

Monday Nitro – February 28, 2000: The Will To Fight Is Gone

Monday Nitro #229

Date: February 28, 2000

Location: Target Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Attendance: 4,638

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Mark Madden

The big story coming out of Thunder is that the old guys are actually starting to mix it up with the younger guys in the form of Dustin Rhodes vs. Terry Funk and Vampiro vs. Ric Flair. I fully expect WCW to screw this up as only they can, but it's nice to dream for a little while. I'm sure Luger and Hogan will be here tonight to explain how things really work in wrestling. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the last week, with Kevin Nash thinking he's Commissioner Gordon (yes of Batman) and Luger/Flair taking over the shows by beating up Hogan and anyone else who get in their way.

Sid arrived earlier today. Yes, he actually CAME TO WORK. Tonight he defends against Tank Abbott. Oh how this company continues to fail. Can't we get some Greg Valentine title shots again?

Jarrett doesn't care if Abbott wins because he has a guaranteed title shot. At least they're wearing NWO gear now and Jeff has his US Title. They must be listening to me.

Opening sequence.

Tag Team Titles: Mamalukes vs. 2XS

The Italians are defending and the challengers tell Miss Hancock to stay in the back because she's messing up their rat chasing. Lane and Idol start things fast but here's Hancock for commentary as the champions take over. A kick to the head and neckbreaker drop Lane. Disco: "Why are you

being so nice to her?" Madden: "SHUT UP DISCO!!!" The camera is smart enough to stay on Hancock instead of the match which sees both guys on the mat.

Idol comes in and cleans house as everything breaks down. Hancock gets on the table to dance (and keeps having to pull her skirt, if you can even call it that, down). Everyone but Vito (down) is distracted, allowing Vito to get up and plant Idol with the DDT for the pin. Tony: "Finally something happens in the match." The match was short and we missed way too much of it looking at Hancock, making this one of the more entertaining matches in a long time.

Vito wants more dancing and Hancock is happy to oblige, only to have the Harris Twins come in to clean house. Thankfully it doesn't seem that Hancock is with the Twins. They want a title shot.

We run down the card.

The KidCam sees Bagwell hitting on Liz. This is totally and completely different than GTV. This was also taped earlier as Luger, Liz and Flair are watching. Ric wants to take Bagwell out for this.

Bigelow picks Sid to beat Abbott tonight.

The Nitro Girls are at Ohio State as we're getting ready for Spring Breakout.

Hogan, with his weightlifting belt back, wants a Yappapai strap match with Flair at Uncensored. You can hear the fans boo when he calls himself the greatest of all time.

Here are Flair (with another weightlifting belt), Luger and Liz with something to say. Flair yells about Hogan like the good old days when he was a psycho. Luger calls Sting a no-show (true actually) and says tonight the Stuff gets snuffed. Lex keeps going by ripping down Minnesota so here's Curt Hennig of all people to challenge Flair to a match tonight. I haven't heard Hennig this fired up in years. Flair says it's on and Hennig promises to streak down the streets of Minneapolis if he loses.

Booker blames the tag team loss on Thunder on Kidman being on the floor with Torrie.

Torrie and Kidman want the KidCam back.

Nitro Girls.

Madden talks while Tony is on the phone. The results of the call: Sting will be here tonight. They needed a call to confirm that?

Jarrett promises to win the title at Uncensored and doesn't know who Vampiro is. For some reason he specifies that it's Uncensored 2000, as opposed to Uncensored 45.

Booker vs. Kidman

Imagine that: taking two young, talented people and having them fight each other in a meaningless match instead of building them up. Booker elbows him down for two but gets caught in a victory roll for the same. The ax kick plants Booker but here come the Harris Twins for the DQ.

Both guys take H Bombs and Torrie gets knocked off the apron.

Gene calls Cassius the mystery man. I know he isn't a dirty old man now but I'd prefer that over stupid. Harlem Heat thinks you should have someone watching your back.

Lash Leroux thinks Sid wins tonight.

Here's a clip of a guy with 28 inch arms at the Arnold Classic. Good for him.

Norman Smiley is going to beat up Dustin Rhodes for Dustin hurting Terry Funk. Anything new for Norman is an upgrade.

Hardcore Title: 3 Count vs. Brian Knobbs

Knobbs is defending after Finlay beat 3 Count on Wednesday. Brian fights all three of them off using the cast and everyone uses weapons. There's a Pit Stop for Shannon and Knobbs throws him out to the floor. Tony mentions that this is a Night of Champions. Thanks for telling us that

nearly halfway through the show. Moore gets powerbombed through a table but a trashcan lid shot and a dog pile is enough to pin Knobbs and give us a triple champion.

Vampiro wants to show Jeff Jarrett some pain tonight.

Knobbs wants a rematch. Finlay thinks it's time to make 3 Count's lives miserable, starting with a six man tag on Thunder with a surprise partner. It's time to bring out the dog. Oh dear.

Norman Smiley vs. Dustin Rhodes

Dustin comes out to an instrumental version of his old "Well they call him the natural" theme. Norman is wearing full football pads and puts on a bearhug of all things to start. A cross body puts Dustin down but for some reason doesn't cause him any major pain. Some dancing sends Dustin to the floor before the swinging slam sets up the Big Wiggle. Dustin will have none of this fun and the beating is on. He drops Norman chest first onto the barricade, which should have no effect due to the pads but WCW in 2000 is stupid enough to defy science. Back in and a top rope clothesline is enough to give Dustin the pin.

Nick Patrick picks Tank Abbott. I'll give them this: at least they're trying to make this feel important.

US Title: Vampiro vs. Jeff Jarrett

Jeff is defending and has a bunch of women with him but quickly sends them to the back. Before we get to the match, we get a quick recap of Jeff guitaring everyone, which now cost him \$10,000 apiece. They start fast with headlocks into headscissors but Vampiro starts firing off the kicks. That goes nowhere so they head outside with Jarrett dropping him on the barricade to take over.

Back inside and it's Jarrett in control but Vampiro catches himself off a monkey flip. That earns him a clothesline as this has been almost all Jarrett so far. A quick Rock Bottom gets two for Vampiro and some small packages get the same, but here are the Twins for a distraction. Sid comes out to chase them off but the referee doesn't see the cover off

Vampiro's Nail in the Coffin. Jarrett hits a quick belt shot for two (with the bell ringing anyway), avoids the guillotine legdrop, and hits a quick Stroke to retain.

Rating: D+. Notice the difference between this and Flair vs. Vampiro on Thunder: here Vampiro got in almost nothing until a bunch of interference screwed Jarrett up. On top of that, Jarrett pinned him clean. That's not a good way to make Vampiro look good, but this was about setting up Sid vs. Jarrett instead of doing anything for anyone else.

The Mamalukes pay a guy to give the Harris Twins a package.

Ricki Rachman, an annoying tattooed guy who does promotional stuff, talks to Disco Inferno about 3 Count while sitting at a restaurant at Ohio State. Seriously.

Fit Finlay attacked Vampiro during the break. Why you ask? Not answered, just like when he did it on Wednesday.

David Flair dances with the Nitro Girls but Daffney catches him. I'd make a "well maybe he didn't think she was watching like everyone else" but it was too easy. Everything is cool after a few seconds.

Cruiserweight Title: The Artist Formerly Known As Prince Iaukea vs. David Flair

David is challenging and Crowbar is on commentary. Prince licks his own finger and points at David so David points back at him. Crowbar does an actually funny Gordon Solie imitation, getting in every catchphrase he can. Prince takes him down with some right hands but Crowbar shoves him off the ropes. David covers for two but the girls get in a fight, allowing Prince to hit his middle rope DDT to retain.

Sid has been attacked and a guitar is seen nearby.

The NWO leaves but the guy from earlier delivers the package to the Twins. It's a dead fish. Eh I've seen worse.

Sid has been banned from strenuous physical activity. Well Sid hasn't been strenuous in the ring for years so that should be fine. Sid comes up

and says he's fighting tonight, even though he's dizzy.

The Cat vs. The Maestro

Cat insults some fat fans before Maestro comes out. Symphony carries out a boom box with the music Stro has to listen to as part of the bet. The boom box plays what sounds like 3 Count, Maestro freaks out and hits Cat with the boom box and gets the pin.

