

Monday Night Raw – January 13, 1997: Maybe It's Good That No One Was Watching

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 13, 1997

Location: Knickerbocker Arena, Albany, New York

Attendance: 6,855

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Honky Tonk Man

We're six days away from the Rumble and the one clear thing is that a few people could win it. The main picks would be Austin or Hart but there are enough people that could possibly win to make it interesting. Other than that we've got Sid vs. Shawn II building up to Shawn's return home. Do you really not get who is leaving the PPV with the title? Let's get to it.

Shawn is in San Antonio before the Rumble on Sunday.

Jerry Lawler/Hunter Hearst Helmsley vs. Marc Mero/Goldust

Goldust is here to get revenge on HHH for hurting Marlena while Lawler and Mero are there to make it a tag match. Brawl to start and the regal team is knocked to the floor. Goldust and Lawler start things off but it's quickly off to Mero who sends Lawler into hiding. The fans chant BURGER KING which sounds good at the moment as I haven't had lunch yet. Lawler tries to get in a punch out with a former Golden Gloves champion, earning himself a right cross to take him down.

Things break down for a bit and Lawler gets punched some more, sending him to the outside. Off to HHH as more stalling ensues. We also hear about the upcoming matches on the show for the second time in about three minutes. Mero backdrops HHH down and brings in Goldie, sending Helmsley

running in fear. Back to Lawler who gets in a few punches before being knocked to the floor.

Mero comes back in and gets decked from behind by HHH. This match is having a hard time getting any kind of rhythm going at all. Mero gets worked over with really basic stuff from both guys, such as Lawler suplexing him down. Apparently next week the winner of the Rumble will face the loser of the WWF Title match. That's not a terrible idea. Mero tags in Goldust who causes HHH to run away again as this is getting really repetitive.

Lawler gets a foreign and likely invisible object as Mero goes to the floor. We take a break and come back with HHH charging into Mero's boot in the corner. A headscissors put HHH down and FINALLY we get Goldust vs. Helmsley. Goldie explodes on HHH, pounding away as hard and fast as he can with clotheslines and uppercuts. HHH gets caught in the ropes and Goldust pounds away until he gets disqualified.

Rating: F. This was AWFUL. I have no idea why they let this go nearly FIFTEEN FREAKING MINUETS but it had no business lasting longer than about two. There was no flow to it at all and it was just waiting until we got to the stupid ending. On top of that, Mero and Lawler had no reason to be in the match at all, other than keeping this from being the same one on one match we would see on Sunday with Goldust vs. HHH.

Shawn is in San Antonio and watches a promo from Sid in the Alamodome, saying that he's going to be a monster against Shawn on Sunday. Sid is going to make sure to humiliate Shawn in front of his friends and family. It's probably the most coherent and best Sid promo I've ever heard. We also get a recap of Sid attacking the Lotharios. Shawn says that he and the people of San Antonio are going to kick Sid in the teeth. He isn't defenseless like the Lotharios (nice show of respect there Shawn) and on Sunday, Sid is going to fall.

Here's Bret with something to say. Yesterday Austin attacked Hart on

Superstars and injured his ankle before the Rumble. Oh apparently Bret is going to sit in on commentary.

Shawn is STILL in San Antonio.

Rocky Maivia vs. British Bulldog

Bret praises Rocky as he comes to the ring. The guy has an eye for talent if nothing else. Rocky also might be having eyes for Sable but it doesn't seem to be for sure. Bret describes the WWF as a lawless land and says he'll take care of Austin if they wind up in the ring together. Feeling out process in the match with Rocky taking over via an armdrag. Honky asks Bret if he'd consider being Honky's protege but Bret laughs it off.

Bulldog gets sent to the floor and things stall a for a bit. Back in and it's time for more arm cranking as Owen comes out to ringside. Rocky gets sent to the outside as well just before Owen stares down Bret. We take a break as Bret takes off his sunglasses. Back with Davey pounding on Rocky as the Hart staredown continues.

We hit a chinlock on Rocky for a bit before Maivia fights back up with a cross body for two. The delayed vertical suplex puts Rocky down again and a legdrop gets two. Back to the chinlock due to a lack of anything better to do. Rocky fights back up and they collide to put both guys down again. Maivia fights back with a bunch of clotheslines including one that puts both guys on the floor. Cue Austin to take out the knee and Stun Bulldog for the countout. Bret couldn't make the save because Owen wouldn't let him get up.

