish has a cut lip and stares at Jazz, again meaning this must continue.

We recap the main event. Big Show attacked Rey Mysterio at Backlash so tonight it's Brock Lesnar standing up to the monster in a stretcher match.

Smackdown World Title: Brock Lesnar vs. Big Show

Lesnar is defending and you have to put your opponent on the stretcher and get it over the finish line. During the entrances, Cole mentions that this is the first stretcher match in the company in 17 years since Andre the Giant vs. Killer Khan in 1986. You really would think he would get it right after all these weeks but alas, Cole isn't that bright (it was 1981). Also, Show brings a stretcher backboard with him with Mysterio, Benoit and Lesnar written on the back. Only Mysterio's name is crossed off, making Show look even lamer than usual.

Lesnar wastes no time in taking over and hitting Show with the board to knock him outside. A few more shots have Show in trouble and Brock sends him into the board, which is in front of the post. Show is back up and drops him across the stretcher before hitting Brock in the back with the backboard. A chokeslam plants Lesnar in the ring as I wonder why there's

a referee inside with them.

Show drops a leg onto Lesnar onto the board and it's stretcher time. The champ kicks his way off though and a few backboard shots has Show in trouble. Some choking with a camera cord and Lesnar puts Show on the stretcher as the announcers say it can't be done. Seriously it's not that big of a deal. Show fights out again so Lesnar rams the stretcher into his ribs.

A tug of war goes to Show...and he throws the stretcher down and puts its pad on another stretcher. More backboard (albeit from a different backboard) have Lesnar in trouble as this just keeps going. Back up and Brock knocks him off the apron and onto/back off of the stretcher. As Cole incorrectly says the first WWE Champion was crowned forty years ago yesterday (it was forty years ago yesterday that Bruno won the title to become the second champion), Rey Mysterio comes out to distract Show.

The distraction lets Brock drive a freaking forklift into the arena and dive off the thing with a crossbody/clothesline. A suplex into the F5 (more of an AA) allow Lesnar to throw him onto the forklift (Why can't he just put him onto the stretcher then?) and wheel him across the finish line to retain.

Rating: D+. This could have been a lot worse and it needed about five minutes cut out but it was a watchable enough main event. The problem here was the stretcher rule was completely tacked on and Show only having one of the three names crossed off made me shake my head. They should have done a last man standing match here or something like that, though it's not terrible or anything.

Overall Rating: D-. Yeah this really didn't work in the slightest. The ladder match was good and the main event was watchable but everything else was anywhere from terrible to a disaster. Aside from the America vs. Piper match and the awful World Title match, everything on here felt either unimportant or worth your time. Nothing on here felt like it needed to be on a pay per view and that scares the heck out of me considering the single branded shows start in June. Really bad here and that's not surprising when you consider the TV leading up to it.

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Smackdown – May 15, 2003: One of the Only Times WWE Has Disgusted Me

Smackdown

Date: May 15, 2003

Location: 1st Mariner Arena, Baltimore, Maryland

Commentators: Michael Cole, Tazz

It's the go home show for Judgment Day and I have my notebook ready for all the questions I have regarding the Mr. America storyline. Given how little sense the whole thing makes if you listen to what everyone says, I'm likely to leave far more confused than I was when I came in. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Vince McMahon opens things up and he's SURE who Mr. America is. No one could possibly question the fact that Mr. America is Hulk Hogan. See, Mr.

America doesn't uphold traditional American values because he's deceiving everyone around here. After pausing for the WHAT chants, Vince complains about Hogan getting two checks (which would likely be signed by Vince himself, making me wonder who he signs American's checks to) and on top of that, Mr. America doesn't care that he batters women.

We see a clip of America knocking Vince into Stephanie, though Vince blames her for it just as much. He's not going to deal with Hogan himself though because we're having an open contract at Judgment Day with someone getting to deal with Hogan him/themselves. Cue the FBI of all people with Nunzio offering their services to deal with Mr. America. He even has a video resume of their greatest hits and Johnny promises to be on Hogan like baked on ziti. They'll go talk about it over coffee while Palumbo has a match.