Liz and Luger have lost the bat.

Kidman picks Tank Abbott.

Ric Flair vs. Curt Hennig

Hennig slugs away in the corner to start and nails a backdrop, followed by some chops in the corner. Flair gets slammed off the top as this has literally been all Hennig so far. We get a ref bump because wrestling has gotten too complicated around here. The PerfectPlex has Flair in trouble but Luger comes in for the save. A low blow gives Ric the pin.

Rating: D+. This is a hard pairing to screw up but they came close with less than four minutes, a ref bump and interference. Either give them more time and cut out stuff like Cat vs. Maestro or....actually just cut that match and give this match the time. There's no real reason to not be able to give more than one match seven minutes or so, but they're cramming so much stuff in here and it's screwing up the rest of the card.

Meng, who can suddenly speak English, can't decide who wins the main event.

More stuff from Ohio State.

Total Package vs. Buff Bagwell

Again. These two have fought more than maybe any other pair in Nitro history. So is Buff officially a face, even when he's trying to steal someone's woman? Some quick dropkicks have Luger in early trouble but they head outside with Luger choking away on the table. We hit a reverse chinlock back inside and Buff slaps the mat but the referee doesn't care.

How stupid does Bagwell have to be to not even blink when Bagwell taps the mat while in a submission? Bagwell gets his knees up to crotch Luger and makes his comeback, including a Vader Bomb for two. Buff goes after Liz but Flair comes in for the DQ.

Rating: D. I'm sick of these two fighting, even when you set something up earlier in the night. The fact that it's there to set up another Luger match because he's still getting pushed for whatever reason doesn't help either. Flair is the highlight of this team though and at least he's willing to help build up some stars.

They load up the Pillmanizing but Sting returns for the save. Returns after being gone for a week that is.

WCW World Title: Sid Vicious vs. Tank Abbott

Tank is challenging and comes in on a motorcycle. Sid is wobbly with glazed over eyes. I'm going to assume he's fine. His taped up ribs seem a bit more serious. Tank grabs a front facelock and shouts GO TO SLEEP. That goes nowhere so Tank punches him in the ribs, amazingly showing some psychology. We hit a reverse chinlock before a bunch of body punches put Sid down again. Back up and Sid grabs a sleeper which he turns into the Crossface to make Tank tap.

Rating: D. Well, they tried some psychology but it wound up being a bunch of punching and chinlocks until Sid grabbed a hold to retain. This could have been far worse, but I could have gone for them sacrificing Tank to someone who needs the win instead of the World Champion. At least it was short and made sense though.

Overall Rating: D. The shows have had a bit more energy in recent weeks, but that might just be due to me giving up on fighting. It is however nice to see the younger guys at least being moved up the card, though unfortunately they haven't actually won anything yet. This week was better, but they need to keep pushing forward and get away from these horrible main events already.

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SuperBrawl 2000: A Failure Of Existence

SuperBrawl 2000

Date: February 20, 2000

Location: Cow Palace, San Francisco, California

Attendance: 8,569

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Mark Madden, Mike Tenay

Well the TV shows have been some of the least interesting things I've ever had to sit through, so maybe the pay per view will be the complete opposite and be entertaining. I mean, stranger things have happened right? The main events tonight are Sid Vicious defending the World Title against Jeff Jarrett and Scott Hall in a three way, plus Hogan vs. Luger and Funk vs. Flair because they haven't replaced the Radicalz, but these old guys are still going to be fighting each other no matter who else is on the card. Let's get to it.

The opening video starts by focusing on Funk vs. Flair. The start of Funk's promo overlaps the opening narration as they can't even get something simple like "wait five more seconds" right. Sid defending the World Title is billed third here.

We open with, of course, a promo. Jarrett and the Twins leave the

Commissioner's office along with the girls, much to Gene's shock. Much to my shock too as the Twins were banned from the building. Jarrett says he's in charge due to hitting Nash with the guitar on Thunder. His first ruling: the Twins are allowed at ringside.

The announcers run down the card to fill in even more time, including the "Special Main Event Match" with The Demon vs. The Wall.

We recap the Cruiserweight Title tournament, including the matches between people not even in the finals. This gets us to over ten minutes of filler before the first match starts.

Cruiserweight Title: The Artist Formerly Known As Prince Iaukea vs. Lash Leroux

The title is vacant coming in and Artist has Paisley with him. Lash spansks Paisley and gets punched in the face. Some southern gentleman. Prince hammers away at the shoulder (allegedly head) in the corner but gets shoved down onto a very loud ring. Lash's version of Flip Flop and Fly is broken up by a superkick to the face, only to get sent to the floor for a dive from the southern non-gentleman. Back in and Prince doesn't seem to mind being crushed by a dive as he ties Lash up in the Tree of Woe for a running knee. Oh yeah Kevin Sullivan is in charge.

Lash tries a sunset flip but Iaukea grabs Charles Robinson's crotch to stay on his feet before licking his own finger and pressing it to Lash's head. The Artist keeps yelling at the referee (to be fair Robinson didn't seem to like having his crotch grabbed) and Paisley gets on the apron for no apparent reason other than to give us a bright purple bodysuit as a distraction. Lash slugs away but the Paisley distraction lets Prince hit the middle rope DDT for the pin and the title.

Rating: D. This was a Thunder match with a lame ending that did nothing to get the fans into the show. These two are the least interesting guys in the entire tournament (yes, less interesting than Kaz Hayashi) and they wind up in the finals. A member of 3 Count should have won this and then feuded with some other cruiserweight to build that person up as the new big deal. Instead it goes to Iaukea, who isn't over and hasn't been over in about three years since he beat Regal for the TV Title. Calling

him over back then is a stretch but it's as close as he ever got otherwise.

Norman Smiley has his ribs taped up after being chokeslammed through a table on Thunder.

Brian Knobbs yells about never giving up.

There's a private room that no one is allowed inside. If no one is allowed inside, why bother looking at it? In theory wouldn't that mean no one is inside in the first place?

Hardcore Title: Bam Bam Bigelow vs. Brian Knobbs

Brian is challenging so naturally he lost on TV this week. He also has a broken arm thanks to Luger. The brawl starts early and here's Fit Finlay, who has been feuding with Knobbs in recent weeks but of course starts helping him here. Madden: "The title moves around a lot." Bigelow is the third champion in about four months. That's not moving around that fast. The World Title has changed hands seven times in January. If the Hardcore Title moves around a lot, the World Title took third in the 100m at the 1984 Olympics.

Knobbs and Bigelow fight into the back as Tenay says no one holds the belt that long. The first reign was a month and a half and the second was about a month. Would a little research kill these people? Bigelow throws him into a table of stuff but Finlay blasts the champ in the back of the head. Finlay is too talented to be involved here though and Knobbs says he wants to do this himself.

They head back to the ring where it's table time, which leads to an interesting, semi-fourth wall breaking discussion of why there are so many tables under the ring. Knobbs sends himself through the table by mistake, setting up the Greetings From Asbury Park. Bigelow goes up top instead of covering and gets hit with with cast, knocking him out to the floor to give Brian the pin and the title.

Rating: F. It was boring, it didn't make sense, and above all else it was poorly researched. If there's one thing I want in my hardcore matches,

it's a heavily detailed bibliography with footnotes and references, along with a recommendation of other hardcore matches worth watching for further education. Is that too much to ask?

Flair and Luger are ready.

Sid and Hall's dressing rooms are guarded.

3 Count vs. Norman Smiley

No singing tonight because it's time to fight. No shoulder pads for Norman tonight either. Norman's ribs are injured thanks to Wall chokeslamming him through a table. Tony: "Let's take a look at the angle that lead to his injury." Smiley cleans house to start and backdrops Shannon so hard over the top that he clears the other band members.

3 Count takes over without going after the ribs, though in their defense the ribs are covered by a 49ers jersey. The ribs are fine enough for a giant swing to Helms but Shannon breaks up the Big Wiggle. Shane and Shannon stop to dance, allowing Norman to wiggle instead. The band finally finds the bad ribs and stomps Norman down in the corner, setting up a pair of top rope splashes and a Boston crab to make Smiley give up.

