

Thunder – February 2, 2000: Screw You Hulk Hogan

Thunder

Date: February 2, 2000

Location: Broome County Arena, Binghamton, New York

Attendance: 2,323

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Scott Hudson, Bobby Heenan

The big story tonight is going to be the return of Hulk Hogan, who was casually announced to be coming back on Monday during a Shane Helms vs. Norman Smiley match. I'm not sure how much good Hogan can do to save this mess of a show, but at least he'll do boring stuff with some extra charisma. Let's get to it.

We open with the standard recap of Nitro.

Here's the NWO, complete with Scott Hall, to open things up. Hall can't quite get HEY YO out so let's look at the girls talking about what a sexy beast Scott Steiner really is. That brings us to still acting Commissioner Jeff Jarrett, who says that it's still his job to make Sid miserable. Therefore, tonight we're getting Sid in Triple Threat Theater. You cannot be serious. Like, tell me you didn't just say that.

Somehow this is true, and here's the lineup: a submission match vs. Mike Rotunda, a hardcore match vs. Rick Steiner and Caged Heat (could they at least try to hide their cries of PLEASE WATCH OUR SHOW) against the Harris Twins. Jeff repeats that he takes bribes, making me think this is the result of a bet to see how horrible of a show they can possibly put together.

The announcers run down the card, which will have nine matches total. Three of these will feature Sid Vicious. How much longer before this company goes out of business?

A limo arrives.

The NWO buys off referee Slick Johnson.

Norman Smiley vs. The Demon

In a line I think I'll be repeating a lot tonight, let's get this over with. Norman is in the Demon attire here but Demon comes out of his coffin to start fast. Demon rips his gear off Norman, revealing smiley face trunks. This earns Norman a suplex and a punch to the face, followed by a lot of growling from Demon. A clothesline in the corner staggers Norman, but he quickly goes behind Demon and hooks the Conquest for the win.

Demon, ever the salesman, shrugs off the submission and chases Norman to the back.

Lenny Lane and Lodi are now to be called Lane and Idol and are collectively known as To Excess. Yeah sure why not. As long as they drop the incest.

Sid Vicious vs. Mike Rotunda

Submission match because WCW thought making Kevin Sullivan booker was so important that we don't have the Radicalz anymore. There is however one cool moment in this entire thing: an elderly woman is holding up a sign that says "90 year old woman needs a hug" and Sid hugs her. I know he's annoying and being shoved down my throat but that genuinely gave me a bit of a smile.

Mike tries a go behind to start and gets elbowed in the face. Just like at Syracuse back in '81. Sid pounds away in the corner but misses a running knee, allowing Mike to take him down and slap on a Figure Four. That goes nowhere so Mike tries an STF but Sid quickly makes the ropes. Back up and Sid hits a chokeslam but Mike but Mike hits him low. Well in theory at least as the camera cut away, because all of Ferrara and Russo's schtick was fine but a low blow? That's too far. Sid escapes a fireman's carry and slaps on what is supposed to be a Crossface for the win.

Vampiro doesn't have much to say but would like to face Kidman again.

We finally get brackets for the Cruiserweight Title tournament. These are updated after the first three matches.

Psychosis

The Artist Formerly Known As Prince Iaukea

Lash Leroux

Shannon Moore/Shane Helms

Cruiserweight Title Tournament First Round: Shane Helms vs. Shannon Moore

Feeling out process to start with Shane getting in the first big move with a suplex. Shane bails to the floor for no apparent reason other than to let Shannon dive onto him. That's what a good bandmate should do. Sometimes you need a guy you can trust to dive on you. I hear that's how Hall and Oates got together. Back in and Shane scores with another suplex for two but walks into a crossbody for the same.

We're told that Madusa is in the building, freaking out Evan Karagias who is in on commentary. That's one thing I certainly don't miss about Russo's time: not every match needs guest commentary. He LOVED that idea. Shane counters a sunset flip and slams Shannon down again, only to miss a corkscrew moonsault. Shannon's big offense here? A snapmare for two. Oh come on man. You need a role model. Like Matt Hardy. Back up and Shane kicks him in the ribs but his neckbreaker is countered into a backslide of all things to send Shannon to the semifinals.

Rating: D+. A snapmare and a backslide? REALLY? We went from Mysterio, Guerrera, Malenko, Jericho and others tearing the house down to a snapmare and a backslide? The match was watchable enough but man, could we get more than one or two high spots in a match? Not a horrible match given their lack of experience on this stage and having about three and a half minutes.

They hug it out post match.

Madusa tells the NWO she wants a match tonight.

Hogan was in the limo. Again, you would expect this to be treated as a bigger deal.

