

# Monday Nitro – January 19, 1998: What Happened To This WCW?

## Monday Nitro #123

Date: January 19, 1998

Location: Louisiana Superdome, New Orleans, Louisiana

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Bobby Heenan, Tony Schiavone, Larry Zbyszko

This is the final Nitro before Souled Out and the main matches are already set. The world title situation hasn't been addressed at all since the first episode of Thunder so it doesn't look like we're getting Sting vs. Hogan II at the PPV. We are however getting Bret vs. Flair in what has been a very well built up feud. The main event tonight is Hogan vs. Giant, hopefully without Robin Hood. Let's get to it.

The Nitro Girls dance to open the show.

### Eddie Guerrero vs. Rick Martel

Eddie jumps Martel before the bell but Rick rams him into the buckle to take over. A middle rope clothesline sets up a gorilla press on Eddie to send him out to the floor. Back in and Martel snaps off some quick armdrags and Eddie is getting frustrated. Guerrero goes after the knee to take Martel down and puts on a quick side leg lock. The slingshot hilo hits Martel's leg and a belly to back suplex gets two. Eddie spends too much time bragging and gets caught in a spinebuster and the Quebec Crab for the tap out.

**Rating:** C-. This was really quick but it was nice while it lasted. There was a nice little story here as Eddie took out the leg but got too cocky and got caught. For a three minute match, that's about as effective as you can get. Martel continues to look like he hasn't lost a step despite

not being a regular competitor for years now while Eddie was smooth as always.

We see the end of Thunder with the NWO imploding again as Nash and Savage are on the verge of completely disintegrating. They slapped each other during the match and Hogan had to play peacekeeper. Post match Hogan accidentally hit Savage to make the problems even worse. Giant and Sting ran out for the save and stood tall to end the show.

Here are Hogan and Bischoff with something to say. Eric has Sting's bat for some reason and presents it to Hogan as a trophy. Hogan says that the NWO has a pecking order and everyone is going to fall in line as they're supposed to. If anyone steps over the line, they'll have to answer to Hogan and the bat. He knows everyone is praying to God to rectify the situation with the world title and put the belt back where it belongs. As for Giant, Hogan is proving he's a fighting champion by beating him tonight before moving on to Sting and for Hogan's world title.

#### Chris Benoit vs. Marty Jannetty

The announcers say that this is a match Benoit has been wanting for awhile. Benoit starts pounding away on Jannetty but gets caught in a headscissors to give Marty a breather. A superkick puts Benoit down followed by the jumping fist drop for no cover. Benoit gets a boot up in the corner and takes Jannetty's head off with a back elbow. Marty actually wins a slugout in the corner and gets two off a knee lift.

Benoit blocks a suplex into a snap suplex of his own for one before throwing Marty to the outside. Jannetty slides through the legs to get back in before slamming Benoit face first into the mat. Here's the Flock in the aisle but Benoit takes Jannetty down into the Crossface for the fast submission.

**Rating:** C. This was better than I was expecting. Jannetty really was better than people gave him credit for and he's been showing that a bit

in WCW. He more than held his own against Benoit and didn't look bad in his other matches so far. Benoit looked good as well here in his tuneup match for Raven on Saturday and the Crossface came out of nowhere for the finish.

Post match the Flock storms the ring but Benoit fights them off and stares Raven down. The distraction lets Saturn get in a cheap shot but Jannetty comes up to make the save. Marty dives onto most of the Flock so Benoit can swan dive onto Lodi.

### Jerry Flynn vs. The Cat

It's Ernest Miller in his more famous persona. Flynn kicks him in the chest to start before countering a kick into a quick ankle lock. Cat makes the ropes and puts on a cross armbreaker which is broken just as quickly. Flynn comes back with a clothesline and a chop but Miller hits an enziguri as the martial arts begin. Cat hits his top rope spin kick for the fast pin. Short match here but it's clear that UFC is starting to become an influence on professional wrestling.

Here's Scott Hall with something to say. After the NWO wins, Hall says that he isn't worried about Zbyszko because he gets the title shot at SuperBrawl no matter what. Hall calls out Larry for only being AWA World Champion (mentioned by name for the first time here) because his father in law was world champion and for the company going under with Larry on top. Hall says Dusty is a better wrestler turned announcer and Larry doesn't want any of Hall. Larry says he wants him on Saturday and heads to the ring as we take a break.

### Buff Bagwell/Konnan vs. Steiner Brothers

Scott starts with Buff and it's time for a pose down. Buff hiptosses him down and takes Scott into the corner, only to be pounded down with forearms to the back. A belly to back puts Buff into the ropes and it's off to Konnan. Scott speeds things up and leapfrogs over Konnan before

nailing him with a clothesline. A running gorilla press sends Konnan rolling to the floor as it's all Scott so far. DiBiase yells at him to tag but Scott doesn't seem interested.

Back to Buff who is powerslammed into the Tree of Woe in the corner so Scott can choke away. He shoves the referee before being whipped into Konnan's knee, allowing Buff to clothesline Scott to the floor. Rick finally comes over to make the save for his first action at all in the match. Konnan and Buff take turns pounding away as Scott isn't interested in tagging. Scott clotheslines both NWO guys down and knocks Buff to the floor. The Steiner Screwdriver (now just an over the shoulder tombstone for safety's sake) hits Konnan for the pin. Rick did nothing other than the save on the floor.

**Rating:** C-. Scott's heel turn is working well so far but we're still in the early stages. At this point the team is winning most of their matches and Scott is looking more and more dominant every time he's out there. Rick and Ted can't get through to him but the team is winning so they don't have much to complain about.

Scott and Buff pose at each other post match with Buff running from a showdown. Rick stares at Scott but Scott walks away and celebrates on his own.

Hour #2 begins so the announcers recap the events of the first hour.

Here's Giant with something to say. While he can't touch Kevin Nash, he's got the chokeslam for Hogan tonight. This brings out Nash with a cup of coffee and Hogan with the ball bat. Nash gets in Giant's face but here's Savage to go after Nash. Hogan calls him off but Savage comes in and knees Hogan into Nash, sending Nash into Giant. Nash throws the coffee into a ticked off Giant's face but Hogan hits Giant with the bat. Sting runs out and gives Hogan the Death Drop to take his bat back. Giant is on his feet again about twenty seconds after Hulk Hogan hit him in the back with a bat. That's an impressive recovery.

Nitro Girls.

### TV Title: Mortis vs. Booker T

They slug it out to start as the announcers talk about Nitro going to three hours next week. Booker hits a quick ax kick and cranks on an armbar for a bit. Mortis avoids an elbow drop but Booker Spinaronis up and hits a side kick to knock Mortis to the floor. Back in and Booker slingshots into a northern lights suplex by Mortis for two. Mortis loads up a top rope frankensteiner but Booker counters into a scary looking powerbomb off the top. Mortis is dead and the Harlem Hangover is good for the pin to retain.

**Rating:** C-. This wasn't much to see but the slingshot into the northern lights suplex looked great. The match was just a quick win for Booker which is fine as it allows him to get on TV and showcase what he can do for a few minutes. It's also a good sign that WCW can throw different people out there to challenge for the title instead of having the same few guys challenge over and over again.

Post match Wrath comes out to lay Booker out but Rick Martel makes the save. He asks for a title shot at the PPV and Booker says if it's ok with the company it's ok with him.

Here's Flair for the hard sell for the match with Hart. Flair immediately takes the jacket off and says he's here to wake the dead and make little girls talk out of their head. He takes the mic and lays on the mat, telling Bret to Scorpion this. Cue Bret as Flair gets on the apron. Hart praises Flair as one of the greatest wrestlers of all time but Bret has been waiting for this moment his entire life.

It's like he's starting his career over again against Ric Flair, and Bret is going to run over Flair on Saturday. Flair can compare their histories, but on Sunday morning Flair is going to wake up and feel that Bret is the best there is, was and ever will be. Flair says that he

respects Bret's family and he's giving Bret one more chance to say that Ric is the best ever. Bret smiles at him and says that Flair will know who the best is on Sunday morning.

We look at Jericho attacking Mysterio last week on Nitro and costing him the Cruiserweight Title match. The announcers also talk about Mysterio winning the title on Thursday, setting up a title defense against Jericho on Saturday.

#### Chris Jericho vs. Juventud Guerrera

Juvy gets a quick sunset flip for two and monkey flips Jericho into the ropes to frustrate Jericho again. Jericho offers a handshake but clotheslines Juvy down to take over. Guerrera seems to be a face here despite being a heel against Mysterio last week. Jericho can't hit a tornado DDT and gets rolled up for two. Juvy hits a top rope spinwheel kick for two more but misses a charge and falls out to the floor to stop his momentum cold. Jericho holds the ropes open and kicks Guerrera as he comes back in, setting up the Liontamer for the submission.

**Rating:** C-. This was just a quick match to give Jericho more momentum leading into his title shot against Mysterio at the PPV. Jericho's turn has been well built up to this point and it's really easy to hate him given his actions. You put that against a natural hero in Rey and you get a good match as a result. It's basic booking but very effective.

Jericho takes his time to let the hold go and says it's because Juvy didn't make it clear that he gave up. Chris jumps Juvy but Rey runs out for the save, setting up a double team on Jericho.

#### Scott Hall vs. Lex Luger

Hall throws his toothpick at Luger so Lex slaps him in the face. They fight over a lockup until Luger shoves Hall into the corner and flexes a

lot. Hall wants a test of strength but suckers Luger into a double arm crank instead of trying his luck. The fans are distracted by something in the crowd so the hold stays on for a good while. Luger finally counters into the same hold on Hall but Scott kicks him low to escape.

Hall stomps away and puts on a sleeper, only to have Luger counter into one of his own. As is always the custom with this counter to Hall's sleeper, Scott quickly breaks the hold but gets punched down. Luger fires off the atomic drops and clotheslines but Savage runs in for the DQ before the Rack goes on.

**Rating:** D. The arm hold screwed a lot of this up but it wasn't much of a match either way. Luger and Savage are fighting again at the PPV in a match that really doesn't have much of a story other than WCW vs. NWO, which isn't much to base a major match on. There was no mention of Zbyszko vs. Hall during the entire match either.

Hall and Savage stomp Luger down until Zbyszko runs out and is beaten down as well. Lex makes the save with a chair.

### The Giant vs. Hollywood Hogan

Hogan comes to the ring in a neck brace, talking about how Giant caused his injuries. Bischoff says that Hogan can't fight tonight so Giant lifts him off the floor and suplexes him into the ring as the bell sounds. There goes the neck brace and Giant hits a quick running clothesline in the corner. Nash has come out to ringside as Giant chokes in the corner with his boot ala Big Kev.

They head to the floor with Hogan being rammed into the barricade. In a really impressive power display, Giant presses Hogan over his head and back inside over the top rope. Nash distracts Giant and Hogan FINALLY gets in a shot to the back to take over. Hollywood pounds away in the corner and chokes Giant down before hitting the big boot to the chest. Just like the old days, Hogan slams him down and drops the leg but Savage

comes out to distract Hogan. Giant pops up and the chokeslam ends the match.

**Rating:** C-. It's really hard to complain about seeing Hogan wrestle for free on Nitro against a big named guy. The match was really just a backdrop for the NWO drama but it was still entertaining stuff. Hogan's abilities when he's in his comfort zone are often forgotten because of how bad he can be at times, but almost any time you get to see him against a monster you get an entertaining match.