This was WAY too long and really just established that America will have a match on Sunday and the FBI of all people are getting involved. The FBI isn't interesting and are just a step above a Three Stooges sketch. Ignoring the fact that they might make for a better match for Mr. American than Vince or Roddy Piper, this was a really long waste of time.

Chuck Palumbo vs. Rikishi

Palumbo stomps away in the corner but accidentally hits Johnny in the face. A belly to belly gives Rikishi two but Johnny trips him up again. The superkick gives Palumbo two, only to have Rikishi's version knock him into the corner. Johnny breaks up the Stinkface and gets pulled inside, allowing Palumbo to hit a second superkick (in just over three minutes) for the pin.

Rating: D-. So Rikishi is now dealing with the FBI and having bad matches at the same time. At least it's better than wasting people like Chris Benoit on them, though it would be nice if Benoit actually had anything interesting to do at the moment. At least he wouldn't use three superkicks in the same match. He's not a Young Buck after all.

Post match Brock Lesnar arrives and comes to the ring to give Palumbo an F5 in retaliation for last week.

Stephanie cuts Brock off in the back and explains a stretcher match to him in that classic Stephanie style of speech that no one ever uses in the real world. I know most wrestlers do that but no one can make it sound as robotic as she can.

Mr. America visited some wounded troops.

Torrie Wilson comes out to show us one bikini she's considering for Sunday. As usual she looks great but I still don't know why I'm supposed to want to pay to see her in another one when she's in Playboy at the moment.

Stephanie is admiring two sets of flowers (one red and yellow, the other red and white) when Vince comes in. He would have gotten Mr. America's mask off last week if not for her screwing up so he accepts her apology. She's not apologizing though because she's gotten flowers from Hogan and America. Stephanie is leaving because Vince has everything under control tonight. Vince breaks both vases.

Clip of Rey Mysterio being injured at Backlash. He's back for an interview tonight.

Cruiserweight Title: Matt Hardy vs. Tajiri

Matt, who thinks Tajiri weighs too much to be a cruiserweight and can eat more sushi than him, is defending with Shannon Moore and Crash in his corner. Tajiri snapmares him down to start but gets jumped from behind. The kicks have Matt in trouble but Tajiri has to deal with Shannon, allowing Matt to hang him over the top rope. The Side Effect sets up an abdominal stretch from the champ, only to have Tajiri kick him down again. Rapid fire strikes have Matt in trouble and there's the handspring elbow for good measure. Crash breaks up the Tarantula though and it's the Twist of Fate to retain Matt's title.

Rating: D+. Perfectly fine match here but there's only so much you can do with four minutes and three people fighting Tajiri at the same time. Tajiri continues to be one of the most consistent guys on the roster and could do a lot more if he was given the chance. At least he did well while he was out there.

Matt says he has the Mattributes to take care of Mr. America because that story is now invading the cruiserweights.

Eddie Guerrero, wearing the gold medal, is talking to a framed Kurt Angle photo and talks about Chavo being injured in a match overseas. There's no reason to worry though because he's Latino Heat. He even puts a mustache and beard on Angle's face.

Stephanie runs into Mr. America as she's leaving and asks him to thank Hogan for him. She even throws in a kiss on the cheek.

John Cena vs. Chris Benoit

Cena wants to face Mr. America so he can turn him back into the Hulk so quick you'll think his name is Bill Bixby. As for Benoit, instead of the Canadian Crippler, he'll be the crippled Canadian. Benoit wastes no time in driving him into the corner before getting one off a backbreaker. A heck of a chop has Cena clutching his chest but he's still able to send Benoit shoulder first into the post. The ensuing armbar makes sense but Benoit is right back up with a chop and a snap suplex.

Cue the FBI to distract Benoit so Cena can knock him outside, earning themselves a quick ejection. Back from a break with Cena holding a chinlock and getting two off a shoulder. Cena stomps on the leg but gets sent into the middle buckle off a drop toehold. There's the first German suplex into the Swan Dive but Nunzio runs in. Benoit gets rid of him in a hurry and reverses the FU into the Crossface, only to have Johnny the Bull come in for the DQ.

Rating: C. What does it say that this is pretty easily the best match I've seen on WWE TV this week? Above all else, it's two guys having a match and actually trying for a change, which is a lot more than you can say about almost anything that happens on Raw. Is it that much to ask for some effort in these matches?