Here's Hogan for the big return speech for a big ovation. It's definitely Hulk instead of Hollywood here, which is definitely the right move at this point. Hogan talks about having a chat with Goldberg and Sting about all the pre-taped scenes and the writers (oh geez) and now he's here to get something off his chest. He's tired of a bunch of young nobodies trying to act like they mean something. Ric Flair has been talking about taking the business back and for once Hogan agrees with him.

This brings him to Luger, presumably one of the young guys, who immediately comes out with Liz. Luger thinks Hogan is a coward, just like Sting who never comes out when Luger calls for him. We see a clearly fake Sting (complete with a wig) coming to the ring but Hogan jumps Luger before that can go anywhere. Liz gets an atomic drop (with Hogan barely dropping her) and Hogan ducks a bat shot to send Luger running. So that's the co-main event at SuperBrawl I'm guessing.

Quick recap here: all the rookies suck, and all the veterans are awesome, except for that horrible Luger. This is the savior's big return speech, where he rips the youth apart and basically says everything since he's been gone has been a waste of time. Also, not a word about what happened at Halloween Havoc, meaning we're never going to get an explanation.

Kidman and Torrie have the KidCam.

Jeff Jarrett talks to Oklahoma about a women's division. We're really doing this again?

Kidman vs. Vampiro vs. The Wall

The small guys go after Wall to start with a spinwheel kick and double clothesline putting him on the floor so we can have a talented (though worthless according to Hogan) pairing. Vampiro suplexes him down but Wall comes back in and blasts Vampiro in the back, followed by a gorilla press drop to Kidman. The double teaming continues but Wall shrugs off a cross body.

Instead, Torrie distracts the crooked referee (at least he has good taste), allowing Kidman to blast Wall with a chair. Those are completely no sold (concrete over steel I guess) so Kidman throws the chair at Vampiro and is immediately knocked to the floor. A chokeslam from Wall ends Vampiro to finish a fairly packed yet quick match. So after Vampiro and Kidman have two good matches, Wall gets the push. Raise your hand if you're surprised.

Sid is ready for Steiner.

Lane and Idol want a Tag Team Title shot but the Mamalukes aren't interested.

Sid Vicious vs. Rick Steiner

Hardcore match, and I can't believe it but they actually bring up Sid powerbombing Steiner through the stage a few months back. Who would have guessed they could work a tape machine, let alone remember that? Steiner tries to get smart and is almost immediately clotheslined out to the floor. They fight into the crowd with Rick chucking a chair towards ringside, nearly wiping out a fan or two in the process. Maybe he can get fired! I'm willing to have a few fans suffer to get rid of Rick Steiner.

Rick can't entirely suplex Sid onto a table but drops him on it anyway. Close enough I guess. We hit the front facelock on the outside after a devastating two minutes of not wrestling. A whip into the barricade and chair to the back....seemingly fire Sid up as he comes back with a chair of his own and they head towards the entrance. Sid ducks for a backdrop but someone blasts Steiner with a bat, allowing Sid to get an easy pin.

Rating: D-. So let's get this straight: Sid won the title twice last week in three matches in two days and now he's having three matches in one night after winning the title? Who writes these contracts? Hogan only had to wrestle at three Starrcades out of the six he was around for but Sid can wrestle seven times in four shows?

This Week In WCW Motorsports.

Hogan leaves.

Diamond Dallas Page vs. The Machine

Now here's an interesting case. Throughout the night there have been vignettes for the Machine, who is apparently coming. Machine was a masked man named Emory Hale (also spelled Hail at times) who floated around WCW for years because he had a great look and could conceivably be turned into a good monster. The problem was that even after years of training, he was one of the absolute worst workers in history. I distinctly remember watching this match for one very infamous spot and I'm curious to see if it's as bad as I remember it.

Machine gets a big, overblown entrance with a silhouette entrance with Hudson wanting to know why the Machine is here. It's not really that surprising. Everything else in WCW is stuck in 1986 so why not bring back the Machines? Machine shoves him into the corner a few times but Page grabs some armdrags to put him down. There's the discus lariat followed by a Cactus Clothesline as Page is in full control. This has been acceptable so far and Machine keeps the level up with a low blow and snake eyes before jumping up and down to stomp Page on the mat.

A Russian legsweep with little snap gets two and a World's Strongest Slam plants Page again. Now here's the big moment. Machine goes up top, in the corner on the far left from the camera. That's important as Page shakes the rope to crotch him, but for some reason he shakes the rope facing the entrance, meaning a rope that Machine wasn't touching. This must have thrown Machine off as he jumps halfway across the ring to crotch himself on the ropes instead of just, you know, dropping down. Page hits two more clotheslines (his fourth of the match) followed by the floatover Diamond Cutter for the pin.