Post match Giant goes after Savage, Nash goes after Savage, Luger runs out to go after Savage, and the NWO comes in for the save. Sting repels from the ceiling into the crowd (after running to the ring earlier) and finally clears the ring of the NWO. WCW stands tall to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** B-. With only one bad match and some great buildup for Souled Out, it's hard to find much to complain about here. It's really interesting to see how well WCW was clicking at this point given how bad things fell apart just a few months later. This was an entertaining show and it made me want to watch Souled Out so the show is a success.

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## On This Day: June 10, 1997 – Monday Nitro: Kevin Nash



# Needs An English Lesson

## Monday Nitro #39

Date: June 10, 1996

Location: Wheeling Civic Center, Wheeling, West Virginia

Attendance: 3,500

Commentators: Bobby Heenan, Tony Schiavone, Eric Bischoff, Larry Zbyszko

It's the go home show for the Great American Bash and other than that there isn't much. The PPV was focused on the football players vs. wrestlers match and the world title was on the side. However, last week the invader (Hall) had promised a BIG surprise for tonight which we'll get to later. With Sting having confronted him, it was pretty clear that this was going to be a huge angle. Let's get to it.

On the theme song and opening video, there are six shots of people total. Three are Hogan.

We get a clip of Hall and Sting last week and them almost going at it.

## Scott Steiner vs. Booker T

This would be huge about four years later. Basic anything you can do I can do greater match to start as I think this is face vs. heel but I'm not sure. Both escape belly to back suplexes but Scott gets a double underhook suplex for no cover. Booker manages to get a boot up in the corner kind of like a superkick to put Scott down. Scissors kick gets two.

Off to a front facelock and Booker controls. Spinning cross body off the top gets two. Larry Z giving wrestling advice to Booker is really weird for some reason. Scott gets something like a DDT to break the momentum though and here comes Steiner. We speed things up and Scott gets a belly to belly to put Booker down. Frankensteiner is avoided which gets two for Booker. A top rope splash misses and Scott hits another belly to belly to end it.

**Rating:** B-. Not bad at all here with two guys that were still (kind of) young and motivated and could give you a good match at this point. Also nice to see some young guys out there having some time to show off. Booker wouldn't mean much of anything for like two years though and Steiner would be about 18 months away, so call this a very early preview.

Scott is talking about the match when Debra of all people interrupts him. She wants to talk about her husband and Scott leaves. Nice chick indeed. She talks about how this feud with the Horsemen is her fault. Gene says no it isn't. She wants to call this off before Sunday and Gene says he'll try to get something set up with Heenan. It's not like this mattered because she and Mongo joined the Horsemen on Sunday.

#### Diamond Dallas Page vs. Jim Powers

This is for the Battlebowl ring. Naturally we talk about the football thing the entire time because that's all that matters. To be fair this is going to be a squash so it's not like it's as bad as usual. This is Powers' debut and he's wearing something similar to leopard print. Page hits a gutwrench gutbuster and stands around a lot. Page's gum is kicked out and Powers gets some jobber offense in. The crowd does not care in the slightest about him. Powerslam gets two. Not that it matters because there's the Diamond Cutter and we're done.

**Rating:** D+. Just a long squash here and by long I mean four minutes. Bagwell faced Page for the ring on Sunday in a match I don't remember in the slightest. Powers was just a jobber that didn't mean anything as most jobbers tend to be. Nothing to see here as Page was far from meaning much at this point.

Recap of Benoit vs. Sullivan which entails Anderson and paranoia. Anderson said everyone would know where everyone stood on Sunday. The match was great too.

Video on Konnan who was pretty different back in the day and in a good way.

Konnan, the US Champion at this point, says that he'll keep the title when he fights El Gato on Sunday. He's such a legend that no one has ever heard of him.

### Sting vs. Meng

This is more or less just a tune up for Sting for his match with Regal on Sunday. Meng be clubberin to start us off but Sting gets a backdrop to break that up. Meng does his monster that you can't hurt thing as Sting hits the ropes for a bunch of clotheslines. Face jam puts Meng down but he gets a small package of all things for two. Shoulder breaker puts Sting down so Meng goes up. Sting manages to crotch him and put on the Scorpion for the kind of surprising tap. Not enough to grade but it was exactly what you would expect.

Heenan takes Flair to the Horsemen dressing room and shuts the door. Screaming is heard and here they come, beating up a guy named Joe Gomez who is supposed to team with Renegade to face them later.

### Jim Duggan vs. Dave Taylor

Taylor is buddies with Regal. Renegade and Gomez have replacements apparently. The fans like Duggan of course. Oh and those replacements: the world tag team champions Luger and Sting and the titles are on the line. The match of course means little but at least it's got a point. Taylor cost Duggan a match last week so here you are. After some basic stuff it's more basic stuff in the form of kicking and punching. There's the taped fist which is hanging from his hand as the referee counts the pin. Freaking blind idiot. Short and more or less nothing.

Video on the Cruiserweight Title which is finally in America. Malenko defends against some guy that is debuting on Sunday. Mysterio I think his name is.

We recap Tenta vs. Bubba which is something no one really wanted to see other than them but whatever. Hart says Tenta wasn't pulling his weight. Bubba says he'll win and that's that.

Here's Scott Norton to talk for some reason that no one knows. I don't think I've ever heard him speak. He didn't like getting chokeslammed last week so he's coming for revenge tonight.

### Scott Norton vs. The Giant

We get the stupid countdown to the second hour as we wait on Giant's entrance. Don't think this is for the title. Norton goes right at him and gets powerslammed for his efforts. Norton comes back and hammers away but we go to the floor and he misses a splash into the post. Chokeslam out there and we're done. Less than a minute and a half but Norton was impressive here as he took it to Giant. It didn't work but points for trying at least.

Luger comes out post match and Giant massacres him. Luger kicks him low to prevent a chokeslam through the table. A champagne bucket to the head just ticks Giant off and Luger heads to the announce table. He says throw the rules out on Sunday because he's ready for the big man.

Video of the Nasty Boys on some TV show with Dennis Rodman, who is made an official Nasty Boy.

Kevin Greene was on the Tonight Show and talked about the match. He picked the name Shallow Grave apparently.

### Steven Regal vs. Billy Kidman

Kidman is a total rookie here. I think this is his WCW debut. Regal kills him for a bit but Kidman gets some stuff in and busts out a 450 (kind of) which misses. Regal puts on the start of a Liontamer but steps on Kidman's head instead for the tap in less than a minute.

Sting comes out for the save post match.

## Public Enemy vs. Nasty Boys

Please....be gentle. Public Enemy runs out during the Nasties' entrance and the fight is on. There's the WCW trademark for tag team brawls: split screens where all four guys can be seen on one screen. Knobbs and Grunge are in the ring so we'll say they're legal. Middle rope clothesline takes Grunge to the floor as the Nasties are the big faces here. Ok finally into a regular match.

Grunge has a broken hand. Sags takes both of them down with a double clothesline and it breaks down into a brawl quickly again. Sags hits a Piledriver as we take a break. Back with Public Enemy in control. Knobbs takes down Grunge but can't bring Sags back in. There's Jerry who hits a World's Strongest Slam on Rocco for two and it breaks down again.

Rocco tries to leave as Grunge unbandages his bad hand/arm. Oh ok Rocco left to get a garbage can. Pumphandle slam by Sags looks to set up a middle rope splash from Knobbs but Rocco breaks it up. The trashcan is brought in and the Nasties get caught using it for the DQ. Kind of a stretch given what they had done before that but I can live with it.

**Rating:** D+. Yeah it was bad but it could have been a lot worse. They know how to make brawls decent and they had the right idea here to not make them act like they could work a competent technical match. I wanted to hate this but I really couldn't do it in good faith. The Public Enemy would actually be tag champions later in the year.

Video on Hogan who punches a lot.

We recap the coaches being added to the football player match. This is set to a bad country song.

Tag Titles: Sting/Lex Luger vs. Ric Flair/Arn Anderson

This should be good and there's a lot of time left. Flair and Luger start us off as the bell rings twice. Luger beats him up and tosses him with ease and does the same to Anderson. Big old gorilla press puts Flair down again. Flair does the Flair Flip in the corner but runs into a right hand from Sting to put him down. Bischoff mentions the concept of Nitro Parties. I never got the appeal of those but they became a big deal.

Sting comes in to beat up Anderson for a bit as the champions have dominated the entire time so far. Sting does his double nipup both times he's pulled down by the hair. Anderson and Flair both get taken down so Flair runs off to grab a chair. The Horsemen chill in the aisle as we take a break.

Back with Anderson being pinballed between the champions before Flair comes in to face Sting. Hard to screw this one up. Flair gets a slight advantage and then goes up top. If you don't know what happens here, go somewhere else. Top rope clothesline gets two for Sting. There's a superplex for two. Ric goes to the classic thumb to the eye and it's off to the Enforcer.

Spinebuster gets two. Arn does his jump into the air when the other guy is on the mat and Anderson jumps into the legs between his balls for a funny reaction spot. Off to Flair instead who can't suplex Sting. Sting

gets an O'Connor Roll for two and a weird small package for the same. Off to Anderson as we take another break.

Back with Flair sending Sting into the guardrail. Back in Sting gets the backslide but Flair makes a blind tag to bring Anderson back in. Sting gets a knee to the nether regions and falls into the tag to Luger. Powerslam gets two on Luger. Luger hits a double clothesline to put both guys on the floor and here's Giant for the DQ.

**Rating:** B-. Eh it's Sting/Luger vs. Flair/Anderson for about 18 minutes. This is one of those matches that is going to be good due to just sheer talent in the ring. They know what they're doing and they've fought so many times over the years that they know each other perfectly, which often helps with matches. Flair and Anderson would win at the PPV and the Horsemen would be back.

Giant gets beaten up by Sting, Luger and Scott Steiner but just gets mad because of it. Giant says Luger is dead to Gene.

Heenan starts to rant about Savage and here's Hall in black this week. For some reason the screen splits here into two identical images. Bischoff asks where the surprise is and turns around to run into Nash's chest. He says they're not here to play ("Look at the adjective: play. We ain't here to play." Play is a verb, Kev.) and wants WCW's three guys. Nash blasts the old guys in the company and wants to know where Hogan and Savage are. Bischoff invites them to the Bash and says he'll try to have their fight there. That would result in Bischoff being powerbombed off the stage.

**Overall Rating:** C+. Well the Bash was a two match show and they built



those up quite well. Anything else you get out of it was a bonus and you had a decent main event and a story running through the entire show so this wasn't too bad really. The Bash wasn't all that good but considering what happened a month later it's not like it really mattered. Pretty decent show this week.

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# Monday Nitro – January 5, 1998: Show of the Year

## Monday Nitro #121

Date: January 5, 1998

Location: Georgia Dome, Atlanta, Georgia

Attendance: 26,773

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Bobby Heenan, Larry Zbyszko, Tony Schiavone

It's been a week since the mess with Hogan and Sting to end the last episode and from what I understand, nothing has been announced yet. Odds are that's going to be saved for the first episode of Thunder which airs three days after this show. We're in a new year here though so things should be pretty big tonight to give them a good start. Let's get to it.

We open with two limos pulling up, bringing the NWO in full force. They don't seem to be too pleased with each other so Tony is in a frenzy.

The announcers talk about the cameras rolling after the show went off the air last week, but there's a court injunction keeping them from showing us the tape. That's all the explanation we're given, but that sounds so

appropriate for WCW. I'm not even going to bother to ask the variety of questions that statement brings up.

JJ says he thinks Sting is champion (Tony already told us that) and he's sorry for the near riot that took place in Baltimore last week.

Apparently lawyers from both sides have wanted the tape but it's in a judge's chambers. YOUR tax dollars at work people! Apparently the tape will be released in 24 hours and we can see it on the debut episode of Thunder. Boy that's convenient. We'll also see video from Starrcade on Thursday about the fast count and all that jazz.