Rating: D. So you give Norman a 3-1 disadvantage and an injury and then have him lose. Points for being logical, points taken away for killing the crowd by having the fan favorite lose. I like that they're pushing 3 Count, but if they think this is going to get the fans to care about them, they're even more lost than I thought.

Jarrett wants the Harris Brothers to find out who is in the locked room.

The Demon vs. The Wall

This is the MAIN EVENT MATCH, which is WCW's way of fulfilling their contract with Kiss without wasting a main event on Demon. There's no Wall because he realized how stupid this whole thing is. Demon goes to find him and gets jumped from behind, triggering another brawl.

Wall takes it inside and chokes with his boot as this is looking like a squash to start. Demon comes back with a clothesline and stomps away

before mixing it up by punching in the corner. Back up and Wall drops him ribs first onto the ropes, only to get slammed off the top. The fans are already jeering this match so thankfully Wall chokeslams him off the top for the pin.

Rating: F. On pay per view mind you. This actually happened on pay per view. But it was a MAIN EVENT MATCH so everything is fine right? Demon was a character that was dead in the water before he started but at least they seem to be trying with Wall. I'd be stunned if he isn't just being built up as cannon fodder for someone else but he's getting a push for now.

Ernest Miller promises that James Brown is here. Apparently Beethoven stole his stuff from Little Richard, who stole it from James Brown. The things you learn around here.

The Twins can't get into the room.

We recap Tank Abbott vs. Big Al, because this needs a story. Actually it does, as I have no idea why they're fighting. Al is Tank's former bodyguard from the UFC, so they're having a leather jacket on a pole match.

Tank Abbott vs. Big Al

Al is in jeans and a biker vest. He takes off his belt and they tie their hands together, which means Tank is going to have to.....oh dear goodness he's going to have to wrestle. Or just throw left hands and swear a lot. Al hits him with a forearm that breaks the belt and seems to knock Tank out cold. Then he takes forever to wrap Tank's legs around the post but stops, says that's too good for him, and gets back inside. Back in and Al stands on his face, making sure to lean against the ropes.

Tank slugs him down and then throws Al onto his shoulders. For some reason he climbs all the way to the top, where he drops Al down, sending him feet first into the steps and head second onto the floor. By the way, to Bill Watts, THAT'S WHY YOU HAVE MATS OUT THERE (I read his book recently and he still thinks the biggest danger is a sprained ankle if you step on the edge). With Al somewhere between unconscious and dead,

Tank goes out and hits him once in the chest before going up for the jacket and the win.

Rating: Spencer Tracy in Father of the Bride. That's as logical of a rating as I can give you after this. We had Al, who just appeared but has never wrestled before and I don't believe will after this match, against Tank Abbott, who also isn't a wrestler (at least by my definition), in a match about a leather jacket. Throw in the likely brain trauma for Al and this is one of the biggest calamities I've ever seen.

And now, for the infamous part. Abbott finds a knife in one of the jacket pockets and holds it over the unconscious Al's throat, where he says he could kill Al right now. Tony suggests that they were scissors and that Abbott was going to cut Al's beard. That line has been mocked a lot over the years, but I'll actually give Tony credit for thinking it up that fast. Have you got a better idea for what he should be saying there? Now that being said, it would have been a lot better if Al actually had a beard.

We recap the battle of Harlem Heat. Stevie Ray claimed that Booker had forgotten where he came from and has since given Booker's spot on the team to Big T. This of course includes the rights to the letter T. Booker was also arrested on attempted murder charges because he hit an atomic drop on J. Biggs. That's a bit harsh. I mean, maybe he was just trying to cut off Biggs' beard.

Booker tries to keep it simple by saying he'll teach Big T. a lesson tonight. The T isn't mentioned.

Booker vs. Big T.

For the rights to Harlem Heat. Oh and Booker has Leave It To Beaver music because he's lost the rights to the Harlem Heat song. Stevie has promised that someone is coming back from Booker's past to cost him the match tonight. That pretty much leaves Sherri Martel and Midnight unless it's someone new. T. pounds on not-T to start but Booker comes back with a weak Angle Slam and a suplex.

Stevie grabs Booker's foot (sounds like a hostile takeover of the B on

Booker's boot) so T. can knock Booker to the floor. Back in and Booker hits his kicks before knocking Biggs off the apron. There's the Book End and missile dropkick but the lights go out. Thank goodness the referee counted so slowly. The bell tolls midnight and the lights come up with a large man (maybe 4x4 from the No Limit Soldiers) to distract Booker, setting up the Pearl River Plunge to pin Booker. I guess it was too much to ask the guy to actually do anything but stand there.

Rating: D-. Now, NEVER LET THEM FIGHT AGAIN. Big T. is worthless at this point and adding someone even bigger doesn't make the team mean anything more. Booker is stuck in this stupid story because the idea of moving him up the card is a sin of some sort. I'm sure we'll get another match though as Booker will find someone to team with him next time.

The Maestro is sick of hearing about James Brown and has a bet in mind: if Brown isn't here, Miller has to be Maestro's servant. If Brown is here, Maestro will listen to any music Miller picks exclusively. Keep in mind that this whole bet has been set up on the night of the show with about 100 minutes of air time left. This falls under the theory that if you have a good looking woman in the background (Symphony here), the scene is much easier to sit through.

The Twins beat up a backstage worker who can't unlock the door. I know they're not known for being too bright, but is it that complicated to have two 6'6 300lb monsters kick in a wooden door?

We get a WAY too long recap of Kidman vs. Vampiro, who had two good TV matches and then Vampiro walked out on him in a tag match. Tonight is the tiebreaker and the Wall is also involved in some way, though he isn't appearing in this match. Therefore, I'm sure you get why he's featured in the recap video. The video goes on for nearly two minutes, which might set a record for the longest recap of a midcard match ever.

Vampiro vs. Kidman

The announcers spend the entrances talking about how Kidman has moved up from the Cruiserweight division, which is a nice sentiment but I'm not sure how accurate it really is given that he's fighting Vampiro in a midcard match. Feeling out process to start with Kidman grabbing a

headlock (a non-cruiserweight headlock of course) but Vampiro punches him in the head, allowing Kidman to hurricanrana him out to the floor.

Back in and Vampiro scores with a dropkick as the fans are eerily silent. A quick shot of Torrie helps a bit and Kidman counters a powerbomb (duh), only to have his knee dropkicked out from under him. Torrie gets knocked off the apron so Kidman snaps Vampiro's neck across the top to go check on her. Madden does his best Jerry Lawler impression but it comes off as far more creepy stalker than loveable dirty old man like Lawler. Vampiro slams Kidman in and gets two off a snap suplex.

A Fameasser (called the Dropper according to Tenay) gets two more as Madden makes up a bit for being creepy by saying this could be a US Title match in a year and a World Title match in two years. Kidman's top rope hurricanrana (which he used to win the first match) gets two but Vampiro blows my mind by doing the unthinkable: he powerbombs Kidman.....TWICE!!! Since the announcers don't get one of Kidman's biggest deal, they treat this as nothing special.

In a very quick ending, Kidman goes up top for a sunset bomb but turns around into a kind of super reverse DDT for the pin. It looked really awkward and Vampiro is slow to get up. It's not quite Big Al being dropped onto the concrete from above the top rope, but that was a totally non-cruiserweight pulling Vampiro down in a reverse DDT. That has to hurt.

Rating: C-. Pretty uninspired stuff here but at least they only took seven matches to get something to go six minutes. This was treated like a big feud but it never came off as anything more than taking two guys with talent and throwing them together because the company had nothing better to do with them. Somehow I'm sure they'll be blamed for the crowd not caring after an hour of really dull stuff.

Funk promises to win the death match with Dustin Rhodes in his corner.

Sid tells security to get away from his door.

David Flair, Daffney and Crowbar have fun with the stretcher.

We recap the Tag Team Title match, which is over Vito's sister's wedding being broken up by the crazy people. Therefore, tonight is an Italian stretcher match for the Mamalukes' titles in the third match between these teams.

The Mamalukes don't accept their family being hurt by anyone. It's so bad that Johnny doesn't want a cheese sandwich.