Rating: D. You know, bizarre spot aside, this wasn't the worst match I've ever seen. The problem here is they built Machine up as someone important but Page beat him clean in four minutes. Page was getting back to the style that worked so well for him so maybe putting him nearer the top of the card could work. He's old but at least he hasn't been near the top of the card for fifteen years or so and is relatively fresh.

Arn Anderson says the Funk vs. Flair feud got him into wrestling. Wait

what? I'm not the best NWA historian in the world, but is there another major Flair vs. Funk feud other than the one in 1989? I'm sure they had matches before (I can find two World Title matches between them in the early 80s and a tag match in 1985), but unless I've never heard of it, they never did anything major other than their famous matches. Anyway, Anderson respects both guys but he's wanting WCW to stand up to the NWO and wants the two of them to lead the charge.

Villano IV vs. Tank Abbott

Meng is watching from the back as the Villanos try twin magic and are both knocked out in about a minute.

The Harris Boys talk about being NWO and show why you never hear them speak.

Funk asks Anderson whose side he's on but Arn won't answer.

Mamalukes vs. David Flair/Crowbar

Non-title and Crowbar starts with the Bull. Disco is on commentary again and asks a good question: why are these teams always paired together? As the match we've seen a few times already continues, we see Daffney go up to Ms. Hancock for watching the match, but let's cut away from that and see Crowbar hitting a slingshot splash for two. That's not the worst idea in the world.

Johnny comes back with a gorilla press drop and brings in Vito before it's off to David, who is brought in by Crowbar throwing him over the ropes. Makes sense. David dances over to Vito and gets kicked in the face for his efforts. Vito comes off as a Saturday Night Fever enthusiast, which is possibly why I've always kind of liked him. Vito drops a middle rope elbow for two and it's back to Johnny. The hiptoss into the powerbomb is enough to set up the tag back to Vito as the beating continues.

Vito goes back to the middle rope for a knee drop but David rolls away. Granted he rolled towards the corner and hit Vito's knee because the idea of left and right is too complicated for him but at least he tried.

Crowbar comes in off the hot tag and everything breaks down with Vito hitting the Impaler on David but Daffney offers a distraction. In the melee, David hits Vito with the crowbar to give Crowbar the fluke pin. Longest match of the night here at about 5:45.

Rating: D+. Disco brought up a good point: why are these teams always fighting? Is there no one else that you can put in there against the champions instead of Flair and Crowbar? You have a roster this big and they don't have a combination to put together against the Italians? The match was watchable as long as Crowbar was in there and Vito was his usual self.

Sid Vicious vs. Harris Twins

This is inside Caged Heat because that's how WCW thinks it gets ratings. They start fighting in the aisle and the Twins knock the World Champ onto a table. That goes nowhere so they try this cage thing with the Twins stomping away in the corner. A bunch of elbow drops have Sid in even more trouble and they clubber him down to keep the advantage. There is zero reason for this to be in a cage so far.

We hit the chinlock less than three minutes in and my goodness just close this company now. It's early 2000 and I'm watching one of the Harris Twins chinlock World Champion Sid Vicious inside Hell in a Cell on a Wednesday in front of 2,300 people in Sid's third match of the night. Sid fights back, throws we'll say Ron over the ropes and powerbombs Don for the pin, wrapping this up in less than four minutes, giving him a total in ring time of about ten and a half minutes for three gimmick matches.

Rating: F. If you need an explanation, you fail as a wrestling fan.

Post match the NWO raises the cage and comes in to destroy Sid as the cage....doesn't lower back, again defeating the purpose of the cage being there in the first place. Steiner puts him in the Recliner and Sid gets spray painted as Jarrett promises to make Sid miserable to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. There was some good stuff going on with this show but my goodness HIRE SOME NEW PEOPLE. WCW still had money at this point and there had to be someone out there they could snatch up. I know the main

event is Valhalla and no one new is cracking into it, but get someone new to fill out the midcard. It's a bad show but the main event stories are doing most of the damage. Oh and Hogan saying the young guys are worthless. That was bad too.

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

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00XOUNBEA>

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

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

Thunder – January 19, 2000: All Hands On Deck

Thunder

Date: January 19, 2000

Location: Roberts Memorial Stadium, Evansville, Indiana

Attendance: 2,726

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Mike Tenay, Bobby Heenan

The big story at the moment is how a huge chunk of the midcard and the World Champion are all gone due to Kevin Sullivan being part of the new booking committee. In addition to the talent leaving due to Sullivan, it also means that the show has gone from going 200 miles per hour to about 20 miles per year as the show has slowed way down and gotten a good deal more boring. Let's get to it.

There's a closed door meeting taking place.

The NWO arrives.