Rhyno and Spanky come in to help Benoit clean house.

Video on the UK tour.

It's time for Piper's Pit with Sean O'Haire backing Piper again. Piper

talks about the contract because this is the biggest story in the world at the moment. Some people want to collect the bounty for their careers and some people want to do it to suck up to Vince. Well Piper is going to do it because he hates Hogan.

This brings out Mr. America, who hands the flag to a guy in the front row, which sounds like a plot point. America gets why Piper has issues with Hogan because he remembers Hogan beating Piper up when he was a kid. He's cool with the match with Piper because I guess Mr. America gets to decide who collects bounties on him. Piper says Hogan has never beaten him 1-2-3 (yes he has) and goes on a rant about the kid waving the flag. Sean goes outside to deal with the kid, allowing Piper to jump America from behind.

America fights back but Sean makes the save, only to have the fan jump the barricade and prevent the mask from being taken off. A spear takes the fan down and Piper chokes away, only to yank off his artificial leg. That freaks Piper out and the villains leave. Oh don't worry about it. Nash did it on purpose in 1996 and he's main eventing the pay per view on Sunday. Sean even yells at Piper because cheating on your wife or whatever his thing of the week was ok but attacking an adult fan who jumped you from behind? Not cool bro.

After the entrances to the next match, Vince yells at Piper and O'Haire for messing with a fan like that. Sean: "Mr. McMahon, I had nothing to do with this." YOU SPEARED HIM DOWN SO PIPER COULD BEAT HIM UP! Vince tells them to stay there while he makes up his mind about what he's going to do. Piper stands there, which is way out of character for him. Vince leaves and Sean blames Piper for what happened because his career is on the line.

Shelton Benjamin vs. Eddie Guerrero

Eddie has the picture of Angle and comes out in a sombrero. Shelton takes Eddie down and yells a lot before hitting a forearm to the face. A chinlock slows things down but Eddie is right back up with a middle rope hurricanrana. One heck of a powerbomb plants Eddie for two but also kickstarts his comeback with a couple of dropkicks. Right hands in the

corner set up the rolling suplexes but here's Charlie Haas with a ladder. The distraction lets Shelton hit a superkick for the pin. That's totally different than the finish to the opener. This one had a ladder you see.

Rating: D+. Not enough time to mean anything and having the same finish used in two out of four matches is about as pitiful as you can get. Agents should be smarter than that and able to come up with a better finish. If nothing else just ask Eddie what he thinks would work here, as I'm sure he can come up with something other than distraction into a superkick.

Eddie fights them both off and busts the picture over Shelton's head.

Piper and O'Haire haven't moved when Vince comes back in. He buys Sean caring about what happened (as the most interesting part of his character is erased) but Piper doesn't care at all. That's just what Vince wants though and that's why he's facing Hogan on Sunday. My goodness they're actually going there and Vince is actually saying Piper is better than John Cena, the Cruiserweight Champion (and his minions) or the FBI. And people wonder why the future was so bleak.

And now, the Miss Elizabeth piece from Confidential. She passed away from a cause that wasn't determined yet (because it was less than two weeks ago when this aired) and Vince says she was just a commodity in WCW. They talk about her career, the battery charges from Lex Luger, and then her death. In probably the lowest point since...oh I'd think the Melanie Pillman interview, we hear the actual 911 call of Luger saying she wasn't breathing. I'm not even sure how to respond to that so we'll move on. This is of course edited off the Network version.

And now, after hearing a 911 call of a woman dying earlier in the month, Sable comes out and shows off her own bikini. Now pay up if you want to see it again!

Pay per view rundown.

It's time for the Mysterio interview. First of all, he'll be back in the ring in a few weeks and he wants the Cruiserweight Title. He didn't think he'd be able to wrestle again and he wondered if that was it when he was

laying in the ambulance. Rey isn't sure about ever facing Big Show again...and Big Show kidnaps him.