Here's Jericho with a chair and a suit jacket in his hands. He wants to apologize for his actions last week because that's not the real Chris Jericho. The real Jericho is the one standing here right now. He understands that a lot of people look up to him and that wasn't the right reaction. Jericho gives Penzer a new chair to sit in and a new suit jacket to wear. That will NEVER happen again.

#### Diamond Dallas Page vs. Chris Jericho

Non-title here. Feeling out process to start with Page taking over via a swinging neckbreaker. They get back up and slap hands before Jericho is run over with a shoulder block. Tony is still shocked by the fifteen members of the NWO showing up in two limos. We get another standoff and Jericho offers a handshake, only to sucker Page in with a right hand. Not that it matters as the Diamond Cutter hits for the pin a few seconds later.

Jericho has another fit post match.

Gene talks to some WCW lawyer who reads a prepared statement, basically saying any WCW wrestlers violating WCW policies will be fined or suspended. Also if the NWO violates a policy on Nitro, they're fined or suspended too. That's certainly riveting information.

#### Bill Goldberg vs. Stevie Ray

Goldberg pounds him down to start but Stevie escapes a powerslam and hits a belly to back suplex for no cover. A clothesline gets two for Stevie

but Goldberg's second powerslam attempt works fine. Off to a quick chinlock but Stevie comes back with a superkick. Not that it matters as it's the spear and Jackhammer to keep Goldie undefeated.

Nitro Girls.

### John Nord vs. Barbarian

You might remember Nord as the Berzerker from the early 90s. He's part of a new wave of talent coming in apparently, which will also include a former WWF Tag Team Champion debuting later tonight. Nord is just a guy in white trunks and furry boots here. They clothesline each other and no one goes anywhere but another clothesline puts Barbarian on the floor. Nord, a big guy in his own right, hits a dive over the top to crush Barbarian but he stops to go after Jimmy Hart. Barbie rams him into the barricade but Nord sends him head first into the steps.

They whip each other into the barricade as this is way more energetic than you would expect it to be. Back in and Nord hits a Samoan drop for no cover followed by a series of elbow drops. Jimmy gets choked a bit but Barbarian hits a big boot to the jaw, sending Nord out to the floor. Back in and a pumphandle slam gets two for Barbarian before he chops Nord in the corner. Nord misses a charge into the corner and falls outside again, only to come back in with a middle rope elbow. A modified camel clutch by Nord (Nord was sitting almost on the mat while pulling back on the chin) is good for the submission.

**Rating:** C+. This was WAY better than I ever could have expected it to be as Nord looked pretty solid out there. Barbarian was his usual self but a bit more physical than he usually was, making for a pretty solid surprise here. I barely remember Nord at all around this time which is one of the fun parts of rewatching these shows. Good stuff here.

Here's Bischoff for a chat. He says there are no problems in the NWO so the announcers can forget about it. The fans boo him and Eric loses his cool. He goes on a rant about how Hogan beat Sting twice in a row and how there's no tape or anything and WCW is just scared of the people seeing it. Eric says Nitro should belong to the NWO after the kick to the head, but we'll see that on Thunder as well. Eric is still ticked off and walks

out.

We look at Ultimo Dragon winning the Cruiserweight Title last week from Eddie.

### Psychosis vs. Juventud Guerrera

The winner gets the first shot at Dragon. Apparently we're going to see Bischoff vs. Zbyszko in its entirety on Thunder. Good to know I paid to see it live because I can now see it again less than two weeks later. Psychosis takes him down twice in a row to start but misses a splash in the corner to let Juvy fire off some chops. Juvy sends him to the floor and there's a big dive to take Psychosis out.

Back in and Psychosis crotches him on the top rope as Tony starts bragging about the NWO not holding any titles. A facejam gets two for Psychosis but the guillotine legdrop misses. Juvy hits a springboard missile dropkick to take out Psychosis' knee before pounding away at the masked head. Juvy goes up but dives into a dropkick to the ribs to shift momentum again. Psychosis has a powerbomb reversed into a DDT and the 450 sends Juvy to Thunder (where else?) for the title shot.

**Rating:** C. This was fine. Both guys got to do their thing and it was a nice change of pace from the match we saw just before it. As stupid as some of the main event stuff would get, the lower card stuff on Nitro was almost always an excellent mix of different styles, which is what we got right here.

We get a clip from last April with the NWO having problems to show that this has happened before. What this has to do with anything that's happened lately is beyond me but it's hard to keep up with WCW logic at times.

Hour #2 begins.

More Nitro Girls.

Here's TV Champion Booker T to say it's awesome that he's TV Champion. It was for his son apparently.

### TV Title: Booker T vs. Prince Iaukea

Feeling out process to start with Booker's wristlock going nowhere. Instead Booker kicks him in the head and pounds away before getting two off the ax kick. A side kick misses Iaukea though and Booker falls to the floor. Back in and another kick to Iaukea's head sets up the Harlem Hangover for the pin to retain the title. Total squash.

We get proof of the fast count: stills of Patrick counting it. Tony: "You can see the fast count." How does this man remember to tie his shoes every morning?

### Buff Bagwell/Scott Norton/Konnan vs. Ray Traylor/Steiner Brothers

Traylor and Konnan get things going with Ray missing a charge into the corner and getting clotheslined down. Konnan loads up a DDT but Scott Steiner takes his head off with a clothesline to break it up. Bagwell gets slapped to the floor as Scott Steiner stomps on Konnan's head. Everything breaks down and the NWO is sent to the floor. Bagwell gets the tag but wants Rick instead of Scott.

Rick poses a bit in a funny spot, causing Buff to go off with right hands. That lasts all of four seconds as Rick suplexes him down and gets two off a Steiner Line. Back to Ray to face Norton with Traylor being taken down like he's nothing. Ray comes back with an uppercut and it's back to Rick for a top rope clothesline.

The NWO finally starts cheating to let Buff take over and Rick gets beaten down by all three NWO guys. Rick finally clotheslines Buff down and tags in his brother as everything breaks down. Everything breaks down and the Steiners set up the Steiner Bulldog, only to have Scott drop Buff down in an electric chair. Rick is distracted but his brother hits the awesome Steiner Screwdriver on Konnan for the pin. DiBiase gets in some kicks to Vincent for old times' sake.

**Rating:** C+. This match goes up a letter or so because of the Steiner Screwdriver. If there has ever been a more devastating looking move I can't think of it off the top of my head. If you've never seen it, picture a delayed vertical suplex but instead of falling back, Scott

drops the other guy straight down on his head like a fast piledriver. It's incredibly dangerous but so sweet to watch. That lack of the Steiner Bulldog at the end isn't a good sign for the Brothers though.

Here are the Nitro Girls again in case you forgot what they look like.

We look at a fan's Nitro Party.

#### Brad Armstrong vs. Rick Martel

This is Martel's debut and his first national match in years. A quick rollup gets two for Martel as I think Armstrong is the heel here. Brad grabs a headlock as Tony is SURE there are problems in the NWO. Armstrong charges into a knee in the corner and gets caught by a middle rope clothesline for no cover. Brad gets in a forearm out of the corner and chokes away, only to get caught in the Quebec Crab for the win for Martel. Another short match.

More Nitro Girls.

#### Chris Benoit/Steve McMichael vs. Perry Saturn/Riggs

Benoit and Saturn get things going and the chops start flying fast. Off to Mongo who gets pounded into the corner, only to come out with a hip toss. A powerslam puts Saturn down but Riggs comes in for a double team. Benoit is fine with letting his partner get beaten down by both guys in an odd bit. Riggs trips Mongo up for a clothesline from Saturn before drawing in Benoit to allow more cheating.

The Flock cuts the ring off to keep Mongo in with Saturn putting on a Fujiwara Armbar. A double shoulder puts McMichael down but he hooks a double suplex and makes the hot tag to Benoit. Everything breaks down and there's the Crossface to Saturn but a Kidman distraction lets Raven hit the DDT on Benoit, giving Saturn the pin.

**Rating:** C-. They're taking their sweet time to get to Raven vs. Benoit but that has the potential to be a classic when we get there. The tag match was a fine idea to keep the story going now that Benoit has gone through every individual member of the Flock but hopefully Mongo isn't a fixture in these matches.

Here's Ric Flair with something to say. He's glad WCW is taking over again and is glad that Sting is world champion, but everyone wants the belt. One of the people that wants it is someone that has rubbed him the wrong way: Bret Hart. How can someone like Bret call himself the best when Flair is around? This brings out Hart who says that he'll say the catchphrase and then say WOO at the end of it.

Flair talks about how Bret is a big time columnist in Canada, but we're here in Atlanta tonight and Flair is prime USA man. He tells Bret to say it again and Bret does just that. If Flair has a problem with it, too bad. Flair lists off some legendary names and says Hart can believe he's better than them, but Race and Kiniski and Funk and Brisco aren't Ric Flair. Bret takes off his jacket and says to be the man you gotta beat the man, which he's done before. Flair says if you think you're better than me, let's see you do it again. AWESOME segment here that makes me want to watch them fight right now.

#### Lex Luger vs. Randy Savage

Nick Patrick is the referee here to tick off the announcers. Actually scratch that as JJ comes out to suspend him, drawing out Bischoff to protest. Bagwell and Norton are here with Savage and Luger gets jumped before the bell. An elbow to the face puts Luger down for two and a belly to back suplex gets the same as this is one sided so far.

A slam puts Luger down but Savage jumps into a right hand to the ribs. Luger starts firing off his wide array of clotheslines and the powerslam looks to set up the Rack, only to have Savage bail to the floor. Savage bails to the floor to avoid the Rack and after hiding behind Liz he's able to send Luger into the barricade to take over. Back in and Luger gets a small package out of nowhere for the pin.

**Rating:** D+. These two spent like three years fighting each other and this wasn't one of their better matches. The match was almost too short to rate and the ending came out of nowhere, making it hard to get into the match at all. Luger was rapidly becoming a shell of himself which would only continue in the coming years.

Post match Savage goes after Luger with a chair but Bischoff pulls the

chair away (remember the threat of suspensions earlier tonight). Savage doesn't know who it was and decks Bischoff, drawing out Hogan to calm things down. Nash comes out and decks Savage as Hogan tries to calm things down. The NWO surrounds Luger but Sting runs in for the save to end things.

**Overall Rating:** B-. This was actually a pretty solid show with the NWO showing real signs of problems and Sting clearly being the lead soldier in WCW's war. Add that in with some excellent talking between Bret and Flair and you have a pretty good TV show here. You can see a lot of Souled Out coming together, but right now we're getting ready for Thunder on Thursday which should be interesting. Good show this week and one of the best in a very long time.

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# On This Day: May 26, 1997 – Monday Nitro: Happy Anniversary Scott Hall

## Monday Nitro #89

Date: May 26, 1997

Location: Nashville Municipal Auditorium, Nashville, Tennessee

Attendance: 6,484

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Bobby Heenan, Tony Schiavone, Larry Zbyszko

We're back to the regular two hours again and that might be something good in this case. Also Hogan is here tonight which always helps make the shows feel bigger than they do without him. We're coming up on the Great American Bash in three weeks and odds are we'll get the main event



announced tonight. Let's get to it.

Here are Hogan and Bischoff to open the show. Hogan's beard appears to be infecting his head and is growing at an alarming rate. This is the one year anniversary of Hall jumping the guard rail. Bischoff says he's checked under the ring and there's not Sting this week. Hogan talks about partying in the Bahamas with Nick and Brooke, which are names that don't mean anything at this point. Hogan runs down Sting and Eric says that Sting is just afraid of Hulk. Hogan says he's going to be looking around and if he finds anyone in Sting makeup, he's going to take them out.