Tag Team Titles: David Flair/Crowbar vs. Mamalukes

The mafia guys are challenging and Disco sits in on commentary. Vito and David get things going with Young Naitch getting knocked into the corner with ease. I know Crowbar is crazy but how did he consent to letting Flair start? David comes back with some shoulders to the ribs in the corner, only to get nailed in the throat for his efforts. Crowbar dives over the top to take the Mamalukes down and gets two off a cross body.

That goes nowhere as Vito comes back with a delayed suplex, but only after he jogs around the ring while holding Crowbar in the air. Off to Johnny who eats a double clothesline but comes right back with a spinning kick to the head. Everything breaks down and Crowbar powerslams Vito down and drops a top rope splash for two with Johnny making a save. A Lionsault (minus the running start) gets the same as this is basically a handicap match. David gets the crowbar but the Mamalukes kick Crowbar into him (and the bar), setting up the spinning Impaler DDT from Vito for the pin and the titles.

Rating: D. I like the result but not the method they used to get there. It's very nice to see the titles go to a team that could actually work some decent matches, but the match that got them there was pretty much a mess. David just doesn't have what it takes to be on this level and it was showing every time they were in the ring. At least the Mamalukes, as mediocre as they are, can work well enough.

Nash talks to the cops.

Page and Kimberly arrive.

The Mamalukes want Disco to take someone out.

Curt Hennig vs. Jim Duggan

Really? As I fathom the fact that these two are fighting in 2000, I took some time to see how many times these guys have fought. Believe it or

not, they only have a few house show matches in the WWF and two Thunder matches. You would think these guys would have been a logical pairing at some point. Hennig answers something like an open challenge but doesn't have on wrestling gear, so Duggan calls him a chicken.

Curt McFly charges to the ring and gets slammed down but he snaps Jim's throat over the top rope. Some choking and a dropkick follow but Duggan just slugs away to come back. Ten punches in the corner are broken up by an eye poke but Hennig throws Duggan into the referee. You know I hadn't realized how few ref bumps there had been since Russo was gone. Hennig brings in the 2x4 but Duggan hits the referee by mistake, sending Hennig running away as Duggan's music plays. Huh?

It's 3 Count time!!! They do a letterboxed performance and now they even have a super fan in the form of Karate Norman Smiley. Evan, so overwhelmed by the music, charges at him but Norman feels the power and clotheslines him down. All three members are taken out and Norman is so fired up that he issues an open challenge. Cue Tank Abbott because we need to see him every week. Norman fails at using Dave Penzer as a human shield and goes down in one punch. I'm so glad the fans got excited over Smiley until he got knocked cold by Abbott because we haven't covered that yet.

Lash Leroux vs. Chavo Guerrero Jr. vs. Psychosis

Sometime tonight we should be getting a statement on Oklahoma and the Cruiserweight Title. Chavo goes after Psychosis to start with some chops as Lash just chills by the ropes. Psychosis escapes a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker before joining Chavo for a double clothesline. That's about it for the working together as Chavo sends Psychosis into the corner and slams him down, followed by a dropkick to put Lash on the floor.

Psychosis and Chavo slug it out but Lash gets back up and dives onto both guys to finally do something in the match.

Back up and Psychosis nails Chavo by mistake, followed by a backbreaker from Leroux. Psychosis is sent outside with Lash following him for a whip into the barricade. This time it's Chavo hitting the big dive to the floor and everyone is down. Back in again and Lash misses a dive,

allowing Chavo to throw Psychosis to the floor. Whiplash is countered and Chavo nails the tornado DDT, only to have Psychosis comes back in with the guillotine legdrop to knock Chavo silly for the pin.

Rating: B-. Much like on Nitro, this was an old school fun cruiserweight match between three guys who should be fighting over the title instead of having Oklahoma hold it as a comedy bit. It's cool to see Psychosis win as well as he's an underrated talent, but the same could be said for Chavo. Either way, at least we got an entertaining match.

The Artist still won't sing.

The Artist Formerly Known As Prince Iaukea vs. Kidman

Kidman has his solo theme back instead of the Filthy Animals' song. Prince shoves him into the corner to start but gets reversed and beaten up. Paisley earns her paycheck by tripping Kidman so Artist can slam him down and snap a wishbone. This brings out Torrie for her big return as Kidman starts his comeback, only to springboard into a powerslam.

Back up and Kidman gets two off a rollup, only to have his comeback punched down. Another slam sets up something off the top rope but Prince slips going up and almost falls down. I know it happens with everyone, but given that it's Prince Iaukea I blame his lack of talent. Prince tries a springboard but Torrie pulls him down, allowing Kidman to hit the BK Bomb for the pin.