Post break Show brings Rey out to the ring while carrying a backboard in the other hand. Rey tries to fight back and manages a 619, only to get caught in something like a Samoan drop. Lesnar runs out to save Rey from the chokeslam and beats Show down with the board. The F5 connects but Tazz sees a problem: Show is too big to be put on a stretcher! HOW WILL BROCK SURVIVE??? Rey adds in a bulldog to drop Show and then hides behind Brock to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. I only have one question this week: how did the Mr. America storyline manage to take over even more of the show??? Lesnar vs. Big Show isn't interesting but I'll take it over America vs. Piper and Vince running down most of his heels to say that Piper is the best option he has to take Hogan out. There was some passable wrestling on the show this week but the stories are just killing anything that might be seen as positive. Another bad show this week as Mr. America vs. Vince is swallowing the show alive.

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Judgment Day 2003: This Year Still Gives Me Headaches

Judgment Day 2003

Date: May 18, 2003

Location: Charlotte Coliseum, Charlotte, North Carolina

Attendance: 13,000

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole, Tazz

We continue this series with another show that wasn't all that good. 2003 was like the year of death for Raw as everything was completely dull with HHH gobbling up everything in sight and having terrible feud after terrible feud. Tonight he has Kevin Nash and would face him again in the Cell the next month. Also tonight it's Mr. America vs. Roddy Piper and Brock vs. Show for the title. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about being hung and facing your judgment day which is very similar to the one from last year. There's an electric chair in this one though so it's very different.

Little note: this is the final joint branded show before the lower level shows went to individual brands.

Here's Austin, the co-GM of Raw, to open the show. He says there are a lot of good fans here so he's going to sit in the stands with the fans....in a skybox. He goes through the crowd to get there at least so that helps somewhat.

John Cena/FBI vs. Chris Benoit/Spanky/Rhyno

Cena is a heel rapper here and he does a rap about mafia movies. The FBI here is Palumbo/Stambolli. Who put that face team together too? Benoit had a mini feud with the FBI for no apparent reason and they interfered in Benoit vs. Cena on Smackdown. Spanky and Rhyno are Benoit's friends apparently. Works well enough I suppose. Spanky is Brian Kendrick if you've never heard that name.

The faces clear the ring so Benoit and Rhyno make a launching pad so that Spanky can take them all out on the floor. Cena vs. Spanky to start us off. Enziguri puts Cena down and everything breaks down quickly. Cole calls himself a shoe lace for some reason. Apparently the FBI has a hit list and they've taken out various big names. Palumbo comes in as Spanky is getting destroyed here so far.

Bear hug goes on by Chucky who apparently has stopped deciding to be effeminate and is all tough and Italian now. He lets the hold go just because and gets two anyway. And now he puts it right back on again. Sure why not. Spanky hammers his way out of it and it's off to Benoit vs. Cena.

Everything breaks down and it's Germans for the Italians from the Canadian. Swan Dive to Palumbo and it's a blind tag from Spanky. He tries Sliced Bread #2 on Palumbo but Nunzio interferes and the Kiss of Death (Demolition Decapitator but with a leg drop instead of an elbow) ends this. Benoit had Cena in the Crossface at the same time.

Rating: D. Dude, a four minute opener in a six man tag? Rhyno was never even in the match legally. This wasn't much at all and really had no

point being on this show. That was a telling sign of what was to come with the whole brand split show as there simply weren't going to be enough matches to fill out a card. This was something that would hint at that.

Austin buys a hot dog and the cute girl offers some ketchup. Austin inquires about a burger but here comes Bischoff to solid heat. They're co-GMs so Eric says half of this is his, including the food. There are crates of beer against the wall. Austin offers him the hot dog he was about to eat and Bischoff skeptically eats it. I'm sure the fans are riveted by this. Bischoff wants Scotch but gets a beer instead. He wants it in a cup which Austin doesn't like. Naturally, Austin crushes the cup with his can. This SO needed to be on PPV.

We recap the debut of La Resistance who started a feud with Scott Steiner over the whole Iraq War and the lack of support from French troops, which is what created Freedom Fries which was so stupid I can't fathom it. Stacy was dating Test at the time and got him and Steiner together as a bad team to fight them, which led to an awful feud.

Test/Scott Steiner vs. La Resistance

And you get to pay to see it! Test is a heel here while Steiner is all about AMERICA! La Resistance looks rather stupid but whatever. The French guys say they're innocent in all this and that the American government promotes hatred. I'll spare you all a long political rant here. Stacy likes Steiner but Test is insanely jealous. This of course would turn into Steiner "winning" her and turning heel.