Hector Garza/Juventud Guerrera/Super Calo vs. Ciclope/Damien/La Parka

This is under Mexican rules, which means if you go to the floor, another member of your team can come in just like a tag. La Parka and Juvy get us going with Juvy taking over with a quick spin kick to the face. Juvy goes up but his cross body is caught and La Parka struts over to the corner and sets Juvy up top. Juvy comes back with a big top rope rana to send Parka to the floor.

Off to Ciclope as Larry complains about the Mexican rules because "we're not in Mexico." Sometimes common sense is the best approach. Calo comes in to replace Parka and hits a headscissors to send Parka to the floor. Calo hits a HUGE suicide dive to send both guys into the crowd, giving us Damien vs. Garza. Garza is basically here for one move: a corkscrew plancha to the floor. The idea is that he's going to hit it but you don't know when or how many people he'll take out.

Everything breaks down and it's almost impossible to tell who is legal as four people came in at the same time when Garza and Damien went to the floor. It appears to be Calo vs. Damien now with Calo in control, only to take his eyes off Damien and get jumped. Off to Garza who speeds things up but gets sent to the floor.

Everyone goes to the floor and it's time to fire off the dives. Garza hits his big corkscrew plancha, prompting Larry to ask if Garza thinks he's Captain Planet. Turner property or not, that's the best Larry can come up with? Damien tries a seated senton back inside but Garza catches him in a powerbomb and hits a standing moonsault for the pin.

**Rating:** B. This is pretty much the textbook definition for a lucha libre spotfest and there's nothing wrong with that. Other than Juvy, none of these guys have stood out but they know how to fire off all kinds of flips and dives. While not a great match from a technical standpoint or anything like that, it was fun and the dives were great. That's what you want to do with an opener too. Good stuff here.

### Alex Wright vs. Psychosis

This is Wright's first match after his heel turn last week. Wright flips around to escape a wristlock but Psychosis does the exact same thing. A jumping kick to the face gives Wright control again and he pounds away in the corner. Psychosis comes back with a moonsault press for two followed by a top rope spin kick to the back of Wright's head for one. Wright bails to the floor and dances a bit, only for Psychosis to bust out a mostly missed moonsault to take both guys out. Back in and the guillotine legdrop pins Wright.

**Rating:** D+. This was pretty messy. Also why in the world would you have Wright lose completely clean after a heel turn last week? The announcers are pushing this as a huge upset and to be fair it probably is. The match had almost no flow or story to it at all and the big spots didn't hit. Not terrible but really messy.

Sonny Onoo still has a surprise for Chono tonight but won't say who it is. Sonny tries to sign Psychosis as he leaves and Psychosis is interested. As Sonny gloats, Madusa comes out and wants a Women's Title shot. She says she'll do anything for it and immediately regrets saying it. Sonny says she'll get the shot at the Bash but if she loses, her career is over. She agrees and that's it.

We get a quick look at Ernest Miller and his martial arts background.

### Wrath vs. Mark Starr

Total squash with Wrath throwing Starr all over the place, including out to the floor so Mortis can get in some shots. Wrath does look awesome and has a great name, but this feud went on so long that it killed whatever he had going. A top rope clothesline kills Starr and a bicycle kick sets

up the double arm Rock Bottom to end the massacre. Apparently that move is called the Death Penalty.

#### Konnan vs. Villano IV

They're going really light on the promos tonight. Hugh Morrus talks about how he doesn't like Konnan anymore, which I think happened at Slamboree. Konnan and Villano shake hands before Konnan hits him in the ribs to start. Konnan pounds him into the corner and fires off a dropkick. He shouts VIVA MEXICO which apparently fires up Villano.

After a brief comeback, Villano shouts VIVA MEXICO as well. Not that it really matters as Konnan hits an Alabama Slam out of the corner to stop the momentum dead. Here's Morrus but security stops him in the aisle. The 187 (fisherman's DDT) kills Villano dead and Tequila Sunrise (half crab with armbar) gets the win for Konnan.

**Rating:** C-. Just a squash here as Konnan was a guy who had a decent place in the midcard. The next step for him of course: put him in the NWO where he got lost in the shuffle. He was a Mexican wrestler who could actually wrestle a style different from the dozen or so other luchadores they had which gave him something to offer. Then it went nowhere because the NWO didn't have enough lackeys.

Konnan runs down the Dungeon and Sullivan post match.

#### Masahiro Chono vs. ???

Sonny comes out to introduce the surprise: The Great Muta. Chono is NWO. We get a LONG stall at the beginning of the match, during which Larry announces that the Japanese are in fact a different race. No contact in the first minute. Or in the second minute. Muta puts on a VERY weak headlock. So weak that Chono just ducks out of it and Muta doesn't move his arms. Sonny freaks out on Muta, Muta sprays mist in his eyes, and Muta joins the NWO. Well no one had joined in a few months so I guess we needed someone else to inflate the ranks.

Hour #2 starts.

Savage talks about his feud with Page. Apparently he wants a rematch at

the Bash, which may or may not already be set. The idea is that Savage was embarrassed by a guy in his first main event match at Spring Stampede and it's driving him crazier than he already is.

Here are Page and Kimberly with a rebuttal. The match is already signed apparently. Page has the crutch that was broken over his back by Hogan. He talks about how he's under Savage's skin and how he owes Hogan a Diamond Cutter. Page owes Savage even more though and he'll get that at the Bash. Kimberly says she's keeping the pieces of the crutch as a memento. She also has some of the hair that Savage pulled out of her head. Page says you don't mess with family or his wife, and Savage messed with both. See, this is how you build up a match. I want to see these two fight now.

#### Barbarian vs. Jim Powers

Powers fires off some basic offense to start but can't take Barbarian down. A clothesline takes Powers' head off and Barbarian sends him out to the floor for some more beating. Back in and they chop it out with Barbie taking over. Powers gets in some boots but he doesn't jump far enough coming off the middle rope so Barbarian can catch him in a powerslam. A big boot ends Powers.

**Rating:** D. Powers is FINALLY done after this, not appearing on Nitro for over a year after this. Why we needed to have Barbarian get a squash win on Nitro is kind of head scratching but it was something different than they've had in the rest of the show. Meng has been doing some singles stuff around this time so maybe that's why.

Benoit comes out post match and wants Sullivan back soon. Hart says Barbarian is ready for Benoit right now so Benoit takes his jacket off and gets in the ring. Hart says next week.

#### The Giant vs. Jerry Flynn/Johnny Swinger/Rick Fuller

The jobbers have to tag here so what are you expecting to happen? Swinger starts and can't do anything. Flynn can't do anything so it's off to Fuller who is by far the biggest guy on the team. After Fuller gets beaten up, all three come in with Flynn and Fuller getting belly to back

suplexed at the same time. There's a chokeslam to Swinger, there's one for Fuller, and there's one for Flynn. Giant pins all Swinger and Flynn at the same time.

Luger and Giant are in the ring and we hear about an open contract issued by Hogan and Rodman for the PPV Luger talks about being an NBA fan and watching Rodman. At Uncensored, Rodman came into the WCW world and Luger would like to invite them back. Luger issues the challenge for the PPV and Giant says they're ready. I'm missing something because that match wound up happening at Bash at the Beach. Maybe that's what they meant or maybe it was changed.

Lee Marshall does his road report jazz.

Here's Syxx to talk about Flair. He shows us a video from last week of him and the Outsiders beating up Flair before bringing the Outsiders out. Hall and Nash have the newer design of the tag titles which I've always liked better. They make fun of Piper and say Piper couldn't make Hogan sleep unless they showed him Piper's latest movie. To the shock of everyone, Hall and Nash offer to defend the titles. The opponents aren't the shock. It's that they're actually defending the belts. They want Piper and Flair so they can retire them once and for all.

#### Jeff Jarrett/Steve McMichael vs. Harlem Heat

Before the match we get a quick recap of Kevin Greene running in last week. Booker and Jeff start things off but it's off to Mongo before anything happens. Mongo runs him over but Booker won't tag out. Booker escapes a belly to back suplex but gets punched in the face and clotheslined down. Off to Jarrett as Greene is on commentary now. Stevie comes in and pounds on Jarrett in the corner before slamming him down. We cut to the commentators so we can see that Greene is in fact wearing a football jacket.

Off to Booker vs. Mongo again with the Horsemen taking over. Booker misses a charge into the corner but Stevie blasts Mongo in the back of the head to put him down. Stevie uses the power stuff to take over on McMichael before it's back to Booker for a chinlock. Harlem Heat double teams to draw in Jarrett which allows for even more double teaming.

Stevie puts on another chinlock so we cut to the announcers again. Mongo comes out of nowhere with a powerslam to Booker and it's hot (?) tag to Jarrett. Jeff fires off dropkicks to take over and everything breaks down. Mongo realizes Greene is with the announcers and walks off for a brawl. Jeff puts Booker in the Figure Four but Stevie breaks it up and a Hart Attack with Booker hitting a side kick instead of a clothesline gets the pin for the Heat.

**Rating:** D+. This was long and not interesting. The problem is there's no reason for these guys to be fighting and the main story of the match was about the football players fighting, which I don't think anyone was interested in seeing. Just like last week: these matches have almost no meaning because the Outsiders never defend the belts, so these guys are all fighting for nothing.

Jarrett says that might be the last straw.

Here are Hogan and Bischoff to end the show. Hogan says the title is on the line right now if Sting wants to face him for it. Bischoff says unfortunately Sting isn't here tonight. They turn their backs to the camera and Sting pops up through the mat. And of course it's the fake one and the announcers are fooled.

The NWO Sting stays on his knees in front of Hogan and nods when asked if he's half the man Hogan is. He bows down to Hogan and the real Sting repels into the ring. There's a Death Drop for Bischoff and Hogan falls over the bowing fake Sting. The real one beats up the fake one and here come the troops. Sting flies into the rafters again to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C. This started off hot but slowed way down afterwards. Having Hogan around helped a lot and you can see that they're building to Sting vs. Hogan eventually. I don't think anyone expected it to take another seven months, but it was worth it in theory. As for the rest of the show, it wasn't bad but as always, the show is better when the bigger names are in play.

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# Thought of the Day: And You Thought It Was Bad Today

You know how matches today tend to repeat themselves? Think about this: Back in December of 1997, back when there were two TV shows a week, Buff Bagwell and Lex Luger fought SIX TIMES in the same month. Four matches on Nitro, one on Saturday Night and one on Starrcade. Think about that for a minute. SIX TIMES in the same month.

And you thought Ziggler and Kofi fought a lot.

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## On This Day: May 5, 1997 – Monday Nitro 1997: Nitro Just Keeps Going

### Monday Nitro #86

Date: May 5, 1997

Location: Jenkins Center, Lakeland, Florida

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Larry Zbyszko, Bobby Heenan

It's another hour long show this week which was a nice change of pace last week. We're finally getting close to the end of the build to Slamboree which has gone on way too long now. I believe Hogan is back tonight which will help a lot with the levels of interest on these shows.

If nothing else the main event is better than Mongo vs. Barbarian. Let's get to it.

We open with Flair, Piper and Greene at the announce table but there's a banner that says "Tradition Bites! NWO 4 Life!" behind them. They freak out before they say anything and we go to the opening sequence.

Back with the three guys in the ring and there's another paper drop like last week. Piper goes on a rant about last week and the 75% of the gate demands the NWO made. He doesn't carry a purse so that's fine with him. JJ comes out and says the NWO is getting 75% and Piper has to deal with it. Didn't Piper just say it's ok with him? JJ leaves and Flair says he'll be ready in Charlotte. There won't be a single pothole in the road.