Rating: D+. Pull the plug on Iaukea already. He doesn't have it and this new character isn't masking the fact that he isn't that good. Yeah he can do basic stuff well enough but anything more than simple offense is a chore for him. You have an army of talented cruiserweights on your roster and this is the best you can do? Kidman was his usual self here so there isn't much to say about him.

Terry Taylor is escorted to the ring. I wonder if he got an extension can can still have tailor made suits now that it's 2000.

Here's Taylor as the executive representative (at least it's someone who knows how to talk) to address the World Title situation. This coming

Monday (because it has to be Monday and not at your next pay per view), there will be a match to determine the Undisputed World Heavyweight Champion. Commissioner Kevin Nash is going to get to pick one participant and the executive committee gets to pick the other. The committee's pick: Sid Vicious.

This brings out Nash to rip on Taylor a bit and says he's been reading the commissioner's handbook, which says he gets to make the matches. The fans chant for Goldberg and again Nash threatens to fire him. As lame as his matches are, at least Nash knows how to antagonize a crowd. This Monday, Sid can have his title shot....if he beats Jeff Jarrett. As for Nash's pick, of course it's himself. It wasn't specified but I'm assuming Jeff doesn't get the title shot if he beats Sid.

I'll give them points for adding in a crowd favorite in Sid and Nash makes sense as the villain, but they couldn't throw in a curveball here? You have a chance to make a brand new star to distract the fans from the fact that you just lost four young guys and you go with the safe route of Sid? I get the thinking behind it, but this would be a prime chance to pull the trigger on someone. They don't even have to win the title, but give the fans something to get excited over. Like, at SuperBrawl, not the show five days away.

Nash makes tonight's main event: Booker T./Big T. vs. Sid/Total Package. Ha that's good. Now what's the real main event?

Berlyn vs. The Wall

Time for the blowoff! Berlyn goes after him during the entrances but Wall, the giant monster, grabs a wristlock. Can we get someone to explain the idea of psychology to these people? Berlyn comes back with a nip up and dropkick and the fans already think this is boring. Wall throws him to the floor and drops an elbow to the back but posts himself, allowing Berlyn to dive off the top to take him down.

The second attempt (this time from the apron) doesn't work as well and Wall throws him inside again. Get this match over with already. Back in and Berlyn tries to flip over Wall but doesn't get all the way, making the match look even worse. Wall drapes him over the top rope and nails a

tilt-a-whirl backbreaker but the chokeslam is broken up by a rake of the eyes. Berlyn hits the ropes, eats a big boot and.....gets pinned?

Rating: D. So they established these guys as a team in September and have the horrible blowoff on a show no one is going to watch in January? That's the best thi....yeah this actually is the best they can do at this point. Terrible match here as there's no interest in either guy. They've managed to destroy so many members of the roster that there's no reason to get interested in almost anyone.

This Week In WCW Motorsports. Yes this is still a thing.

Here's Cruiserweight Champion Oklahoma as he continues to get to book himself into a spot for the sake of his own laughter. He brags about promising to bounce Madusa's silicone censored back to the kitchen and that's exactly what he did. After that win, Oklahoma has decided to vacate the title because there's nothing left for him to accomplish. This brings out Madusa to call Oklahoma a coward before saying she wants to start a women's division. Oklahoma starts his rebuttal but here's Sherri Martel of all people to attack Madusa.

So wait. We'll get to the match in a minute but I need a second here. Not only did Oklahoma set himself up to beat Madusa for the title, vacate it due to weighing 260lbs and cover her with barbecue sauce because making fun of Jim Ross is just oh so funny, but now Madusa is just being moved on to a new feud? In other words, the heel booker gets away with everything with his only comeuppance being the barbecue sauce after he won the title? Well of course it is.

Madusa vs. Sherri Martel

Miss Hancock comes out and sits on the announcers' table for some fan service. Sherri chokes a lot, Madusa comes back with clotheslines, Sherri goes up and slips, Madusa suplexes her down for the pin. The match lasted a minute.

Nash tells the NWO girls to massage him.

Fit Finlay vs. Jerry Flynn

Not hardcore surprisingly enough. Jerry chops him down to start and pulls Finlay away from the ropes because Fit is trying to hide for some reason. Finlay comes back with an uppercut and let's look at Buzzkill in the crowd because that's still going on. Fit knocks him down a few times and drops a middle rope knee and they head outside with Finlay hitting an uppercut.

A chair to the throat puts Jerry in even more trouble but here's Brian Knobbs with a kendo stick. Brian gets in some stick shots on Flynn but Jerry comes back with some kicks to Finlay. Knobbs goes to the apron with the stick but Finlay is sent into it instead, giving Flynn the fluke rollup pin.