Test and Dupree start us off and they slap it out while Rene dances.

Resistance is Rene Dupree and Sylvan Grenier if the names are confusing you. Off to Steiner and it's incredibly telling to see how far he's fallen since having the world title match at the Rumble. Steiner uses the power of AMERICA to take over. Grenier is sent to the floor but Steiner walks into a hot shot to shift the momentum.

Double suplex gets two on Steiner and we hit the chinlock. Middle rope clothesline gets two for Grenier and it's off to Dupree. He comes off the top and jumps into a T-Bone suplex and both guys are down. Off to Test again and some rooms are cleaned. Pumphandle doesn't work but the full nelson slam gets two. Steiner gets sent into the barrier and Test steals a beret.

Grenier gets two with feet on the ropes and it's a double team. Steiner is back in now and here comes the pumphandle from Test. The slam hits and there's no referee. Grenier gets a dropkick which knocks Test into Stacy who is caught by Steiner. Rollup gets two for Grenier and Steiner makes a blind tag. Downward spiral gets no cover as Test accidentally kicks Scott's head off. A double spinebuster beats Steiner.

Rating: D. Why in the world is this, ANOTHER TV match on PPV? This is one of those matches that went nowhere as the people didn't care in the slightest and everyone knew it. The French guys were the tag team of note for a few years and then they just went away and no one really cared. Weak match, as expected.

Stacy wants to check on Scott but Test drags her away. This story went on for months.

Mr. America is walking around and runs into Gregory Helms, ace reporter.

The joke is that everyone and their mother knows it's Hogan but he keeps saying I'm not Hogan. Helms accuses him of being Hogan and Mr. America accuses him of being the Hurricane. Both say they're wrong. We do get Hogan to say whatsupwitdat?

Team Angle has given Eddie an offer of have a handicap match or forfeit the match since Chavo is injured. Eddie says a lot to Josh Matthews (in glasses) in Spanish and says he's found a partner. It's Tajiri and they have the gold medals for some reason. Tajiri says he lies, he cheats and he steals. This one is for Chavo.

Smackdown Tag Titles: Team Angle vs. Eddie Guerrero/Tajiri

Team Angle (Haas and Benjamin) are champions here. The brawl starts in the aisle as this should be rather good. Benjamin throws Eddie into a ladder and Tajiri takes his medal off. Team Angle beats Tajiri down with Eddie having been slammed into the ladder earlier. Ah there's Eddie. And so much for that as he gets dropped on Haas' knee to take care of that. Apparently Team Angle not knowing where a ladder is makes them inexperienced.

Tajiri and Eddie botch the heck out of something as they drop Tajiri onto the floor instead of a ladder. That looked awful. A handspring elbow by Tajiri to the ladder takes it and the champions down. Ladder goes into Charlie's balls and the look on his face is priceless. Another ladder comes into the ring and Haas gets sandwiched between them as Eddie hits the hilo onto the ladder onto Charlie onto the ladder.

Shelton pulls Tajiri off the ladder and Tajiri's face hits the rung on the way down. FREAKING OW MAN!!! Shelton powerslams Eddie into the ladder

and the challengers are in trouble. This is one of those matches where there are just spots happening with very little going on in between. Not bad but kind of tiring. Team Angle does that jump on the back thing but from a ladder onto the ladder with Tajiri in between. That was awesome looking.

Haas almost gets up there but Eddie pops up to send Haas flying to the floor. The ladder gets wedged between the top and middle rope and Eddie is sent flying into it. Time for the Tajiri kicks and a ladder shot. Tarantula goes onto Haas which gets a big pop. Shelton saves his partner by driving the ladder into the head of the Japanese man. The champions take over again with Eddie in trouble.

The idea here is supposed to be that Team Angle doesn't know how to win a ladder match due to inexperience. The problem with that is simple: you climb the stupid thing. That's how you win. See the belts? Go get them! How hard is that? Eddie goes up but Charlie keeps slowing him down.