Tag Team Titles: Crowbar/David Flair vs. Mamalukes

Mamalukes are defending and this is suddenly a Sicilian stretcher match. Both members of a team have to be taken up the aisle on stretchers to end this. The brawl starts on the floor, as you would expect, with Disco getting in on commentary as you would also expect. Naturally we look at him as Tony says this is a shoot to him. This is one place where I would prefer WWE's current way too tough commentary restrictions. If any of those words were spoken on Raw, Vince would probably come out and beat Cole senseless live on TV.

The champions run down the crazy guys with a stretcher, which Daffney finds hilarious. They head inside instead of trying to take them the other way on the stretcher because this company's wrestlers aren't that bright. Daffney comes in for a hurricanrana on Johnny, which seems to just annoy him. A lead pipe to the back (so lead that it bends as it hits Johnny) puts Johnny down again and the champs are in trouble. The fans are trying to get into this but it's really not lasting. My hearing isn't lasting either after Daffney screeches into the camera.

Crowbar hits a Lionsault onto Vito and it's time to break up the stretcher. Tony does his "I can't believe we're watching this" voice and Vito powerbombs Crowbar through the table. Apparently Disco has been poked in the eye and can't tell what is happening to who. Johnny jumps from the mat to the top rope ala Shelton Benjamin for a spinning legdrop (with an acceptable pause for balance).

David is taped onto the stretcher and the referees wheel it to the back because.....I don't care why because this is closer to being over. Crowbar dives onto both Mamalukes as the fans are just silent here. Daffney rings the bell to confuse things even more, which somehow takes two minutes for

the announcers to figure out. Vito splashes Crowbar through a table on the floor and puts he and Daffney (Madden: "The screams are usually a sign she's enjoying herself.") on the stretcher to finally end this.

Rating: D. There are multiple problems here, but the biggest problem is who was in the match. Flair and Crowbar are a freakshow team and the Mamalukes are just ok. That's the problem with them: they're just so average that there's nothing interesting to say about them. The other problem here is we've covered this already. The Mamalukes have beaten Flair and Crowbar three times now and there's nothing left to say with this feud. Unfortunately, who else is there for them to feud with? 3 Count? The Harris Twins? That's about as good as the division has at this point, which goes back to my request: HIRE NEW PEOPLE!

With the Mamalukes' music still playing, Jarrett and the Twins leave their locker room. This was a fifteen second segment and changed nothing.

Sid promises to prove that he's the World Champion because he deserves to be.

Here's Ernest Miller for the big talking segment, which for some reason is about ERNEST MILLER. He dances to the ring and rips on the fans for being rednecks who didn't believe he could get James Brown. "You didn't believe me and James Brown were like two neckbones in a pot!" After some more insults, here's a James Brown impersonator so bad that Rick Bognar is off somewhere shaking his head.

Cue the Maestro and Symphony because this is really happening on pay per view. Maestro sounds like he's trying to use an accent but can't decide what country it's supposed to be from. Miller isn't going to do anything Maestro says and there goes James' sunglasses, revealing that it's not the real one.

Cue a bunch of dancers, leading down the real James Brown with another entourage. The Maestro's reaction (jaw hanging open and then fainting) is awesome but this just keeps going to destroy any good feelings. Miller and Brown dance and I think this is a face turn. I know I want to cheer for someone who was calling the fans stupid rednecks when this started but hey, he brought out a singer to dance with him.

The announcers act like this is awesome as it just continues. Brown gives Miller his cape for a passing of the torch or whatever but they have to pose on the apron before this is finally done. Total time between Miller's music starting and cutting to ANYTHING else: 12:06, or longer than any match so far.

Hall talks about how he can go and the James Brown music is playing over his promo.

We recap Ric Flair vs. Terry Funk, which started with Funk saying he's a bigger legend and that Flair is jealous. David Flair got beaten up but Ric wouldn't help him, causing Arn Anderson to walk away from Ric. This is somehow a sequel to their famous feud in 1989 because there was no one young and talented for either guy to put over.

Flair says he's awesome and drops a lot of catchphrases.

If you buy this show, you get a teddy bear! I could use a teddy bear to hold and rock back and forth as I scream into the darkness if the rest of the show is as bad as the first two hours.

Ric Flair vs. Terry Funk

Death match, meaning last man standing but you have to get a fall before the ten count starts. Dustin Rhodes is sitting in a chair to cheer Funk on as the guys slug it out in the corner. Flair rolls outside and the stalling begins but Funk quickly suplexes him back inside. There's the spinning toehold but Flair punches his way out of it. They fight outside with Funk hitting another suplex as this is already in slow motion.

Ric is up first, only to take another suplex, drawing some very inappropriate language. He must have been watching that Tank Abbott mess earlier. Either way, the second suplex is good for a pin but Flair is up at five. To be fair it was just a suplex. Back up and Flair goes after the knees with some kicks and chair shots as Madden tries to play this off as a dramatic silence.

The Figure Four in the ring makes Funk give up quickly for a strategy play and is up before the count even gets close. Flair gets slammed off

the top and piledriven on the floor but Funk would rather take back the floor mats than cover. They slug it out again because a piledriver on the floor only keeps you down for about ten seconds these days. Another piledriver on the mats gets a pin but Flair is up at about seven.

It's table time but Funk has something to say first. He offers Ric the chance to quit and the response earns Flair a mic to the head. Normally that would be a heel move but I don't think they have any idea who is a face or heel here so it's acceptable. Funk puts Flair on the table as we cut to Dustin to remind us that he's here. A really good looking piledriver through the table in the ring knocks Ric silly for....two, as Terry pulls Ric up before the pin. Funk loads up another table and then covers (huh?) before hammering away at the head. Ric gets up and throws Funk through the table for the pin and the ten count to win.

Rating: C+. Good brawl here but the match was basically in slow motion throughout and the ending was lame. Dustin added nothing to this match and I still have no idea who I was supposed to cheer for. Also, Flair gets piledriven through a table and is on his feet less than two minutes later? Really? Still though, these two are going to have a good match through pure greatness and that's how they pulled this one off.

Hulk Hogan, straight out of 1994, says the arm is just the break he's been looking for. They had been teasing a Hulk/Hollywood hybrid coming into the show and there's no sign of it. Of course. Hulk is willing to snap and crackle Liz if necessary.

Hulk Hogan vs. Total Package

Hogan has a broken arm coming in. Buffer's entrance: "LET'S BRING EM ON!" Luger jumps him (Hogan, not Buffer) as he hits the ring but Hulk goes to the eyes, which is considered a Hollywood move. The rapid (work with me here) elbows (all two of them) set up some choking and Luger is thrown to the floor for the t-shirt rip. Hogan's back being to the camera for the big shirt rip clearly shows that he doesn't know how to work. Hogan slugs away on the floor but comes back inside to eat an elbow to the jaw. Oh yeah this is just going to be a punch and kick match.

Luger takes him back outside for some whips into the barricade but a cast

shot to the face staggers Package. Ten rams each into two buckles set up a big right hand as the fans aren't thrilled with Hogan's schtick. A Liz distraction lets Luger get in more forearms to the back but Hogan sends him into the barricade again. Hart steals a ball bat from Liz, a suplex is no sold, Luger hits him low, Hart and Hogan both use their casts and the legdrop finishes Lex.

Rating: D. Remember a little while ago when Flair and Funk took a pretty lame match and made it work through pure charisma? Well apparently that only works if you have both guys trying as Hogan was his normal self but Luger was just walking through this match and doing even less than usual. You can't even have Hulk no sell the steel forearm? The best we can get is a suplex? Worthless match but Hogan's formula worked so long for a reason.

Post match Flair comes in to go after Hogan's leg but Sting, with new makeup, returns for the big save. This segment could have easily taken place in 1995 and no one would have noticed the difference.

Hall comes out of his dressing room and sends the security away.

Sid does the same. These segments felt like the build to a commercial.

We recap the World Title match which is Sid defending against two guys feuding over the NWO shenanigans. That stable needs to die (again) already.

The door has been opened and apparently it wasn't Sting inside. Thankfully they say Sting came from elsewhere in the arena to close a loophole. Unfortunately they leave open the "there was a cameraman on the door so HOW DO WE NOT KNOW WHO WAS INSIDE" loophole.