#### Public Enemy vs. Konnan/Hugh Morrus

Public Enemy's music started while Flair, Piper and Greene were still in the ring and Flair walked past them as they came out. Are they in a time crunch or something? Both teams bring out tables and it's a brawl to start. They almost immediately head to the floor and Jimmy Hart is put on the table but Konnan makes a last second save. Public Enemy loads up two tables on top of each other and Grunge dives through both, but Konnan was pulled out before the collision.

After all that, it's time for an actual match to start. Rocco hits a standing moonsault onto both guys for two but Konnan powerbombs him down. There's a table set up in the middle of the ring but as Rock goes up to splash Konnan through it, Morrus superplexes him through Konnan through the table. Even though Rock is on top of Konnan, Morrus covers Rock for the pin.

**Rating:** D. I was tempted to not rate this but it was long enough. I have no idea how this wasn't a DQ in there somewhere but even though it wasn't, the match was still a mess with a confusing ending. I guess the idea was to fire up the crowd, or to just copy ECW, but either way it was



a big mess and it didn't make a ton of sense.

#### Cruiserweight Title: Rey Mysterio Jr. vs. Syxx

Hall, Nash and Syxx come out in jeans. Rey is looking around and Syxx gets in a spin kick to start. The Bronco Buster is countered by a kick and the Outsiders come in. Hall gets in a shot to the back and hits the Outsiders Edge. Syxx wins with the Buzz Killer in about a minute. How bad are the referees tonight? Somehow he didn't notice the two huge men in the ring at the same time?

JJ and Nick Patrick come out to break the hold but the NWO comes out as well. Eric tells JJ to get out of here because JJ has no power. Good grief what is the point in JJ even existing if they're just going to flat out tell us he has no authority? Syxx yells about McMahon because that's edgy.

Lee Marshall does his road report.

Here are Hogan and Bischoff with something to say. Hogan runs his mouth about the Wolfpac and calls out Sting but no one answers. That's all from Hollywood at the moment.

#### Steven Regal vs. Meng

This is fallout from Regal trying to help Benoit from getting beaten down last week. They go at it immediately and sweet goodness are they going at it. Meng pounds Regal down in the corner but Regal fires right back with punches that stagger the monster back. Not that it matters as here's Kevin Sullivan, who Regal goes after for the DQ. This lasted about 40 seconds but there was more action in it than most matches you'll see on Raw in a given week.

Meng puts Regal in the Tongan Death Grip post match. Sullivan gets him to

drop it and Regal starts beating on them again. The Death Grip stops him cold. Regal looked awesome here.

Video on DDP vs. Savage.

Here are Page and Kimberly. Kimberly looks great in a white dress, even though she stumbles down the ramp. Page talks about being in a lot of bar fights over the years, but none of them were as bad as the one at Spring Stampede. Kimberly refutes Savage's statements that she loves him, but here's Savage in the crowd. He tells Kim to stop calling him and that's about it.

#### Alex Wright vs. Jeff Jarrett

Jeff immediately armdrags him down and struts before we go to some chain wrestling. A swinging neckbreaker puts Wright down and Jeff hits the running hip attack while Wright is in 619 position. Wright comes back with aggression but then stops to dance. Debra's distraction lets Jarrett chop block Wright and the figure four ends this fast.

Time for NASCAR stuff. There's an announcement coming in two weeks regarding WCW and NASCAR. Oh joy.

#### Glacier vs. Lizmark Jr.

Superkick, Lizmark is pinned, 17 seconds.

Post match James Vandenberg (James Mitchell of TNA fame), Mortis and Wrath come out for the big heel beating.

#### Harlem Heat vs. Lex Luger/The Giant

Apparently Luger was injured in Japan by the NWO so it's Giant on his

own. Giant says he has a partner to replace Luger though.

### Diamond Dallas Page/The Giant vs. Harlem Heat

Savage pops up as Page comes out but Page steals a crutch from him. Hogan jumps Page from behind with the other crutch and Page is in trouble. The NWO comes out to beat on Page. Where is Giant? Oh he's in the ring getting ganged up on by the NWO. Flair and Greene come out as well but get beaten down. Piper comes in once everyone else is down and is promptly beaten as well. Hogan runs his mouth to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C. Nitro is in a bad stage at this point as the shows aren't really good or bad but rather just kind of there. The star power helped a lot here as this felt like stuff that actually mattered. The problem with that is it's the same stuff we've seen time after time. JJ continues to mean nothing at all which would be the case for a good while to come. The NWO stuff is back to what it used to be, which is to say that it's repetitive. Nothing of note would really change until August, and even that was just for five days. The show being an hour was a big help here though, as two hours would be too much.

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## Monday Nitro – December 15,

# 1997: This 3 Hour Thing Isn't Going To Go Well

## Monday Nitro #118

Date: December 15, 1997

Location: Independence Arena, Charlotte, North Carolina

Attendance: 9,320

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Tony Schiavone, Bobby Heenan, Larry Zbyszko

We're really getting close to Starrcade now with just two more Nitros to go before the biggest show in the company's history. The majority of the big matches are set for the show now so we're just finalizing things now before the pay per view. I'm not sure if we're going to hear the rest of the card before then but it could go either way. Let's get to it.

Apparently Bret Hart is here tonight. Cool. It's also a three hour show. Not cool.

Here's the NWO and they immediately look under the ring for Sting. Vincent looks into the rafters with binoculars in a bit that shouldn't be as funny as it is. With the inspection out of the way, Bischoff introduces Chono who presumably talks trash in Japanese. Hennig says this is NWO country and he's the best thing the NWO has ever produced. Hogan calls Sting a coward and says Sting will never come face him one on one. They were a bit more concise tonight.

## Vincent vs. Ray Traylor

As soon as the bell rings Vincent walks into a spinebuster followed by a splash in the corner. The Flock arrives. A belly to back suplex puts Vincent down and the Boss Man Slam (now called Traylor Trash) ends this in a hurry.

Traylor wants to know where the NWO is. Based on what happened on Saturday Night, apparently they're in a six man tag against him and the Steiners. Makes enough sense.

We see Flair's comments from last week about how he's the real best there is, was and ever will be.

Video on Nash vs. Giant for Starrcade.

The Nitro Girls dance at the announce table.

#### TV Title: Disco Inferno vs. Yuji Nagata

Disco is defending. Nagata starts firing off some kicks as Larry goes onto a BIG rant about how this town was built on the backs of various legends like Flair, Rhodes, Magnum and himself. The idea of grouping Larry with those men is hilarious. Anyway Disco pounds away but Sonny Onoo's distraction lets Nagata suplex him down for two. A rolling Liger Kick puts Disco down and some shots to the throat have Disco in a lot of trouble.

Nagata gets two off a forearm to the face but walks into an atomic drop. A knee lift gets two for Disco as does a gordbuster. Sonny tries to interfere but gets caught in a Chartbuster (Stunner), followed by a Stun Gun and Chartbuster to Nagata to complete the Steve Austin Special and retain Disco's title.

**Rating:** C. Not bad here as Disco's on and off push continues. For a guy who was nothing but a comedy character when he started out, he had some serious success over the years. The match was nothing to see here but Disco looked confident and like someone who belonged a bit higher up on the card.

#### Fit Finlay vs. Dean Malenko

Eddie is on commentary again here. Dean stares him down during the entrances as Tony thinks that's a challenge. Malenko takes Finlay down by the arm but gets caught in a quick headlock. A slam gets two on Dean and it's off to a nerve hold. Dean fights up as Eddie calls Dean a very boring person. That's the understatement of the century. Dean snapmares him down and puts on a chinlock with a knee in the back.

We hear about a tag match Eddie and Dean were in a few weeks back with Eddie ranting about how the people wanted to see the Frog Splash and not

the Texas Cloverleaf. Finlay fights back with some forearm to the face but Dean whips him into the barricade. Back in and Dean can't powerbomb him as Finlay kicks him in the forehead. Eddie: "Dean looked like his wife told him they were going to have twins."

Finlay hits the rolling fireman's carry senton for two but Dean comes back with a rolling cradle for two. Eddie leaves the broadcast booth, thereby taking away the most entertaining part of the match. Guerrero heads to ringside and distracts Dean out of the tiger bomb. Finlay tombstones Dean down for the pin.

**Rating:** C. Decent match here with hilarious commentary from Eddie. As far as I can tell the Cruiserweight Title match isn't set yet for the PPV but you can tell it's coming. Either way it's a very entertaining feud and the match is bound to be a fun one. Finlay continues to be that kind of veteran you can put in this spot and get a decent match out of him, which is very valuable.

Video on the NWO beating up Roddy Piper, who hasn't been around in months.

#### La Parka/Psychosis vs. Rey Mysterio Jr./Juventud Guerrera

La Parka is in yellow for some reason here. Juvy and Psychosis start things off with Guerrera hitting a top rope rana to take over early. A standing version does the same but La Parka kicks him in the back of the head to slow Juvy down. Apparently this is under Lucha Rules, meaning going to the floor is the same as a tag. Psychosis hits a guillotine legdrop followed by a belly to belly for two on Guerrera. La Parka powerbombs him down for two more as we're actually getting the tag formula out of this.

Psychosis goes up but accidentally dropkicks La Parka. That's not enough for a tag again though as Psychosis pops up and decks Rey to keep Juvy in trouble. La Parka misses a splash in the corner and it's finally hot tag to Rey, although the announcers would rather talk about Bischoff. Rey ducks under both guys, allowing Juvy to hit a springboard cross body. Everything breaks down and the heels are both kicked to the floor, allowing Rey and Juvy to hit stereo flip dives to take them out.

Back in and Juvy hits what the Hardys would call Poetry in Motion for two on Psychosis. La Parka is sent into Psychosis before Rey is launched into a rana for two on the guy in yellow. Juvy and Psychosis go on top with Psychosis trying a slam off the top, only to be turned into a kind of small package off the top for two for Juvy. Guerrera gets crotched while loading up a Doomsday Device but Rey hits a springboard hurricanrana to the floor to take out La Parka. The 450 from Juvy is enough to end Psychosis.

**Rating:** B. Take four guys, let them go nuts for seven minutes, listen to the crowd cheer a lot. It worked for the six man matches and it worked here in the four man version. Mysterio and Guerrera worked pretty well together although I don't remember them teaming up all that much over the years until a bit at the end of WCW.

Here's Doug Dillinger who apparently used to be a Charlotte cop. They bring out Arn Anderson to a BIG ovation. Anderson calls this place his home and says that the fans deserve to see Ric Flair, so here's Naitch. Flair says that Anderson is about to make him cry but there are more important things to deal with at the moment. Apparently there was a fund set up today for fallen Charlotte cops and WCW has donated \$15,000 to it to start. That's rather cool. Flair presents them with a check, but now it's time to talk about Hennig. There goes Flair's coat and he wants Hennig tonight, because the NWO can't beat him in Charlotte.

JJ comes out to talk about the stipulations Bischoff wants. Eric shows up and says he wants punches and kicks to be legal. JJ says that's fine as long as submissions count. I know WCW had some weird rules at times but I'm pretty sure submissions have always counted.

Nitro Girls.

Here's Hall for a match but first of all we need the survey. For once, the fans are solidly WCW.

Scott Hall vs. Chris Jericho

Jericho grabs a pair of quick rollups for two each and the Lionsault hits for two more. Jericho dives into the fallaway slam though and Hall takes

over. Hall counters a hiptoss and hits a BIG chokeslam for no cover. After doing the Giant imitation it's the Outsider's Edge and we're done quick.

Heenan comes in on commentary.