Shelton goes after him too but Eddie knocks him down and drops a Frog Splash on him in a cool spot. Eddie vs. Charlie on top of the ladder and Charlie takes a sunset bomb to the mat. Always loved that move. Tajiri is finally back and his Mists Shelton to let Eddie grab the belts as we have new champions.

Rating: B-. This was good but the problem is that we've seen all this before. The MITB match coming up would make everything else done not called TLC seem weak. This was a good match and belonged on the PPV but it feels pretty worthless all things considered now. Good match, nothing we haven't seen before though.

Bischoff and Austin argue about who should try to sign Eddie. Bischoff doesn't want a burger or another beer. Austin doesn't like the way Eric sips his beer so he opens the skybox and makes fun of the way Eric drinks his beer. He says the match was awesome too which is pretty true. The fans make fun of Eric too and this is pretty stupid.

Jericho says he's going to be IC Champion again and Roddy Piper pops up. Jericho says he's old, Piper makes fun of the Highlight Reel. Chris says Piper is fat and Piper makes unfunny jokes. Yep this is pointless.

We recap the history of the IC Title which is coming back tonight. The title had been unified with the world title because someone thought we needed one champion per show for no apparent reason so they dropped the midcard titles. It comes back tonight and the US Title would be back in June. Tonight we're going to have a battle royal of only former champions plus Booker T who was rather confusing. This is an awesome video which shows some great moments in the title's history which really does have a long history.

Intercontinental Title: Battle Royal

Val Venis (returning here after being Chief Morely for awhile), Chris Jericho, Goldust, Lance Storm, Rob Van Dam, Christian, Test (pulling a double tonight), Kane, Booker T (not a former champion yet in this anyway)

Pat Patterson handles the introductions. Only 9 people in this which is a rather odd number. Standard over the top rules here. Kane and RVD, the Raw tag champions, go at it immediately. Everyone gangs up on Kane and he's like boys please and tosses Storm. RVD takes the knee out and it's

another pile on Kane. This time they get him out so we're down to seven.

Kane comes back in to beat them up for fun. Booker puts Test out and Goldust throws out Val. Jericho gets his springboard dropkick to put Van Dam out so it's down to Goldust, Jericho, Booker and Christian. Goldie cleans house for a bit but the Canadians come back to take over. Goldust comes back and bulldogs both Canadians. This is getting boring in a hurry.

With the help of Booker, both Canadians gets Shattered Dreams. There's the Spinarooni but Goldust lunges at him, only to get tossed as well. It's down to Booker vs. Christian vs. Jericho. The fans are all behind Booker here. This isn't his year though as he was beaten by a racist heel at Mania (People "like Booker" don't win world titles. What do you think that was implying?) and gets double teamed here.

Booker fights them off for a bit and Jericho skins the cat. Down goes Booker again as the words GET ON WITH THIS play over and over in my head. Jericho is bleeding from the nose. Jericho sets for the Lionsault and Christian shoves him out! I love double crosses. Booker beats on him for awhile and a referee somehow is knocked down. Christian hit a baseball slide into him if you're curious.

Yes, it's going to be a Dusty Finish in a battle royal. Scissors kick misses and Christian goes to the apron. Booker sends him into the buckle and wins this. The music plays and Christian steals the belt from Patterson. A belt shot to the head and a toss out later and it's Christian that officially wins the title. Booker would get it back about two months later. Everyone hates this mind you. Yes, a Dusty Finish in a battle royal. I told you this era was weak.

Rating: D+. Another boring match tonight which is a theme here. Was there a point to this being a battle royal other than not wanting to have two tournaments going at once? For some reason they were afraid to give Booker anything even though he was on a roll and was over at this point. That's Vince for you though. Weak match with a bad ending.

Sable tells Torrie not to be nervous. They have a bikini contest next. They were doing this weird lesbian angle here and it didn't go anywhere really. Sable oils her legs to try to make Torrie want her and it goes nowhere.

We recap this...whatever which is set to bad music. There was a body contest where Torrie more or less gave her a lapdance. Hot, but pointless for the most part.

They do that silhouette dance behind the curtain thing while Lillian does the theme music of Torrie. It's live for once and it's her gyrating with Torrie so I can't complain. I'm not sure what to say here. They're both hot, Sable looks better, the fans cheer for her, but before she's declared the winner Torrie takes her bikini off to reveal a much smaller one, making her the winner. Torrie kisses her post contest. This was a waste of 10 minutes. They've both been in Playboy so I kind of fail to see the point of something like this. Lawler's reaction is hilarious.