WCW World Title: Sid Vicious vs. Scott Hall vs. Jeff Jarrett

Sid is defending and this is one fall to a finish with No DQ. Jarrett is introduced as a five time World Champion combined (what does that even mean?) but not the US Champion. That's awful even by WCW standards. Hall and Jarrett start fighting before Sid comes to the ring and we've got less than nine minutes to go in the show. Points to Buffer for still

doing Sid's entrance while Jarrett is running from Hall.

The champ gets double teamed as Hall and Jarrett's feud is dropped for fear of Sid. That goes nowhere as the Twins interfere to give Jeff control. Jarrett stomps on both guys and Hall doesn't even let him put on the sleeper before reversing it. The referee is decked maybe three minutes into this, which really shouldn't mean much given that this is No DQ.

A double chokeslam (with Jeff jumping before Sid even had time to think about moving his arm. I know Sid is Sid, but Jarrett is better than that) gets two from new referee Nick Patrick and Ron gives Jarrett the belt. Sid gets knocked out and Hall grabs some rollups for two each on Jeff, who knocks the second referee out. Sid throws Jeff into a chair, allowing a third referee to count two for Hall. Sid fights the Twins but Jeff pokes the referee in the eye and gives him a Stroke. Come on just get to the finish.

Jarrett beats up the fourth referee before he can do anything and here's crooked referee Slick Johnson. The Outsider's Edge plants Jeff but Johnson has a sudden shoulder injury. I'm counting that as a ref bump. The guitar lays out Jarrett and here's....oh sweet goodness Roddy Piper is here in a referee's shirt. He stops Johnson's count at two, pokes Jarrett in the eye, and watches Sid plant Jeff with a chokeslam. Sid powerbombs Hall to retain with Piper counting, which is the last time we'll see Hall in a WCW match.

Rating: F. This is another match where if you need an explanation, you haven't been paying close enough attention. The match ran seven minutes, meaning we had a ref bump about every 100 seconds. On top of that, why does WCW insist on putting Roddy Piper on TV so often? It's like Undertaker returning over and over: it works for awhile, and then there's enough of them to make a full on DVD.

Overall Rating: F-. This show is one of the worst kind you can have: it didn't need to exist and then on top of that it was horrible. What on here couldn't have been done on TV? Even Flair vs. Funk, the longest match of the night by far at just under sixteen minutes, felt like a TV

main event. There are matches on here that feel like they could be TV openers, which is nowhere near enough to make me want to pay to see this show. If the biggest things to happen on a show are a tournament final for the lowest title in the company and ANOTHER Roddy Piper return, there is no need for a show to exist, especially one this horrible.

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Monday Nitro – January 17, 2000: WCW Is Dead

Monday Nitro #223

Date: January 17, 2000

Location: Value City Arena, Columbus, Ohio

Attendance: 10,646

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Bobby Heenan, Mike Tenay

I have to say this way too often around here, but everything has changed again. Benoit won the World Title last night and that's the last you're going to see of him in WCW. Unfortunately that's also the case for Malenko, Guerrero and Saturn, who all quit when Kevin Sullivan was announced as the fired Vince Russo's replacement. The Filthy tried to get out as well but didn't have such an easy escape. Now we get to see how

everything falls out so let's get to it.

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

Kidman vs. Psychosis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Booker T. vs. Big T.

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

Vampiro vs. Disco Inferno

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

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

Rating: C. Nothing great here but like I said, they were trying for a change. It's such a different atmosphere already with Russo gone for one

show and you can see the quality and effort going up. Vampiro looked decent here and I can see why they wanted to push him, but they need to do something with him already.

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

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

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

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

We get an encore!

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

Maestro vs. Tank Abbott

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

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

Most of the midcard is coming to the arena. Since this is WCW, it takes

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

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

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

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

Team 2000 vs. Varsity Club

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

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

as this just keeps going.

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

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

Sid Vicious vs. The Wall

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

The Mamalukes come out but eat powerbombs.

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

Total Package vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

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

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

Diamond Dallas Page vs. Buff Bagwell

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

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

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

Rating: D+. This is another feud that is just meandering along with little development in sight. It's no longer about whether Kimberly slept with Bagwell but rather if she's going to leave her husband for him. That's about all there is as far as advancement goes, but it's not enough

to validate the boring matches that come with the feud.

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

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

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

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

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

Now here's the thing: WCW was going to die no matter what. In the long run, there was too much money being burned and too much of a mess to possibly fix the place. Somewhere along the line it was going to go under and Vince would be left smiling. However, as long as you had those four guys (or at least a young core group of wrestlers who could one day take

over), there was always a hope. It may have been just a glimmer, but it was there.

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

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

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

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

Monday Nitro #221

Date: January 3, 2000

Location: BiLo Center, Greenville, South Carolina

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Bobby Heenan, Tony Schiavone

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

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

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

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

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

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

A motorcade is leaving the airport.

There's going to be a new commissioner tonight.

Nash thinks Tom Zenk is getting the job.

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

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

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

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

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

The motorcade arrives.

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

Lash does a cross sign at Daffney in a funny bit. The bad night continues for Lash as Midnight appearing in the ring freaks him out even more. David and Lash get things going with Stevie Ray sitting in on commentary. Flair is easily knocked around the ring because he's just not that good.

It's off to Crowbar who eats a drop toe-hold to send him to the floor, only to have him slide back inside where he accidentally baseball slides David.

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

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

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

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

Total Package vs. Tank Abbott

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

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

The NWO takes their ball bats to the limo.

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

to the NWO is to bring in a guy who first retired about sixteen years earlier.

Now don't get me wrong: Terry Funk is awesome and one of the best wrestlers and performers of all time, but this is not the right move in this spot. This needed to be someone young who could be a future for WCW, not another legend who shows up, basically in the same role as Piper.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The old guys and the NWO look for David.

Funk and Anderson find Daffney in the boiler room.

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

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

Jarrett kidnaps Daffney.

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

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

Vampiro superplexes Crowbar down and Buff tells Vampiro to stay in for the finish. There's a Ligerbomb to Crowbar but Vampiro stops to argue with Anderson because it's the least logical thing possible right now. Funk punches Vampiro in the face and Buff adds a Blockbuster to his

partner, again for no apparent reason, allowing David to get the pin to go to the finals.

Rating: F. This was a circus with the partners basically saying screw the tag belts because we want to do stupid stuff instead. I've completely lost track of what's going on with Bagwell (feuding with Page I believe), Vampiro (feuding with no one that I know of) and almost everyone else in this company. The sad part: I really don't care what they're doing either.

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

Flair and Crowbar can't find Daffney.

US Title: Jeff Jarrett vs. Sid Vicious

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

Standard beatdown and spray painting follows.

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

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

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

This wasn't a match and that really shouldn't surprise me at this point.

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

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

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Monday Nitro – December 27, 1999: The Fingerpoke of Doom

Doesn't Look Bad

Monday Nitro #220

Date: December 27, 1999

Location: Houston Astrodome, Houston, Texas

Attendance: 16,640

Commentators: Bobby Heenan, Mike Tenay, Tony Schiavone

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

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

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

Opening sequence.

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

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

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

Brian Knobbs vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

Kanyon is at ringside and has a wireless mic on. Bigelow goes after him to start but Knobbs gets in a trashcan shot to take over. The announcers

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

Sid arrives with Benoit.

There's a monster truck in the back.

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

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

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

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

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

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

ZZ Top is here.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tank Abbott vs. Shane

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

Career retrospective on Scott Steiner.

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

Before the Steiners can leave, here's the NWO. Bret wants a washed up

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

Back with the NWO still in the ring because that's what this show is about anymore. Nash isn't cool with someone taking their bats. On top of that, they're not cool with Bill Busch trying to interfere, so stay in your office and let them handle the wrestling stuff. He promises that Nash will be here tonight to wrestle in Houston. As for Goldberg, the game is about to become deadly. Bret thinks it's 4-0 Hitman over Goldberg so Goldberg can consider himself stopped.

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

Hennig is put in an ambulance after a break.

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

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

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

Booker for the pin. That would be two matches with a weapon shot and brawling partners.

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

The Scream mask guy attacks Chavo.

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

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

WCW World Title: Bret Hart vs. Jerry Flynn

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

US Title: Kidman vs. Jeff Jarrett

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

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

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

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

Nash gives Hall directions over the phone.