### Meng vs. Steve McMichael

There's no Mongo so we cut to the back and McMichael is out cold with Goldberg standing over him. JJ comes up to yell at him and Goldberg volunteers to go fight Meng. As he comes to the ring though, Mongo pops up and a brawl breaks out.

### Tag Titles: Scott Norton/Konnan vs. Steiner Brothers

Blast it with the two Scotts. For the sake of simplicity, Scott Steiner is Scott and Scott Norton is Norton. The Steiners clear the ring early on so let's talk about Bret Hart. Konnan starts with Scott and is gorilla pressed with ease. A belly to belly sends Konnan into the corner and it's off to Rick vs. Norton. Norton charges into a boot in the corner but comes back with a big clothesline to take Rick down.

Rick nails a Steiner line of his own and goes up top for a top rope clothesline for two. He goes up again but pulls a Flair and is slammed down by Norton. After some interference from Konnan, Norton's shoulder breaker is good for two. Off to Konnan who walks into a belly to back suplex as everything breaks down. Scott comes back in to load up the Frankensteiner but Vincent runs in for the DQ.

**Rating:** C-. Another not great match with another run in ending. For some reason this doesn't surprise me in the least anymore and it's already getting tiresome. Do we really need to protect Norton and Konnan from the tag team champions/ Oh wait Vincent already lost tonight so we can't have another NWO pinfall loss, because then people would stop viewing them as a threat. Or something like that I guess.

### Booker T vs. Randy Savage

Stevie was either about to be injured or already was injured so Booker's singles push is on the verge of happening soon. Booker is in regular



tights now and not the traditional Harlem Heat attire. He takes Savage down in a hurry and cranks on the arm but Savage comes back with right hands in the corner. Booker knocks him to the floor and then into the front row, only to throw him back into the ring a few seconds later.

Back in and Booker spends too much time posing but manages to slam Savage down. An elbow misses but Booker spins up and hits the Harlem side kick. Savage rolls to the floor as this is one sided so far. Booker misses a splash onto the barricade and momentum shifts in a hurry. After dropping Booker chest first onto the barricade, Savage throws him back inside for two.

A fan tries to get in but Savage drills him in the head. Booker spins kicks him down and Savage accidentally bumps the referee. The ax kick hits Savage but Liz breaks up the missile dropkick, allowing Savage to knock Booker to the floor. A chair shot to Booker's head allows the big elbow to end Mr. T.

**Rating:** C+. This was a good solid rub for the single Booker as he beat up Savage for a good four minutes out there. Savage winning was fine though as Booker was nowhere near ready to be a real threat to him yet. Liz getting involved was always strange to see given how meek she was back in the WWF. This is on Best of Nitro Volume 2 I believe.

### Chris Benoit vs. Riggs

Again this was supposed to be Raven but it's another substitution. Benoit goes to look for Raven but gets jumped by Riggs instead. Back inside and Benoit gets up an elbow before firing off those hard chops. Benoit's eyes look awesome here. Chris drapes him stomach first across the top rope before headbutting him down on the mat. As in Riggs is on the mat and Benoit leans down to headbutt him.

A chop sends Riggs to the floor again but he gets in a shot on Benoit to take over. The fans are firmly behind Benoit as he gets his knees up to block a Riggs splash back inside. A front suplex puts Riggs down and there's the Swan Dive into the Crossface for the submission. He snapped that hold on very fast and it looked sweet.

**Rating:** C+. This story is growing on me and the match that would result would be amazing. This feud should have elevated Benoit WAY up the ladder but of course he would be back down in the middle of the card after it was done because of various factors we'll get to later. Good performance from Benoit here.

Post match Benoit yells at the Flock before diving on them, only to get beaten down and put in the Rings of Saturn.

Here's JJ again to talk to Bischoff, this time about who is referee. They go back and forth between WCW referees and NWO guys with Dillon eventually agreeing to it being an NWO guy as long as he gets to pick which one. Cue Bret Hart who says he'd be honored to be referee, so Bischoff says \$7.5 million. Hart says he knows what it's like to be screwed by a referee before turning around to show a Hart Foundation jacket and leaving. To clarify, about a month after the Montreal Screwjob, the hottest name in wrestling is going to be a referee in a match between Eric Bischoff and Larry Zbyszko. Let that sink in for a minute.

Post break Gene calls out Lex Luger but gets Bagwell instead. Bagwell says Luger can't beat him so here's Luger, saying that he was in the production truck asking for a match with Bagwell. Buff gives about five excuses but after a slap we're ready to go.

#### Buff Bagwell vs. Lex Luger

Luger runs Buff over to start and backdrops him down. A few clotheslines put Bagwell down again before Lex stomps away. Back up and Lex misses a charge into the corner so Bagwell can stomp away a bit as well. Luger easily fights back and hits his usual clotheslines and powerslam, but here are Norton and Vincent....not for the DQ. Luger fights them off and clotheslines Bagwell to the floor and that's the DQ. Oh they're trying to trick us with the DQ's now. Match was nothing.

#### Ric Flair vs. Curt Hennig

Before Flair comes out Hennig challenges anyone in the audience to come fight him. He goes on and on for a bit about how he's the US Champion and

all that jazz while insulting Flair. After a break here's Ric for the fight...and here's Hall for the DQ maybe ten seconds later. So much for that idea.

Flair manages to fight off the NWO for a bit but Hennig takes him down and puts him in the Figure Four. DDP, Luger and the Steiners come out and the NWO eventually runs off. Page challenges Hennig as Flair limps around. That leg injury was the reason he wasn't on Starrcade, which is a questionable decision to say the least if it's not a legit injury.

The Steiners and Luger take Flair to the back as more fans try to run in but are quickly dispatched. The rest of the NWO comes out so Page bails through the crowd. Hogan and company get in the ring and call out the Stinger. The lights flicker and Sting shows up on the WCW sign at the entrance. He hops down and walks to the ring as we go off the air.

**Overall Rating:** B-. Pretty good show overall but I'm really dreading the move to three hours. They're already having trouble filling in three hours and that's what we're going to get all the time, PLUS two hours of Thunder every week? It's almost like that's way too much material for one company to produce. Good thing this happened before and no other company on top of the business would try something that stupid again right? Good show this week but it felt long.

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## Monday Nitro – November 24, 1997: We Need More Sick Boy

[Monday Nitro #115](#)

Date: November 24, 1997

Location: Wendler Arena, Saginaw, Michigan

Attendance: 5,879

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Bobby Heenan, Tony Schiavone, Larry Zbyszko

With World War 3 out of the way, we're down to five Nitros left before Starrcade. Scott Hall won the battle royal last night after there was yet another fake Sting sighting. That sets Hall up as #1 contender for Souled Out in January, which would be like winning the Rumble for a shot at Extreme Rules today. Anyway, all eyes are on Sting vs. Hogan now which means the drama is going to be cranking up. Let's get to it.

Here's the NWO to open things up. Bischoff does the usual gloating while smoking a cigar. Hogan brags about how awesome the team is and offers anyone interested a title shot tonight. This brings out Giant who accepts the challenge but JJ Dillon comes out and says Giant has to sign a waiver because of his bad hand. You know, because we need to bring in the legal department to make sure an interesting match is ok.

#### Tag Titles: Steiners vs. Disorderly Conduct

That would be Mean Mark and Tough Tom who jump the Steiners before the bell. This goes about as well as you would expect it to for them with the champions clearing the ring and throwing I think Tom to the floor after a belly to belly from Scott. Off to Rick who walks into a side slam from Mark and a forearm drop gets two. Rick easily shrugs it off and brings in Scott to clean house with forearms to the back and a belly to belly to Tom. Everything breaks down and it's the Steiner Bulldog (after about three tries by Scott to get the wide load up) to Mark for the retaining pin.

**Rating:** D+. Again, what did you expect here? Disorderly Conduct were your standard brawling jobber tag team who were there to make the Steiners look good. Granted that didn't really happen but at least the Steiners get to defend the titles for once. These would be the WCW Tag Titles mind

you and not the NWO ones that the Outsiders have at the moment.

Nitro Girls.

### Booker T vs. Meng

Meng powers him down to start but Booker speeds things up and hits a quick forearm. A backdrop puts Meng on the floor, which only ticks the monster off. The announcers ignore the match and talk about Giant vs. Hogan as Booker is backdropped down, only to spin back up. That lasts about a second as Meng catches the side kick in the air and slams Booker down for two. Meng goes to clubberin in the corner and pounds Booker down with a shot to the back. Booker dodges a charge and rolls through a powerbomb for a very fast pin. This would be an upset still at this point.

Post match Meng puts Booker in the Tongan Death Grip but Stevie Ray blasts the monster with a (wooden) chair. Barbarian comes out and it's a beatdown of Harlem Heat.

Nitro is the official spokesman for Alien Resurrection. Ok then.

We recap JJ Dillon trying to sign Raven.

JJ and Gene go up to Raven after delivering him an ultimatum last night. Apparently Raven signed earlier today but with some clauses, including that every match is under his rules and he only has to wrestle when and against whom he wants. Riggs is officially with Raven and the Flock now.

### Chris Benoit vs. Raven

Actually scratch that as Raven throws in Sick Boy to fight in his place.

## Chris Benoit vs. Sick Boy

Benoit is fine with beating up Sick Boy instead but gets caught by a springboard back elbow from Sick Boy. Benoit drops him over the top rope to take over but Diseased Man comes back with a missile dropkick and some choking. Benoit fires off some chops in the corner but stops to glare at Raven, allowing Sick Boy to take it to the floor. Now the newly debuted Lodi distracts Benoit and lets Sick Boy to get in some more shots to take over again. A springboard guillotine legdrop misses Benoit though and the Swan Dive connects, only to bring in the Flock. Benoit fights them off and the Crossface gets the submission on Sick Boy.

**Rating:** B-. I don't remember much about Sick Boy but this was a VERY impressive performance. He was flying all over the place and hitting some very crisp moves which had Benoit in trouble. Why didn't we ever get to see more of this guy? I don't think I ever remember a Sick Boy match and apparently that's kind of a shame.

Post match Benoit gets beaten down by the Flock and put in the Rings of Saturn.

We get a video from the NWO about Hall tormenting Zbyszko. Larry is ticked off about it and goes to the ring to call out Hall....again....as papers fall from the ceiling. They have a shot of Hall's foot on Larry's chest from I think Halloween Havoc. Good thing they had these ready in case Larry decided to storm the ring. Eric comes out and after babbling about how Hall is too busy to fight Larry, he talks about how he's beaten Larry twice now. A challenge is made for a third fight and Larry accepts, or at least it seems like he does.

## Prince Iaukea vs. Alex Wright

Can Iaukea just fall in a hole already? A quick headlock puts the Prince on the mat and it's time to dance again. Wright misses a charge into the corner and gets backdropped into a chinlock by the Prince. Alex fights up

but has to stop to argue with Debra. A shoulder puts Prince down and there's more arguing with the blonde. Debra gets up on the apron and gets her dress caught on the buckle so she can't get down. The distraction lets Iaukea hit a top rope cross body for the pin.

**Rating:** D. Nothing to see here as it was more of an angle than a match with the focus being on Debra. I'm pretty sure this would be it for her though as she would be in the WWF by January at the latest. Iaukea continues to be one of the most bland guys in the history of the company, yet he keeps winning matches like this.

Wright fires Debra post match.

Video on Sting vs. Hogan.

#### Disco Inferno vs. Randy Savage

Savage armdrags Disco down and Liz Disco up for good measure. They head to the floor and Liz shoves him into the post in the most physical move you'll ever see from her. Back in and Savage slams him down before ending Disco with a pair of elbows.