Bischoff says he has a condom in his wallet. He's half drunk and half sick from the food. Austin offers him a pizza and Bischoff can barely move. Instead he gives him some "pickles", more commonly known as peppers and Eric is in agony.

Piper talks to O'Haire and Vince comes in. Vince gives Piper a pep talk

and wants him to destroy Mr. America so that Vince can rip the mask off.

We get a clip of Smackdown where Mr. America gave a “fan” (Zach Gowen) an American flag and the kid jumped the barrier to stop them from unmasking Hogan, only to discover that he has one leg.

Mr. America vs. Roddy Piper

Get this over with. FAST. Sean O’Haire is with Piper here and Gowen is with Hogan. The joke is an old one here but still kind of funny. Piper, in regular trunks, jumps Hogan along with O’Haire to take over early. O’Haire, in wrestling gear for no apparent reason, hammers away on Hogan a bit too. Here comes Mr. America with the “24 inch Patriots” and the beating is on.

Out to the floor and Hogan chokes O’Haire with the weight belt. Hogan whips Piper with it a bit as we haven’t had a single wrestling move other than a punch or whip in this whole thing. Sleeper goes on and it’s AWFUL. Piper is almost poking him in the eyes. Hogan fights that off and gets taken down by an axe handle to the back. American hammers away again and it’s Vince to the rescue! Low blow by Piper but a pipe shot from O’Haire hits Piper and the leg drop ends it. Gowen kept Vince from saving it.

Rating: F+. Why in the world is Roddy Piper in trunks in a featured match on PPV in 2003? Hogan....eh I guess you can stretch to let that be here, but put him against O’Haire and let HIM get the rub. He was a cool character and he gets fed to Hogan instead of growing a bit. That’s the criticism you get for Hogan and at times it makes sense. Granted this one isn’t Hogan’s fault, but it’s the stereotype of him. This one is on the company though.

Stephanie tells HHH to be careful. That's all there is to this meeting.

We recap HHH vs. Nash. Nash was back for the 10th time and naturally he's #1 contender just because. He wants to be with his friends apparently but he got caught in the middle of HHH vs. Shawn and he doesn't like it. HHH says this is how it is now and he's never going to be friends with Shawn. Let alone reform DX 5 times and win the tag titles. Flair got after Shawn to save the title and it was a big mess. In short, Flair/HHH vs. Shawn/Nash. The feud had zero heat and no one thought Nash had a chance and they were right. Jericho was involved here also but it didn't really matter.

Raw World Title: Kevin Nash vs. HHH

Shawn, Flair, Nash and HHH all get entrances. Remember that Shawn and Flair were listed in the ad for the match. Naturally Flair gets the biggest pop of them all since we're in Charlotte. Nash jumps him in the aisle and we pair off. Is there a reason why this isn't a tag match? Flair and Michaels fight to the back and they're gone without even a bell.

There's the bell and it's all Nash so far. By the way, we won't be seeing Flair or HBK for the rest of the match. So glad that they got a PPV payday here. Nash gets a backdrop and HHH tries to run and hide. Back in the ring and down goes the Game. Side slam and an elbow drop by Nash. There's another elbow and HHH shoves down the referee. Somehow that's not a DQ but whatever.

HHH finally gets a neckbreaker to take Nash down. HHH is in purple here. Back off to Nash who hammers away and then shoves the referee too. Hebner is underappreciated for doing stuff like this. After a brief chase HHH accidentally clotheslines the referee and low blows Nash. There goes the turnbuckle and HHH goes...into another corner.

Sidewalk slam sends HHH down and Nash goes through some of his favorites like the elbows and a big boot. Snake Eyes is attempted into the exposed buckle and Nash shoves the referee down AGAIN. HHH reverses it and rams Nash in so that the Pedigree can get two.

Another attempt is reversed into a backdrop over the ropes and HHH finds the sledgehammer. HHH hits Hebner in the chest with it and finally it's a DQ after less than 8 minutes. The fans are not thrilled and boo heavily then die. This set up Hell in a Cell in two months in one of the weakest major gimmick matches ever. HHH takes a Jackknife post match.