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

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

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

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

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

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

It's so lame that Vampiro pops up and plants both psychos (yeah Vampiro

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

Rating: F. This was the sixth match of eight tournament matches tonight and they're now six for six in having at least one team implode. I know I say Russo only has a few ideas in different forms, but he's done the same idea six times in less than three hours. Suddenly Oklahoma makes so much more sense.

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

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

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

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

Rating: D-. They're seven for seven in teams splitting and almost half have had a weapon spot. I would ask if this was the best they could do, but yes, this really is the best they can do: the same match over and over and over. In a weird way, I'm actually hoping they manage to do it

again one more time in the last match because it would be one of the most amazing things ever to see them do the exact same plot point eight times in one night.

Buff gets laid out post match.

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

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

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

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

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

Overall Rating: F. Somehow, this is miles better than last week's show. The wrestling was nothing special (Kidman vs. Jarrett was decent before it fell apart), the booking has been covered already, the ending was

stupid, and this whole show was a mess. You can tell Russo has lost some authority though and that's the best thing that could possibly happen to this company.

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

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Monday Nitro – May 31, 1999: Now They're Screwing Up Cage Matches

Monday Nitro #190

Date: May 31, 1999

Location: Astrodome, Houston, Texas

Commentators: Bobby Heenan, Tony Schiavone

We're two weeks away from the Great American Bash and the main event is still dominating the card. Thankfully we're getting some development on the rest of the card and hopefully the rise of Benoit and Malenko up the card as the new young stars of the company. Well Malenko is pushing 40 at this point so he can only be so young but you get the idea. Let's get to it.

We open with Raven arriving at the arena but getting attacked by Bigelow and Page in the parking lot. They throw him into a dumpster and slam the lid on his head.

Recap of last week with Piper beating up Flair and the Horsemen turning on their leader.

We see Tank Abbott getting into it with Rick Steiner on Thunder.

The announcers do their thing.

DJ Ran.

Here's Eddie Guerrero for the first time this year after a horrible car wreck. The announcers welcome him back and show us some photos of Eddie's totaled car. Eddie lists off his injuries and hopes to be back soon. He'll be doing some commentary to start things off.

Hak vs. Kidman

Hak has to lose the weapons to start and Kidman actually tries to make it a wrestling match. I can't imagine it staying that way but it's nice to pretend for a bit. They stay on the mat for a bit with Kidman holding a headscissors...and now let's hear from Tank Abbott and his goons about how being in a cage is hardcore. He has history being in a cage you see, and he's going to referee the TV Title match tonight.

We cut back to the match with Kidman taking over again with a dropkick. Chastity gets on the apron with a chair, allowing Hak to send Kidman face first into the steel. It's weapons time now as I guess this was a hardcore match the whole time. Kidman is whipped into the ladder but avoids a Swanton through the table. He loads up the Shooting Star but here's Hugh Morrus to shove him off, somehow drawing a no contest in a

hardcore match.

Rating: D. There was some decent wrestling to start but then we went to the hardcore stuff and a Tank Abbott promo because we can't do that at some other point. I don't know why they insist on wasting Kidman on something like this when he's capable of having good matches with any talented guy you throw at him.

Brian Knobs comes out to beat up Hak.

Flair is in his office and orders eight women to his room tonight. JJ Dillon says Savage's elbow is officially banned. So what else can he actually do?

Clip of Steiner and Abbott on Thunder.

Eddie thanks the fans and Bischoff for believing in him.

Here are Bigelow and Page with something to say. Page rips on the fans and says he knew it was wrong to put Hogan out with a knee injury. He tried to apologize but last week Hogan knocked him out with a crutch as he was leaving. Bigelow and Page threaten to put Hogan on the permanent injured list before turning their attention to Raven and Saturn. They took the trash out earlier and now don't want to wait for the Great American Bash for their title shot.

Kanyon is going to take Raven's place in the Tag Team Title match tonight.

DJ Ran doesn't like Curt Hennig not liking hip hop. Oh geez they're going to have him advance stories now?

Curt Hennig comes out to the commentary desk and insists that rap is crap. Hennig likes country music better and is going to go sing a country song at DJ Ran's booth. Bobby Duncum Jr. comes out to sing with Curt and they belt out Blame It On Texas. It's not really singing as much as it is rhythmic talking but they're trying. Konnan and Mysterio come out in their Astros jerseys for the save. A tag match is made for later.

We look at Hennig and Konnan brawling last week. Wouldn't this fit better

before the previous segment?

Van Hammer vs. Evan Karagias

Evan gets hammered on to start and is quickly put in a Tree of Woe. He avoids a charge though and grabs a headlock, only to be shoved away and shouldered down. A headscissors takes Hammer over but he counters another attempt with a hot shot. Hammer plants him with a backbreaker and Vader clothesline for two before putting on an abdominal stretch. Evan actually hiptosses the big guy over, only to get caught in a delayed vertical suplex. Hammer gets taken down again and a high cross body gets two, but he grabs the cobra clutch slam for a quick pin.

Rating: D. Hammer really needs something besides the cobra clutch slam. That's a move that almost anyone could do and while it's decent for a power guy, he needs to do something that looks a lot more devastating. Or we could just not have Hammer on TV and see how well that works for us.

Here's Piper to say God bless America and talk about the Horsemen breaking up last week. He calls Flair a gelding and asks Malenko to come out here for a chat. Piper praises Dean as the best cruiserweight of all time but Dean doesn't say anything. He takes the mic and says that Flair walked out on the Horsemen and last week was just them responding.

This brings out Flair and Anderson but Dean cuts them off and says the Horsemen weren't supposed to be about feeding Flair's ego. WCW needs to be about passing the torch and letting the younger guys get their chance on top. Flair says he hasn't met anyone worth passing the torch to yet. Dean goes to Arn and says last week he promised to have Arn's back anywhere, but that was last week. Piper and Flair get in a fight and Flair runs away. Natrually that's the focus instead of Anderson and Malenko because it's Flair and Piper.

Nitro Girls.

Eric Bischoff joins commentary for no apparent reason.

Konnan/Rey Mysterio Jr. vs. Curt Hennig/Bobby Duncum Jr.

So much for Rey defending against Kidman, at least for now it seems.

Konnan and Rey wear what appear to be prison uniforms. The cowboys try to sing a little bit but get dropkicked in the back to start fast. Mysterio dropkicks Curt's leg and shouts WEST SIDE on the middle rope. Hennig and Duncum are knocked out to the floor for a breather as Bischoff praises Rey. Back in and Hennig nails Mysterio in the ribs with a right hand before it's off to Duncum for a shoulder breaker.

Back to Hennig who whips Rey across for the Bret Hart chest first bump to the buckle. The cowboys keep up the fast tagging with Bobby throwing Mysterio around like a rag doll. Mysterio nails a quick dropkick to Hennig and slides between Curt's legs for the hot tag to Konnan and a genuine eruption from the crowd. There's the Tequila Sunrise on Hennig but Duncum breaks it up with the cowbell for the DQ.

Rating: D+. It's another culture clash feud but at least most of the guys in it are worth watching. Duncum had potential to be good but the cowboy thing was only going to take him so far at this point. It's not a bad match but I groaned at the cowbell ending. WCW was so obsessed with getting rid of the southern identity but they have that around?

Konnan gets hogtied post match.

Here's Savage on his own with something to say. He talks about Nash being on his way to the arena when Madusa comes out to say Nash is here. Savage calls Nash out for later in another segment that didn't need to be in the arena.

Page and Bigelow are in the back, standing over an unconscious Kanyon.

David Flair vs. Erik Watts

Holy sweet mother of goodness they can't be serious. Bischoff just buries both guys, saying Erik got his push because of his dad and that David absolutely sucks. Well he had to be right at some point. He even says that his son would have a winning record if he was in charge. There were warning signs of Garrett Bischoff coming and no one stopped him??? Erik hammers away to start and clotheslines Flair out to the floor. He rams David into the buckle a few times and yells at Papa Flair.

David manages to avoid a dropkick and tries the Figure Four, only to get kicked out to the floor. A suplex brings him back in for two and Watts starts picking him up every time. David is tortured with a Rock Bottom, pumphandle slam and chinlock slam. He loads up another Rock Bottom but Anderson sneaks in for a spinebuster to give David the pin.