Rating: F. It was slow, it was boring, it had Brian Knobbs and Jerry Flynn is getting a pin on television over someone like Fit Finlay. Flynn is similar to Tank Abbott: here's there for one reason and for some reason the company insists on pushing him, albeit slowly, no matter how boring he continues to be. Another bad match tonight.

Kanyon vs. Diamond Dallas Page

The Triad fallout continues. Kanyon says he's beaten Page over and over again now so there's nothing left to prove. This brings out Kimberly, who is offered a spot in Kanyon's entourage. Kimberly offers to think about it if the other girls leave. This brings Page through the crowd to get in some cheap shots to start things off. A suplex drops Kanyon and Page knocks him off the apron, setting up a Page dive to the floor.

Back in and Kanyon grabs a swinging neckbreaker (way too popular a move in WCW these days), followed by elbows and a chinlock. Page fights up and they head outside again with Kanyon hitting a quick Fameasser onto the steps. A high cross body from Kanyon is rolled through for two for Page. They slug it out with Page taking over, only to walk into a pumphandle slam for two. Cue J. Biggs with the briefcase but Page knocks him off the apron. Kanyon dives into a powerbomb, setting up the Diamond Cutter for the pin.

Rating: C. Not bad here but you could see Page having the whole thing mapped out. Kanyon continues to be entertaining in almost everything he

does and should be doing something better than just fighting Page and Bigelow all the time. The same is true of Page. He could be fighting for the US Title (along with a few other people) but he's just kind of here, going from match to match and never advancing.

Luger and Big T. talk backstage.

The NWO watches from their locker room.

Total Package/Sid Vicious vs. Booker T./Big T.

Oh this could be bad. Mr. T.'s offspring get in an argument to start and the fans chant for Ahmed. Eventually it's Big T. vs. Sid to start and T. wants a test of strength. Sid asks the audience if they want to see it, complete with the hand to the ear, but Big backs down. It's off to Booker as we've somehow eaten up two minutes of the match with no contact yet. Booker and Sid lock up, let go, and it's off to Luger.

Amazingly enough it's Luger with the first real contact of the match as he runs Booker over with a shoulder, only to have Booker knock him out to the floor. Nash is here to watch as Luger chokes Booker in the corner. We take a break and come back with Sid holding Booker in a chinlock. It's off to Luger who eats the running forearm, only to have Big T. slapjack him from the apron. Now, down 2-1, Big T. comes in and gets chokeslammed, leaving Luger to Rack the unconscious Booker for the submission.

Rating: D-. So to clarify, not only is Big T. fat and out of shape, but he's very stupid. Let's just get to the stupid angle that's coming with Harlem Heat so we can get Booker out of this and on to ANYTHING else because yet another Harlem Heat storyline can only go so far and we passed that about a month ago.

Overall Rating: D+. This is an interesting look at how the new regime is going to go. First and foremost, the matches are getting more time. Several of these had 4-5 minutes, which is enough time to get the point across. I'd still like to cut out a match or two and extend the matches they already have, but at least they're letting the wrestlers tell a story and not have to fly through five plot points while trying to fit in some moves in between.

However, there's another side to the new bosses. WCW is so desperate for a new star but they're hanging on to the old guard as tight as they can. It should be all hands on deck to make someone into a star but instead we're getting Sid and Luger in the main events with Booker T. doing the job to advance the Harlem Heat feud.

Since they announced the title match for Monday, I've been trying to figure out who they could have put in that spot instead of Sid and there really aren't a lot of options. Assuming he's healthy, there's always Sting, but is that really where you want to go again, especially with Hogan out there somewhere? There's Vampiro, but my goodness that would be a jump. Kidman is a US Title level guy at best. That really just leaves Booker T., who is last seen out cold and being put in the Torture Rack because Luger and Sid are a team for no apparent reason.

So we're waiting to see if Sid is the guy that can carry the promotion? I'm assuming we'll get Sting and Hogan back soon enough, meaning it really is going to become even more of a good old boys network around here. I know the idea is to find someone steady, but that should be done while also building for the future, which WCW has never managed to do. Everyone young has been ground down to nothing for the sake of pushing old acts for a quick score. Above all else, that might be the biggest thing that lead to their downfall. It's really hard to care when the quality is going down and the champions get older every week.

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

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

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

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

Thunder – January 12, 2000: It's Killed My Ability To Speak

Thunder

Date: January 12, 2000

Location: Civic Center, Erie, Pennsylvania

Attendance: 3,947

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Scott Hudson, Mike Tenay

We're officially on Wednesdays now as Thunder goes running away from Smackdown as fast as it can. It's the final show before Souled Out, which isn't going to wind up meaning anything as the top half of the card is going to be thrown out the window due to a bunch of injuries. Let's get to it.