Rating: F. This was there to set up Bad Blood and that's all there is to it. The match sucked beyond belief and no one cared at all about this. Nash was here because he was one of HHH's friends and no one bought that the title was changing. 2003 was the worst year in the history of Raw and this is one of the major reasons why.

Nash goes all psycho post match and Jackknives HHH through the announce table.

We waste some time with HHH being taken out.

Austin gives Bischoff some jalapenos and Bischoff vomits. AND WE GET

REPLAYS!!! This clearly needed a total of ten minutes on PPV while the opening match got 4 minutes and had Benoit and Cena in it.

Women's Title: Trish Stratus vs. Jacqueline vs. Jazz vs. Victoria

This should be mostly painless. At least Victoria and Trish look hot. Stevie Richards is here for Victoria. Jackie is a face here...I think. She and Trish clear the ring and square off. This is one fall to a finish. Crowd is more or less dead here. We're totally in the formula here: two girls fight, a third saves and then she fights the other girl. Teddy Long manages Jazz.

Jazz cleans the ring until Trish comes back and pops her with some forearms. STF goes on from Jazz to Trish and Jackie puts the half crab on Victoria to give us a weird race thing. Trish makes the ropes so Jazz drills Jackie. STF to Victoria as I want this to end badly. Matrix and Chick Kick get two on Jazz. Ranas for both heels but Trish gets dumped to the floor by Victoria. Jazz DDTs Jackie to retain. Yeah Jazz was champion coming into this if I didn't mention that.

Rating: F+. Jazz sucked. That's what this boiled down to at the end of the day. Jazz sucked and yet they wouldn't let her push with the title die. The division existed for hot women and Jazz wasn't your traditional Diva. This was boring and everyone knew it sucked. Terribly weak match.

We recap Lesnar vs. Show. Show injured Rey in a fairly psycho attack at Backlash. Rey wasn't sure whether he could wrestle again out of fear. Show came at him and Lesnar stood up for the locker room and made it a stretcher match because that's what Rey was on when Show hurt him.

Smackdown World Title: Brock Lesnar vs. Big Show

You win by putting a guy on a stretcher and pushing him past the line. Brock looked awesome as a face for some reason. He's like a soldier or something ready for war. The idea is the stretcher is too big to put Show on. Show brings a back board but Lesnar gets it and beats Show up with it. It's fun watching Brock fire away for some reason. Basically this is both guys hammering away with the stretcher parts at various times.

Big old chokeslam and Show puts him on a stretcher before dropping a leg for some reason. He almost gets Brock across but instead clotheslines him to the floor. Back at ringside and Brock beats on Show with a stretcher and chokes him out with a cord. There isn't anything to say here. It's a pretty good brawl but at the same time the stretcher thing is pretty stupid.

Cole asks if you can imagine Lesnar as a linebacker. I think he was a defensive lineman but yeah I can imagine it. He slams Show onto the stretcher but Show falls off. They fight with the stretcher and try to ram it into the other's ribs. Lesnar goes into the post back/back of the head first to take him down. There's another back board under the ring for some reason. Shouldn't the first aid people have that?

Lesnar knocks Show off the apron and onto a stretcher which he drops off of. Lesnar leaves the arena and here's Rey with a 619 to the balls but he can't do anything else. Here comes the chokeslam but here's Lesnar with a forklift. He dives off said forklift onto Show and goes off on him with a suplex and FU. Yes I said FU as that wasn't an F5. Way better than any Cena ever gave him either. Stretcher onto the forklift, Show onto the stretcher, match and show over.

Rating: B-. Hard one to grade here as it was entertaining but at the same time the thing was so back and forth that it's hard to say if it was good or not. On this show though I need something to have that's decent so I'll give this the benefit of the doubt. Show was so big at this point that it just didn't work anymore.

Overall Rating: F. This was just weak. There are two ok matches and that's about it. The show was just dead from an idea standpoint and the HHH match is proof of that. Hogan and Piper would feud for a few months before Hogan left/got fired/whatever and no one cared. This was a terrible show and definitely not worth seeing. Even the good matches are pretty bad. That's not a good thing at all.

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