Rating: N/A. I can't rate this because I can't help but laugh. This is the kind of match that you see on lists of the worst possible matches you could imagine. Like, you say this as a joke instead of something that could actually happen. That's what we're dealing with here because WCW actually did it. Raw could be airing a midget Brawl For All against this and it might not be as stupid an idea.

Video on Nash vs. Savage.

Buff tells Flair he wants Savage again tonight but is given a suitable replacement: Bobby Eaton. Buff: "Does he even work here anymore?" Either way, Bagwell promises to hurt him tonight.

Ernest Miller comes out to call out Norton for a fight. Well at least that's what I think he's saying as Bischoff keeps talking about how the company in New York is beating them right now and he's partially to blame. Anyway here's Norton and we get a bell.

The Cat vs. Scott Norton

Norton immediately nails Cat with a headbutt and knocks him for a loop. He hammers away in the corner as we see the Black and White laughing in the locker room. With Cat down in the corner, Sonny slips him a crowbar to knock Norton silly for the surprise pin.

The Black and White runs out of the locker room.

Here are Savage and the girls again because we haven't seen enough of them. Well ok that's true in George's case. Nothing is said before Nash's music comes on and here's....a tall guy in drag wearing a replica belt. Savage says this is a match so we get a bell, allowing Savage and the girls to get in shots, such as a top rope hurricanrana from Miss Madness and a middle rope elbow from George. Savage drops the banned top rope

elbow for a pin before celebrating with the belt. Again, is there a point to this or are we supposed to draw our own conclusions? For some reason Bischoff thinks Miss Madness is a man.

Nitro Girls.

Recap of Bagwell beating Savage by DQ on Thunder. That would be the second time Bagwell beat Savage by DQ on Thunder.

Buff Bagwell vs. Bobby Eaton

For some reason Bischoff goes on a rant about how worthless Jesse Ventura was on commentary. Eaton hammers away to start and goes after Bagwell's face, only to get monkey flipped and dropkicked to slow him down. Two boots in the corner stop a charging Eaton and a clothesline drops him for two. Buff misses a charge and falls to the floor before taking a swinging neckbreaker in the ring. Bischoff keeps up his tirade by ripping on Bagwell for no apparent reason before switching over to Konnan. Buff comes back with a suplex and hiptoss followed by the Blockbuster for the pin.

We look at Raven getting taken out earlier.

Tag Team Titles: Saturn vs. Bam Bam Bigelow/Diamond Dallas Page

Bischoff calls Page one of the biggest mistake he's made in WCW. Saturn grabs a mic and says he'll keep the titles by himself tonight. Page calls Saturn stupider than he looks. Bigelow gets things going for the only team in the match and shoves Saturn down with ease. A shoulder block does the same as Bischoff hypes up Tank being in the cage tonight. Saturn comes back with a springboard cross body to Bigelow and a belly to belly to Page. Some clotheslines put the challengers on the floor and we take a break.

Back with Bigelow getting in a knee from the apron, allowing Page to clothesline Saturn down to take over. It's back to Bigelow for a falling headbutt and a two count before the discus lariat gets two for Page. A Batista Bomb gets two more and things slow down a bit. Page comes back in with a top rope clothesline for another two and we hit the chinlock.

Bam Bam comes in off the top but misses the swan dive. Saturn superkicks both guys down and sends the challengers into each other. The Death Valley Driver gets two on Page and there's one for Bigelow as well. Cue Kanyon to stand in the wrong corner and get the hot tag, but Page hits him once for the pin and the titles.

Rating: C. Well it's clear that something is coming with the booking but again with the young and talented teams losing the belts so fast. Did they really have to change the titles in just a few weeks? They couldn't have waited for the pay per view? Page and Bigelow aren't even an interesting team as they're just two guys from Jersey. You wouldn't see Norton and Hennig as a team because they're both from Minnesota would you? At least the match was decent though.

Savage and the girls are trying to leave in the limo but it's blocked by a septic truck. You can see it coming from here. Nash is driving, gets out, puts a hose in the sunroof and the villains gets sprayed. Nash says something about this portion of Nitro has been brought to you by Septic Services, for all your savage septic needs. Ok funny line.

DJ Ran.

The cage is lowered.

TV Title: Rick Steiner vs. Sting

In a cage with a roof, Steiner defending and Tank Abbott as the guest referee. Sting sends Rick head first into the cage to start and stomps away with Steiner not all that interested in selling tonight. The champ comes back with a low blow and hard right hands followed by an elbow drop. A dropkick sends Rick through the ropes and Sting rakes his face on the cage before hitting a Stinger Splash, driving Steiner against the steel.

Rick comes right back with a suplex and a ram into the cage of his own. We hit the chinlock as Tank just kind of walks around and doesn't do anything of note. Sting fights up again and nails another dropkick as there isn't a lot of energy for this match. Some clotheslines look to set up a splash but Rick raises his knees.

Sting slips off Steiner's shoulders but can't get a backslide. Instead he tries a very modified Gory Stretch, only to have Rick get to the cage to escape. Sting sends him into the corner for the Splash but Abbott pulls Steiner out of the way. Rick tapes Sting to the ropes as Tank leaves, meaning in two weeks, they've now ended a cage match and a battle royal in no contests.

Rating: D-. Holy sweet Christmas they've managed to screw up a cage match. For one thing, it's WAY too early in this feud for a big gimmick match. On top of that, the match lasted less than eight minutes and was there to push Tank Abbott than for the match itself. The fact that it's Rick Steiner refusing to sell ANYTHING makes sitting through this even worse. Horrible match here and even worse storytelling and decision making.

Abbott and his goons walk out to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. So let me get this straight: we had two and a half hours of Bischoff's out there commentary, Tank Abbott screwing over Sting for a no contest in a cage match, a no contest in a hardcore match, Curt Hennig singing, more Flair vs. Piper and one of the worst possible matches in the history of wrestling. I know I've said this before, but it can't possibly get any worse than this.

Now to be fair there's some decent stuff in here, such as the Tag Team Title match and most of the Horsemen segment, but the bad just cripples anything the good can do for the show. The big story needs to actually go somewhere and that doesn't seem to be happening anytime soon. It's far more old vs. old with talk of the old vs. new not going anywhere. There's still time, but we need to get there and actually fire up the company a bit.

Thunder – May 27, 1999: Well...It Was Better

Thunder

Date: May 27, 1999

Location: North Charleston Coliseum, North Charleston, South Carolina

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Larry Zbyszko

Believe it or not things are looking up just a bit in WCW. The most recent Nitro was just a disaster instead of the worst show ever. There is an interesting story coming up with the old guard not being happy with the lack of respect they've been getting from the younger crowd, which led to Benoit and Malenko turning on Flair earlier this week. Let's get to it.

We open with a video of Savage's recent path of destruction, even though his girls have done most of the work.

The announcers do their thing. It's Sting vs. Rick Steiner in a cage on Nitro.

Lash Leroux vs. Kaz Hayashi

Leroux takes him down to start and works on the arm before putting Kaz on the mat again with an armdrag. Back up and Kaz offers a handshake, only to kick Leroux in the ribs instead. A dropkick puts Leroux down again but he avoids a spinwheel kick, only to get caught in a backslide for two. Things slow down a bit as Kaz gets into kick and chop mode before dropping an elbow.

We cut to the back to see Savage and the girls because this is his company now. Savage is looking for Bagwell but beats up Disco Inferno and Scotty Riggs instead. Back to the match happening in the background, Leroux hammers away in the corner with right hands. We get more kicks from Kaz because he's from Japan, meaning he only knows how to kick you see. He mixes things up by going to the eyes, only to have the fans chant that both guys suck.

Leroux comes back with some very basic offense before a kind of sitout Dominator for two. The Whiplash is countered and Kaz kicks him in the ribs again, followed by a quick hurricanrana. Lash crotches him on top but gets shoved right down, only to dropkick a diving Hayashi out of the air. Now it's Lash going up but getting superplexed down, setting up a top rope senton splash to give Kaz the pin.