We open with clips from Nitro this week. The old guys are prominently featured.

Bret Hart arrives separately from the NWO.

Vampiro vs. Crowbar

To set the tone for this show, Tony brings up the Old Age Outlaws and Scott's immediate response is "Oh you didn't know." Vampiro jumps David Flair during the entrances and goes after Crowbar early on. David gets planted with a Rock Bottom on the floor but Crowbar pops back up with a moonsault to the floor to take both of them down.

Crowbar hits a slingshot splash for two but Vampiro plants him with another Rock Bottom. Some kicks set up a pose but Crowbar plants him with a German suplex followed by a slingshot legdrop. Back up and Vampiro gets crotched on top, only to counter a hurricanrana into a superbomb for the

pin. Short but entertaining while it lasted.

Vampiro gets beaten down post match until Arn Anderson comes out to talk to David. Crowbar goes after Arn and gets laid out.

Time to run down the card.

Here's Bret Hart with something to say. The crowd has a right to boo him right now because he's let them all down. He doesn't like the way the NWO takes all those shortcuts so the NWO is out and the pink and black attack is back. Bret tells the NWO where they can stick it and here they come to the stage. Nash says Bret hasn't learned a thing "since New York" because he's still too stupid for his own good.

The crowd may want heroes, but Bret could have become a god in the NWO. Bret needs to forget about this Canadian hero bull because hard work doesn't pay. That would be one of those shoot comments that isn't meant to be a shoot comment. Nash offers Bret a chance to come back to the team right now, but Bret swears a bit more. He'll go through the NWO one by one starting tonight so Nash promises to end Hart's career. It's a nice idea, even though I'm not entirely sure why Bret has had a change of attitude.

After a break, Bret is sitting in a room with a ball bat.

The Old Age Outlaws are watching on a monitor. I guess that passes for interesting now.

Hardcore Title: Brian Knobbs vs. Norman Smiley

Norman is defending and this is taking place outside, but Norman it's too cold. He's finally forced outside and gets jumped by Knobbs, who nails him with a bunch of weapons. Norman comes back by throwing him into a wall and they hit each other with trashcans and a metal sheet. Cue a car to run Norman down, allowing Knobbs to hit him with a shovel, because RUNNING HIM OVER WITH A CAR isn't enough, for the pin and the title, because Brian Knobbs is a better choice to be a champion than the entertaining Smiley, and doing this four days before a four way title match makes total sense.

The NWO kicks Bret's door down.

Here's the Revolution with something to say. They're ready for the big showdown with the Filthy Animals on Sunday and Shane might even get in the match himself. Malenko promises to raise the Revolution flag on Sunday over the bodies of the Filthy Animals. Saturn talks about spinning wheels and nearly gets into it with Asya until Shane calms them down and tells Asya not to screw this up.

The NWO has Bret and carry him through the back. The Old Age Outlaws are STILL watching all this. I'm still trying to figure out why this is supposed to be interesting.

Jerry Flynn and Tank Abbott get arrested for fighting.

Madusa vs. Oklahoma

Non-title, but this is an evening gown match. Oklahoma comes out in a dress and carrying the Cruiserweight Title, so here's Miss Hancock to shake her head at him. Madusa comes up from behind and kicks Oklahoma down before they whip each other into the steps. He can't get the barbecue sauce taped to his leg so he slams Madusa and tries to get it out again. With that taking way too long, Madusa suplexes him down and strips his dress off for the win.

As if that's not enough, Oklahoma gets the bottle loose and nails Madusa, rips off the top of her dress and pours the sauce over her. This is in no way symbolic of anything whatsoever.

The NWO burns Bret's gear.

Madusa yells a lot, the producer yells clear, the segment ends.

Midnight vs. Booker T. vs. Stevie Ray

It's an elimination match. Why you ask? I don't know, but I'm assuming Oklahoma in a dress pouring barbecue sauce over Madusa's chest will explain it. Midnight comes out first but we see Stevie jumping Booker backstage. Stevie comes out and beats Midnight into the corner for a knee to the ribs and right hands to the face. A clothesline and ax kick set up

a powerslam as Midnight has had no offense.

Cue Booker who punches Stevie to the floor but Stevie wants a mic. He's going to leave now and since this is an elimination match, Booker now has to beat up Midnight. So after we had the regular man on woman violence, we now get man on woman violence against the man's will. Can we please get rid of Russo so we don't have to watch his weird fetish stuff anymore?

Booker grabs a headlock before putting Midnight down with a few shoulders. He doesn't want to follow up though so they stumble around until Midnight scores with a dropkick. Booker hits the ax kick but Stevie low bridges him to the floor and blasts him with a slap jack. He throws Booker inside and tells Midnight to pin him, but Midnight pulls Booker on top of her to give him the win.