Rating: C-. Better match than you would expect given the experience of Rocky at this point, but it was a cool sight to see Rocky hang in there as long as he did and even win the match. He was about to get booed harder than anyone would ever believe possible in this day and age, but at this point there wasn't much to him.

The Nation says they're united at the Rumble.

Undertaker vs. Crush

Crush is part of the Nation here so Taker goes into the aisle to fight them all at once. We head inside for the bell with Taker slamming Crush down and dropping a leg for no cover. Taker loads up Old School but Faarooq crotches him to give Crush control for a good three seconds. Taker sends him to the floor but gets guillotined as Crush comes back in. We continue the punch off until Crush hits a piledriver to put Taker on the floor.

Taker gets rammed into the steps and punched even more before we head back inside. Vader is standing at the entrance to the arena as we take a break. Back with Crush choking away and getting two off a clothesline. Back to the chinlock as this match continues to be slow. Taker hits a clothesline of his own but gets taken down by a belly to belly suplex. Crush loads up his Heart Punch (exactly what it sounds like) but gets caught in a chokeslam. Faarooq and Vader run in for the DQ before a cover can happen though.

Rating: D. Nothing to see here which is a running theme tonight. Crush was there as a warm body and little more, which would be the case until he was thrown out of the Nation, which led to him being a warm body in the DOA. Taker would continue to flail around for a few weeks until he wound up winning the world title at Wrestlemania because why not.

Vader and Faarooq beat down Taker until Ahmed Johnson comes out for the save, only to get beaten down as well to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. This really didn't work for me. The opening match was terrible, the middle match was just ok, and the last match was bad. Sid vs. Shawn is set up pretty well, but rather than Austin vs. Hart, the real battle of the Rumble, was made secondary to the Harts feuding, which wasn't even a thing for Sunday. Just an odd episode all around that

didn't make me want to see Sunday's show.

Here's the Rumble if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/17/royal-rumble-count-up-1997-bret-hart-uh-make-that-austin/>

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How I Would Book Lesnar Vs. Cena

I know I say I hate this, but for once I got an idea in my head and I liked what I saw. This isn't a fully fleshed out idea, but it's more for the Cena promo that I would have loved to hear him say tonight. The answer, as most answers are, is found in a Rocky movie. Before I start this, I know full well this would never work on WWE TV, I know it has holes in it, I know it isn't going to happen. I get that.

Now the crux of this is based on the Brock interview that they've aired for the last two weeks. The idea here is that Brock has dominated everything (not named professional football) that he's ever competed in. Everything from amateur wrestling to pro wrestling to the UFC, he's gone to the top of it with no one being able to stand in his path. Lesnar is a finely tuned athletic killing machine that has never been stopped no matter what he attempts.

On the other side you have John Cena, who played college football and is the top man in the WWE and has been for about

the last 7 years. He started very slowly and worked his way to the top. The idea is that Cena works his way through every problem he faces and even when he fails, he never gives in and never quits. He spent years and years perfecting his craft, unlike Lesnar who has basically come in and within a month or two is the top dog everywhere.

This presents a very strong dichotomy between the two and gives you an angle to play off of. This is where Rocky V comes in. For those of you that haven't seen it, the end of the movie is a confrontation between Rocky and Tommy Gunn. Rocky is a street fighter who had no high class training and was very raw for the most part of his career. Gunn was trained well and became a polished fighter. Now at the beginning of the movie, Rocky has been told that he can never step foot into a boxing ring again due to fear of head trauma. This is where the connection kicks in.

By the end of the movie the two are about to fight each other but Gunn's manager says that Tommy only fights in the ring. Rocky says "my ring's outside." Now THIS is where the WWE should pick up on things. The idea is that Lesnar has dominated everything he's done, but everything he's done has had rules. Even in the UFC, everything is regulated and under control at all times. Play up Cena's background as more of a street brawler (if you flash WAY back in his career it's there) and how he's not a polished killing machine like Lesnar, but at Extreme Rules, Lesnar doesn't have anything under control. It's on Cena's terms, not Brock's. It's a street fight, not a match with rounds and rules and on Sunday, anything goes.

To cap it off, picture Cena saying something like this: "And Brock, this Sunday in Chicago, if you think the beatings you took in the UFC were bad, you just wait. There ain't gonna be a referee to pull me off you like when you guys like Cain Velazquez and Allastair Overeem beating your face into a cage. That's what happens when you lose control: you get

beaten up Brock. I'm not stopping until the job's done and I'm the one left standing. See you on Sunday."

Thoughts?