Post match Savage drops a third elbow but the referee breaks up a fourth. Savage lays out the referee and spray paints Disco. Now the fourth elbow hits.

#### Dean Malenko vs. Brad Armstrong

Malenko takes it into the corner to start before they head to the mat. Armstrong is one of the few people who can actually hang with Dean down there so he goes after Malenko's legs. That gets him nowhere so instead Brad suplexes him down for no cover. Armstrong pounds away some more for a quick two but Dean dropkicks him down and cranks on Brad's arms to take over.

The fans chant boring as this isn't your usual cruiserweight match with everyone flying all over the place. They trade some quick near falls off backslides and rollups until Brad slams him down for two. Back up and Dean sends him into the corner, only to charge into a boot. Being the wrestler that he is though, Dean pulls the leg down and locks on the Cloverleaf for the win.

**Rating:** C. Armstrong wasn't quite the same guy that he was back in the early 90s but he could still move pretty well out there. Also he's the kind of guy you can throw out there for a decent match and make Dean look good in the process. I mean, you can't just have Malenko vs. Guerrero and Mysterio every week without it getting boring.

Mongo brags about knocking out Goldberg when Debra comes up to try to rekindle their relationship. He thinks about it then yells at her to leave, thank goodness.

The Nitro Girls do their thing.

#### Buff Bagwell vs. Chris Jericho

In an amusing bit, Jericho fakes a heart attack ala Sanford and Son from his pyro going off. We get Buff's usual start to a match as he takes Jericho down with a pair of armdrags and poses a lot. Jericho comes right back with a spinwheel kick and a clothesline to send Buff out to the floor. A Canadian plancha takes Bagwell down again and Jericho sends him into the steps for good measure. Back in and the Lionsault gets two. Even back in the 90s that move was barely a finisher.

Buff sends him into the corner and pounds Jericho down before hitting a forearm off the ropes. A cover with a single knee and Buff posing gets two and Jericho is mad. Bagwell puts him right back down with a clothesline and it's off to a chinlock. After a quick argument with the referee allows Jericho to get a two count, Buff loads up the Blockbuster but gets crotched down. A top rope rana gets two for Jericho as does a



spinwheel kick, but he walks into a boot in the corner and the Blockbuster ends our Canadian hero.

**Rating:** C+. Not bad here as Jericho was really starting to come into his own in the ring. Bagwell was Bagwell, which is to say he was almost all character and next to nothing in the ring. The Blockbuster looked good but other than that, Buff's offense is almost all slow paced and basic, which doesn't make for an entertaining match.

#### US Title: Ray Traylor vs. Curt Hennig

As Hennig comes to the ring, we hear about Tenay making a documentary about the late Brian Pillman with the profits going to Pillman's family. Cool idea. Hennig immediately bails to the floor but Traylor goes to the floor for an uppercut. Back in and Traylor pounds away in the corner and a splash sends the champion to the floor. They go inside again where Ray misses a charge and Heenan sounds like he wants to join the NWO.

Hennig hooks a reverse chinlock but Traylor comes back and goes after Curt's knee. Curt slams his other leg into Ray's head to escape and it's back to the chinlock. Traylor powers out and rams Hennig's head into all three of the buckles in a corner to take over again. The reverse crotch on the post slows Hennig down again and there's the Boss Man Slam for two, because Hall was late running in for the DQ.

**Rating:** C-. Not bad but by this point it's obvious what's coming no matter how the match goes. That's a problem that WCW needed to address but they never found a way around it and the reactions eventually stopped happening at all. Also, Traylor's character is done now as there's no reason to buy him as a threat to anyone anymore.

The NWO beats and paints Traylor post match.

#### WCW World Title: The Giant vs. Hollywood Hogan

A Vincent distraction lets Hogan get in a few shots from behind as Rude and Bischoff take over the announcers' desk, complete with Eric slapping Tony across the face. Back to the match as Hogan clotheslines Giant to the floor and works on the broken hand for a bit. They head back inside for an elbow drop from Hogan but Giant shrugs it off and pounds at Hogan's ribs and head. There's a quick chokeslam but Giant hurts his hand in the process. Cue Sting, who is now about 7' tall with long brown hair, to blast Giant in the hand with the bat for the DQ.

**Rating:** D. This was more of the same from the US Title match: we were just waiting on the run-in to end the match which doesn't make for the most interesting five minutes in the world. Thankfully the announcers were NWO so we didn't have to listen to them thinking that was really Sting. Anyway nothing to see here, as usual.

The rest of the NWO comes in for a beatdown and here's Sting...who falls through the mat and is another mannequin. Nash and Hogan beat on him with the bat as the fans chant for Sting to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C. This wasn't bad. They furthered a lot of stories and we even had a good match in Sick Boy vs. Benoit. On top of that we're inching closer to Starrcade which means Bret should be here soon, along with the final push towards Hogan vs. Sting. The wrestling continues to be just ok at best for the most part and the constant DQ's are really getting old, but at least we're getting to the good drama part.

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# Monday Nitro – November 17, 1997: The Fighting Before The War

## Monday Nitro #114

Date: November 17, 1997

Location: The Crown, Cincinnati, Ohio

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Bobby Heenan, Tony Schiavone, Larry Zbyszko

It's finally time for World War 3 but we have one more Nitro to get through first. Last week was the first time Sting finally got beaten down but we have about five weeks before Starrcade so there's time to make people forget about it. Other than that there isn't much to look forward to this week other than Hennig vs. Luger which was set up last week. Let's get to it.

Here's the NWO to open the show and tick off the announcers. They're here en masse with pretty much every member other than Hogan in the ring. Hall does the survey as the fans chant for Sting. Oh and Syxx isn't there either so Hall gives him a shout out. Hall also calls out Zbyszko and gets in a good line by saying he and Nash were watching old tapes of Larry, but even when they put them on fast forward he still wasn't moving. Scott says Larry can't even beat Bischoff and Larry says if Hall is scared just say so and he'll drop it.

Nash holds up the NWO tag belts and says he and Hall are champions because the Steiners never beat them. As for Giant, he can call himself the true giant of pro wrestling because Nash is just too sweet. Eric brings out the big surprise of the night: Hollywood Hogan, who brings out Rick Rude as the real surprise.

This is considered a big deal because Rude also appeared on Raw earlier in the night in a taped segment. This is considered to be a big deal for

Nitro, but I've never understood why. Yeah Raw is taped. WCW had made that clear over the years, so why is this such a shocking moment? They had stolen far bigger names in the past and had them appear mere days later, so why is Rude such a big deal? I've never gotten that.

Rude says what a difference twenty four hours make. He talks about the wrongs of professional wrestling: for one thing, Shawn is calling himself world champion when he never beat Bret Hart. It's wrong to have a referee ring the bell to rob Bret Hart of his title. On the other hand, it's right for Bret to abandon the Titanic and join the NWO. It's right for the NWO to beat up Sting, but it's wrong that Rude didn't get to participate in the beatdown. He'll partake in the next one though.

Hogan brags about being the man in pro wrestling. Apparently Spring has sprung and Sting has been stung. Hollywood talks about all of his brothers being in the NWO for life and that's that. I'm still waiting on the reasoning for Rude showing up here being such a huge deal.

Nitro Girls.

Ray Traylor says he'll fight any member of the NWO one on one. He goes on with how much he hates the NWO for awhile until he gets jumped and beaten down by said NWO. This goes on for awhile, Traylor gets the spray paint treatment and that's about it.

### Glacier vs. Meng

Glacier jumps Meng to start as we hear Larry talking about some Secret Service agent telling him how much the White House loves Nitro. A kick to Meng's head just makes him mad so he chokes Glacier down in the corner. After some clubberin, Meng misses a headbutt and a charge into the corner, allowing Glacier to fire off some kicks. Apparently Glacier wants to vary up his offense away from the kicks. His solution to this is to throw more kicks. A Jimmy Hart distraction lets Meng hook the Tongan Death Grip for the quick win.

Barbarian and Ernest Miller come in for the big four man brawl with Miller cleaning house, only to be taken down by Meng's Death Grip as well.

DDP doesn't want Bret to join the NWO.

#### Alex Wright vs. Steve McMichael

The never ending Debra vs. Mongo feud continues as she's with Alex here. Goldberg vs. Mongo is announced for Sunday. Mongo immediately throws him to the floor but is distracted by the screeching Debra, allowing Alex to take over. We head back inside for some dance time and a spinning kick to Mongo's gut for two. They go outside again for Alex to chop away and go back inside, only for Wright to miss a cross body. Mongo pounds away but gets distracted by Debra, causing him to shove the referee for the lame DQ.

McMichael punches Wright into the crowd for good measure.

More Nitro Girls.

#### Rey Mysterio vs. Chris Jericho

The bell rings and Tony immediately talks about a big Nitro in Atlanta in 1998. Jericho works on the arm to start before hooking a headlock instead. Rey flips him over into the ropes but is placed on the apron instead. A quick springboard dropkick puts Jericho down but Chris comes back with a slam for no cover. Jericho chops away in the corner and busts out a top rope gorilla press slam which is a new one even on Tenay.

Mysterio falls to the floor after no cover but Jericho follows him out and grabs Rey by the mask to send him back inside. A suplex puts Rey down for two and a double underhook backbreaker has Mysterio in even more trouble. Jericho gets two more off a regular backbreaker and a powerbomb

out of the corner keeps Rey in trouble. He gets the knees up to block the Lionsault though and slides to the apron for a sunset flip and a VERY near fall. Jericho unleashes the double powerbomb but as he tries for a third, Mysterio slides off his back and hits a springboard spinning hurricanrana into the West Coast Pop for the pin.

**Rating:** B-. This took time to get going but the last minute or so was very hot. Mysterio can fly with the best of them and Jericho was thinking out there by working over the back. That makes for a good match and this was no exception. Mysterio would get a Cruiserweight title shot at the PPV on Sunday.

Benoit says Bret would never go NWO.

The announcers talk about about Nitro so far and here's Bischoff to the announce desk. He slaps Larry to draw him into the obvious NWO beatdown.

Hour #2 begins.

#### Villano IV vs. Diamond Dallas Page

A quick rollup gets two for Page and he clotheslines IV while also shrugging off some interference from V. It worked so well the first time that V tries it again, but this time the evilness (Villano does mean villain after all) works and down goes Page for some stomping and choking. V chokes away using the ropes and while he's being yelled at (in English), IV comes in off the top to give IV another near fall. Page comes back with a clothesline to send IV to the floor where he dives on both brothers to take over again. Back in and it's the Pancake and Cutter for the pin. Short and better than expected.

V takes a Cutter of his own.

#### Cruiserweight Title: Eddie Guerrero vs. Dean Malenko

Dean is challenging and slaps away an offer of a handshake. Eddie clotheslines him down and hits a quick tilt-a-whirl backbreaker to take over. Malenko comes back with a shoulder block to send the champion to the floor but as they come back in, Eddie stomps Dean down to take over again. A dropkick to the chest and one to the back of the head keeps Dean in trouble and a suplex puts him down again.

Eddie pounds away in the corner and sends him into the buckle so he can choke away. Another suplex puts Dean down as Eddie isn't exactly lighting the world on fire with his offense here. Dean jumps to the apron as Rey is watching from the entrance. We take a break and come back with Eddie choking Dean on the ropes. Malenko hits a backdrop and stomps away in the corner. A leg lariat gets two for Dean but Eddie comes back with a dropkick to send Dean to the apron.