Rating: C-. This wasn't bad but the Savage thing put a big halt in the middle of it. These are the kind of guys that WCW could use to help flesh out the cruiserweight division a bit and thankfully they were able to have a match without Hugh Morrus interfering and eliminating them both. This is what Thunder should be about: showcasing guys that don't get time on Nitro.

Van Hammer vs. Prince Iaukea

Time for more of Hammer's latest push that won't go anywhere. Iaukea tries to speed things up to start and actually hits an enziguri to stagger the big man before dropping him with a springboard dropkick. Not that it matters as Hammer kicks Iaukea's head off to put him on the floor. The beating continues outside until Hammer launches him back inside. We cut to UFC fighter Tank Abbott in the front row. UFC wasn't a huge thing yet as they had only had nineteen shows at this point. Abbott had fought for them as recently as October 1998.

Iaukea gets sent into the apron a few times and goes head first into the steps. Back in and we hit the bearug for a bit with Iaukea saving himself using the power of a hard head. He tries to slam Hammer and gets crushed for two for his efforts. Iaukea goes back up and gets crotched, setting up a superplex (same sequence from the first match) followed by the cobra clutch slam for the pin.

Rating: D. When I was talking about showcasing talent that doesn't get the spotlight on Nitro, I meant guys that you would want to see getting spotlight like that. Instead here we had two guys who either aren't interesting or haven't been interesting in years. Thankfully it was a pretty short match but anytime Iaukea is out there it gets painful.

Video on Nash vs. Savage.

Buy this shirt!

Video from Nitro of Savage attacking Nash and lipsticking him.

Gene brings out Savage and the girls for a chat. Savage thinks Nash fears him, that Bagwell disrespected him, and that he'll take the title at the Bash. The girls all think Savage rocks and that's about it. This really didn't need to be an in ring segment.

The Cat vs. Vampiro

This is the result of an open challenge after Cat ripped on Scott Norton, calling him Yogi Bearer for some reason. Sonny Onoo offers Vampiro money to leave, allowing Miller to get in some cheap shots from behind. Vampiro comes back with kicks to the ribs and ducks a kick that winds up hitting Sonny. More shots to the face have Miller in trouble but he nails Vampiro low to escape. It doesn't seem to have a long lasting effect though as Vampiro keeps kicking and nails a Rock Bottom. Onoo knees him in the back though and Miller finishes Vampiro quick with the Feliner.

Benoit goes into Flair's office to yell at him but Page jumps Chris from behind and beats him down.

Here's Brian Knobs with something to say. He brags about being hardcore and all that jazz until Jimmy Hart interrupts. Jimmy says he managed Brian in the past and wants him back for the First Family. Brian isn't sure but will think about it.

Clip from Nitro of Flair and Piper fighting.

Clip from Nitro of Hennig and Konnan fighting.

Konnan vs. Kenny Kaos

We get a bunch of catchphrases from Konnan followed by him praising all of his friends. Feeling out process to start until Kaos' wristlock is countered with an armdrag. Kaos drops him again with a a clothesline and elbow before we hit the way too early chinlock. Back up and Konnan hits his wrap around bulldog and the low dropkick followed by some right hands in the corner.

A few clotheslines and a suplex get two on Konnan and we hit another chinlock. Kaos shouts at the crowd a lot and gets caught in a DDT for a quick two. We get the usual from Konnan but he charges into a powerslam. Kaos goes up, misses a guillotine legdrop and gets caught in the Tequila Sunrise for the submission.

Rating: D. Gah these matches can be dull. Kaos is a guy that doesn't have anything going for him and Konnan is suddenly all cool with Nash again despite having issues with him just a few months back. This was just wrestling to fill in space on a card which can be the least interesting things imaginable when there's no motivation.

This Week In WCW Motorsports.

Video on Nash.

Lenny Lane vs. Evan Karagias

Evan hammers away to start and grabs a hammerlock before dropkicking him down. A clothesline puts Lane on the floor and here's Lodi to watch they match. Lane sends Evan into the apron and then the steps before they head back inside for an elbow from Lenny. He sees Lodi and...doesn't seem to mind. Evan jumps over him in the corner and drives in ten right hands. A springboard clothesline gets two on Lenny but he grabs an airplane spin of all things.

Evan gets dropped with a gutbuster as Lodi seems very pleased. Back up and Karagias gets two off a cross body. Lodi: "Looking really, really good." Evan pops back to his feet and floats around into a faceplant. A cross body gets a delayed two but Lane gets Karagias onto his shoulders for an electric chair slam for two. Not that it matters as Evan slams him down and hits a corkscrew splash for the pin.

Rating: D+. This could have been worse and was somehow a breath of fresh air after all of the boring stuff we've sat through for the last hour or so. That being said, I have a bad feeling about where the Lodi stuff is going as it's likely going to be yet another big embarrassment for the company.

From Nitro: Piper yells about Flair a lot.

Video on Sting/Luger vs. the Steiners.

Gene talks to Tank Abbott at ringside and Tank doesn't seem to be all that happy with what he's seen so far. This hardcore division is a joke and the wrestlers all look pathetic. Gene says there's going to be a "shoot" cage match on Monday between Sting and Rick Steiner, which Tank of course laughs off. This brings out Rick Steiner to yell, start a fight, and get pulled away. He wants Abbott to come to Nitro as Tank is taken out by security.

Recap of Flair giving the Jersey boys the Tag Team Title shot and the Horsemen quitting as a result.

Chris Benoit vs. Diamond Dallas Page

This has potential. Benoit comes out to what used to be Dean's theme for some reason. They immediately slug it out to start and Benoit has him in the Crossface fifteen seconds in. Page gets to the ropes and bails to the floor, only to have Chris take him out with a dive. He sends Page head first into the post but walks into a knee back inside. A belly to back suplex puts the Canadian down but Benoit just chops him into the corner and stomps him in the chest.

Page gets back up and counters a whip with an elbow to the jaw to put both guys down. They roll outside with Page being sent into various steel objects, only to send Benoit into the barricade as we take a break. Back with Benoit catching Page coming in but his right hands in the corner are countered with a low blow and hot shot. A stomping puts Benoit on the floor before a big gutbuster has him in trouble back inside.

Benoit gets tied up in the Tree of Woe for another stomping. We hit the chinlock, complete with something like a chinlock slam for two. Off to a sleeper on Benoit but he jawbreaks his way to freedom. Some running right hands put Page down and a bridging German suplex gets two. That's not enough for Benoit so he rolls some more Germans until Page breaks it up with a low blow. A big sitout powerbomb gives Page a near fall but Benoit counters the Cutter and puts on the Crossface in the middle of the ring.

Since we can't have someone lose clean around here though, Bigelow runs out for the DQ.

Rating: B-. This took its time to get going but once they got to the trading big moves section, they really started to cook. The ending was inevitable though as they couldn't put Benoit over because Page has a title shot coming up and you don't want to put Page over because Benoit is coming off a big turn. Good match though and a nice pick up after the bad show so far.

Flair, Bigelow and Page beat down Benoit and no one makes the save.

Another video on Nash vs. Savage.

Randy Savage vs. Buff Bagwell

After some jawing from both guys and a few Nash insults from Savage, the girls shove Bagwell to give Macho the early advantage. Savage busts out a wide variety of choking before taking it outside to drop Buff's throat on the barricade. Back in and Miss Madness nails a top rope missile dropkick to prove her worth. Savage ties Bagwell in the Tree of Woe before choking even more. Off to a neck hold as Patrick yells at two of the girls, allowing George to use her shoe on Buff's throat. Savage yells at Patrick so he actually gets a chair to defend himself. That's fine with Randy, who takes the chair away and nails Buff for the DQ.

Rating: D. If this is supposed to get Bagwell over, they're doing a horrible job of going about it. This was a total squash until Bagwell won on a DQ due to stealing a referee's weapon. Again, the girls help him out WAY too much as well, even though in this case he could have won on his own pretty easily.

Overall Rating: D. Somehow this was an upgrade over some of the recent shows. Above all else, there was nowhere near as much talking on this show. That being said, it meant that we had a lot more time for wrestling, and that has rarely been Thunder's strong point. The Benoit vs. Page match was good and a very nice break from the norm, but this old vs. new thing has a big hole to dig them out of.

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