Back in and Dean almost botches his butterfly powerbomb and can't get the Cloverleaf. Eddie hooks the Gory Stretch but Dean counters into a sunset flip but Eddie counters into a rollup of his own for two. Eddie jumps into a wheelbarrow suplex but he reverses the Cloverleaf into a small package. Dean goes up top and gets superplexed down for no cover. Eddie goes up top now but Dean pulls him down with a release belly to back superplex. Both guys are down and they stay down for a ten count and a draw.

**Rating:** B-. This took awhile to get into but after Dean started his comeback it turned into Malenko vs. Guerrero as you know and love. Their awesome three way feud with Mysterio would continue up through Starrcade with the title changing around multiple times. Another good match here despite the slow start.

Lex Luger doesn't think Bret would join the NWO.

We see the Nitro Party winner from last week.

TV Title: Scotty Riggs vs. Perry Saturn

Saturn is defending and Larry is still banged up from the earlier attack. The champion immediately takes Riggs to the mat with a suplex but gets dropped by an elbow to the face. Perry bails to the floor for a breather (and a shot of a South Park sign, which is pretty surprising given that there were only seven episodes aired at this point) but Scotty goes after him.

This goes badly for the challenger as Saturn suplexes him out to the floor to take over. Back in and Saturn goes after the arm as Raven goes back into the crowd. A northern lights suplex gets two for Saturn but Scotty gets his feet up in the corner. Riggs lost his eye patch at some point.

A suplex and splash get two for Scotty as Heenan suggests Saturn poke Riggs in the good eye. Riggs loads up a superplex but instead punches Saturn down to the floor instead. There's a BIG dive off the top to take out the Flock other than Raven but Saturn crotches Riggs on the barricade to stop him again. Back in and Saturn hits a guillotine legdrop and the Rings of Saturn retain the title.

**Rating:** D+. Saturn looked solid but Riggs is just so boring. He has the most basic set of moves that I've seen for a mainstream wrestler in a very long time and he didn't give Saturn anything to work for here. The dive to take out the Flock was good but that's the only good spot I can ever remember in Riggs' entire career. Saturn tried but he needed something more than Riggs here.

The Steiners and DiBiase are attacked by the NWO while on the way to the ring. Even Hogan helps out here.

US Title: Curt Hennig vs. Lex Luger

Curt is defending and hides on the floor to start until Luger pulls him in by the hair. A backdrop puts Hennig down and Lex pounds away in the corner. Curt pokes him in the eye and hits the Hennig necksnap for two. A



hard chop in the corner wakes Luger up and he comes out with a clothesline to take over again. There's a vertical suplex for no cover but Luger kicks Curt in the ribs instead.

Hennig comes right back with a pair of running knee lifts as the crowd is very silent for this match. The champion hooks a sleeper which gets two arm drops, only for Lex to fight back with a belly to back suplex. He throws Curt over the top and out to the floor but as Luger goes after him, Curt throws him into the referee and blasts Luger with the belt. Back in and there's the HennigPlex but Nick Patrick calls for the bell.

**Rating:** C. Not bad here with these two having a decent chemistry together. The fans didn't react to a lot of the stuff though and I hope that's not because they were just expecting a run-in or a false finish. If so, that really doesn't bode well for the last few good months we have of Nitro before everything starts to fall apart.

Post match Giant makes the save for Luger.

### Giant vs. Scott Hall

Nash comes over to the commentary desk, sending Tenay and Heenan running away. Giant misses a big right hand but connects with a hard shove to put Hall down into the corner. Hall puts on a headlock but gets lifted into the air and placed on the top rope, followed by a polite tap on the jaw. Scott gets in some right hands but gets tossed into the corner with ease. Some chops put Hall down and a slam does the same.

Scott goes to the floor and after escaping a chokeslam bid, Hall slams Giant's hand into the steps. Back inside and Hall stomps away on the hand even more but Giant rises up while no selling the hand. A few headbutts put Scott down and there's a right hand from Giant. The chokeslam is loaded up but here comes the NWO for the save and the DQ.

**Rating:** C-. I liked the psychology Hall was using here but how good can a six minute match between these two on Nitro be when a minute of it is spent with Hall stomping on Giant's hand? This was just to trigger the big brawl to end the show to set up the battle royal on Sunday. Not bad here but the time hurt it.

A bunch of midcarders come out for a big brawl to end the show.

**Overall Rating:** C. This was a wrestling heavy show and an ok go home show. They focused a lot on the non-battle royal matches as I'm guessing the theory is the main event sells itself on name only. Not bad here with some decent action, but the signs are all starting to appear that things are going to get bad in a hurry.

Here's World War 3 if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2013/04/01/world-war-3-1997-totally-not-a-royal-rumble-rip-off/>

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## On This Day: Monday Nitro – April 1, 1996: Bobby Heenan's Swan Song

**Monday Nitro #30**

Date: April 1, 1996

Location: CSU Convocation Center, Cleveland, Ohio

Attendance: 7,000

Commentators: Bobby Heenan, Eric Bischoff, Steve McMichael

We're in the eighth month of Nitro and finally into the 30s of the shows. The company moves towards Slamboree which hasn't been mentioned yet but there's some stuff to get through first. This is kind of a dead period for a few weeks so there isn't much to say about this one. Let's get to it.

We open in the ring with Sting and Giant just about to start us off here. Well ok then.

#### Giant vs. Sting

This would be the main event of said Slamboree PPV. Giant swings but misses as we're told that this was supposed to be Sting/Giant (why?) vs. Harlem Heat but Jimmy paid off the actual team. Sting hammers away but can't get anywhere with him. Cross body just bounces off Giant which always looks cool. Sting manages to send him to the floor but Giant grabs him around the throat for a chokeslam from the apron. Sting manages to get a dropkick to send Giant flying to the floor. Luger runs in to help Sting and it's thrown out. Too short to rate.

Cue the theme song.

We see a clip from before the show with Jimmy paying off Harlem Heat to leave their tag title opportunity. Wait why would Giant be Sting's partner when Sting and Luger are champions?

Flair defends against Luger later.

### Nasty Boys vs. Road Warriors vs. Steiner Brothers

Rick vs. Knobbs to start us off in a rare (for this period and company) three way dance. Things quickly break down with Knobbs vs. Animal. I wish they were doing the version of this they were doing later in the history of the company where it would be three guys in the ring at once. Scott gets a pumphandle slam to Hawk for no cover. Hawk rams into the post shoulder first as this is kind of hard to follow.

Back in and the shoulder is fine. Hawk takes Scott down with a neckbreaker and a fist drop for two. Animal vs. Scott now and Animal is sent into Rick who drills him and gets two after being tagged. WOW that was a badly written sentence. Sags apparently tags in and the Nastys beat up Scott. They're tagging in and out insanely fast here. Hawk fights Sags on the floor and now has a choke on Rick in the ring. I have no idea how they keep jumping but they're not editing it or anything. It's that big a mess.

Knobs hammers away on Rick and we take a break. There's an explosion of pyro in front of a Nitro logo which probably scares half the crowd to death. Back with Rick vs. Animal. Now Sags just runs in when Animal tags Hawk. Ok so I'm not completely insane here. Knobs covers Hawk for two somehow. I've been watching this and I have no idea how we're getting from point A to point B.

Sags and Scott come in and make that Animal vs. Rick. I want this to end

very badly as it's getting very annoying. Now Knobs is in there. You're supposed to tag I think but it doesn't seem like they are. Knobs sends Rick HEAD FIRST into the post. That looked sick. Now Public Enemy comes out and hammers everyone. In the insanity Scott pins Knobs to win. What the heck ever man.

**Rating:** F. In a match you're supposed to be able to tell what's going on. This was like something out of ECW's worst nightmares. Terrible match and there was no way to tell what was going on as the rules kept being thrown out. Horrible match so of course it got about 15 minutes. Get on to ANYTHING else.

#### Hulk Hogan/Booty Man vs. Arn Anderson/Kevin Sullivan

Gee I wonder who wins here. After the entrances we take a break, complete with an ad for the Power Plant, set to what would become La Parka's music. Heenan says tonight is his last night on Nitro for some reason. Booty Man vs. Anderson to start us off. They head to the floor with Anderson ramming him into the railing. Hogan (I think debuting the long tights here) takes Anderson's head off with a clothesline. Scratch that as he had them at the PPV.

Off to Booty Man vs. Sullivan now as we're just waiting on the hot tag to Hogan here. Hogan finally comes in and gets ZERO reaction. Anderson takes him back to the corner as we continue to talk about Heenan leaving. I don't remember that at all but I doubt anything comes of it. Hogan gets a hot shot of all things and a double noggin knocker to make sure we're still in the Hogan comfort zone.

Back off to Booty Man with Woman SCREECHING for Anderson to come on. Come

on who? Uh I mean what. Yeah that's it. Booty Man hammers on Sullivan on the floor and then goes back in for a sunset flip on Arn for two as Sullivan saves. Woman claws at Booty's eyes (did I really just say that?) as we hear about how Woman wearing white is supposed to be bad.

Booty Man is sent to the floor again and we get into a standard heel formula with Booty Man playing Ricky Morton. And never mind as Hogan is tagged in rather fast. Still no reaction but the human sun is in there now. Liz, looking AWESOME in a leather skirt and thigh high boots, tries to help Anderson. Kimberly gives Hogan a show and it goes into Sullivan's eye to end this.

**Rating:** D. Another weak main event level tag match here with nothing going on for the most part. It's more Hogan vs. Horsemen/Dungeon to further prove that the NWO was desperately needing. I think the vast majority of people were just done with this feud but they kept it going anyway. Didn't like this one at all.

Booty Man goes back to get the shoe and gets beaten down a bit.

Gene comes in to talk to the winners and Booty Man says he has an idea. Why do I have a feeling it involves bags of cocaine? Apparently it's a gimmick match of some sort.

WCW World Title: Lex Luger vs. Ric Flair

No show on the 8<sup>th</sup> apparently. Debra McMichael is in the front row which would eventually lead to foreshadowing. Luger challenging Flair for the

world title just feels right. Flair struts a lot to start as you would expect. Luger overpowers him as you would also expect. Well at least they're doing things simply to start. Press slam sends Flair down. This is about the same opening of their matches they always had which is fine.

Flair gets in a shot and works Luger over in the corner. Luger fires away with clotheslines and Flair takes a break. Back in and it's a straight thumb to the eye to put Luger on defense again. Luger gets going again as this crowd is DEAD. They've been this way all night though so it's not just the match. Luger chases the girls off and Flair is able to get a knee in to take over for about the fourth time.

Bischoff uses the term stomping a mudhole which Austin certainly wasn't using yet. Heenan talks about taking some time off to relax which I think would set up him being the coach for the Horsemen at the Great American Bash. Figure Four goes on and Luger almost gets pinned in it. Luger gets up and a sunset flip gets two. Superplex to Flair and Luger growls at him. Powerslam hits and Woman pops up with a cup of coffee. Rack goes on but Liz has the referee. Coffee to Luger's eyes sets up a rollup (and feet on the ropes of course) for Flair to retain.

**Rating:** C-. This was there for the sake of having a main event. That's not so bad but at the same time it could have been more. These two could have a passable match in their sleep which is a good thing. At least it wasn't that bad, but it was there for the sake of being there which is never a good thing. Not awful though.

Heenan says goodbye to the announcers. He has one more thing to say. APRIL FOOL'S! That was awesome as I totally forgot it was April 1.

**Overall Rating:** D. I wasn't into this one at all. They were seemingly running around like crazy with no real idea of where they were going with this. It's not their worst show but it clearly wasn't one of their better ones. That week off probably helped them a lot as they needed time to recharge. Pretty clear they had no plan for Slamboree other than Lethal Lottery, which sucked. Weak show tonight.

Remember: no show for April 8. Next show will be the one dates April 15.

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