Rating: F. So we had a man beating up a woman, a man reluctantly fighting a woman, and then a woman laying down and pulling a man on top of her. I'm sure Russo and Ferrara loved it because they seem to hate women in any form and good for them for getting to enjoy themselves for a few minutes while everyone continues to watch anything else.

Midnight dropkicks Stevie post match, but since that might mean a lowly woman got one up on a MAN, Stevie slap jacks her to put her back in her place.

Jerry Flynn is put in his cell and Tank Abbott jumps him. Because they're cell mates. It's WACKY!

Kanyon is ready for his champagne on a pole match. Well of course he is.

Nash is going to cut Bret's hair.

Funk sends Zbyszko to find out if Bret has had his head shaved, because he doesn't care enough to go find out himself. And that's the boss people.

Chris Kanyon vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

Champagne bottle on a pole. Kanyon slugs him down as Bigelow gets inside

but Bam Bam nails an elbow to the face. An early climb is countered with a powerbomb from Kanyon (looked better than you would think) but Bigelow crotches him to break up a bottle attempt. Bigelow nails a belly to back and falling headbutt as they're trying this wrestling thing for a change. This time it's Bigelow getting crotched as he goes up, allowing Kanyon to Russian legsweep him down from the ropes to put both guys down.

It's Bigelow up first but Kanyon's girls get on the apron to break up Greetings From Asbury Park. Your good guy tries to kiss the girl but Kanyon gets up for a save. Kanyon pulls down the bottle and dives into a right hand to the head. Bigelow grabs the bottle, throws it down, and headbutts Kanyon between the legs. Greetings From Asbury Park ends this.

Rating: D+. Somehow this is probably the match of the night, even though they ignored the gimmick of the match. You can almost cringe in advance whenever a woman is on screen these days though and it has nothing to do with their performances. Somehow we've reached the point where Vince having Trish bark like a dog is a lot easier to sit through than what's going on here.

Post match Luger, still dressed as Sting, comes out and nails Bigelow with a ball bat. Luger loads up a Scorpion Deathlock (oh I'd pay to see him try that move) but a crow appears at ringside to screw off Luger and Liz. Bigelow gets up and yells at Luger, earning him a champagne bottle shot to the head.

Zbyszko and Orndorff look for Bret.

Package on Page vs. Bagwell, which makes sense, even though they never actually showed what started the thing.

Kimberly comes out to talk about various challenges before Gene gets to the point: why are she and Page having issues? Apparently Page doesn't like Kimberly getting too involved with all the people at work but this isn't about Bagwell. Gene: "How are things in the bedroom at home?" I'm wrapping this up quickly: Kimberly says this is private and doesn't refute anything Bagwell has said other than she's taller than he says.

MY GOODNESS stop treating the women on these shows like this. Madusa is

stripped and covered in sauce, Midnight is beaten up and blamed for splitting up a team and now Kimberly is basically called a sl** who has been with every member of the locker room as Gene asks her about her sex life. This gets more and more ridiculous every day and it's getting sickening.

Sid and Benoit are ready for tonight as well as Sunday.

Sid Vicious/Chris Benoit vs. Jeff Jarrett/Kevin Nash

Jeff promises to take Benoit apart on Sunday but gets cut off by Sid. It's a big brawl to start with Benoit taking Nash to the floor as Sid hammers on Jeff in the corner. Well it's not like Jeff can look any worse at this point. A big boot sets up a chokeslam but Nash comes in off the apron to break it up. Nash and Sid pair off as Jeff and Benoit fight to the back of the arena. This is firmly in the "it's technically a match" category. Benoit comes back for a save but gets double teamed as the referee tries to keep this straight.

Jeff puts on the sleeper and of course gets reversed. He does however mix things up by jawbreaking his way out instead of using a suplex. Benoit grabs the ropes to avoid a dropkick and catapults Jeff into the corner. Nash breaks up the Crossface and everything breaks down again. They send Benoit to the floor and Nash blasts Sid with the US Title. Jeff tries the same thing on Benoit but eats a suplex. The Swan Dive is broken up and Nash shoves Benoit onto the belt, setting up the Stroke for the pin.

Rating: D. Total Attitude Era style main event here with neither team looking particularly good. I'm still not sure why I'm supposed to care about Sid vs. Hart on Sunday when they've barely interacted or why Nash being commissioner is going to be interesting (you know he's going over Funk) but the wrestling isn't helping anything.

Scott Steiner is out cold under a table and Bret is gone.

Bret, covered in bruises, walks outside but says he isn't leaving like that. Ignore his hair clearly under the back of his hat.

It's time for our big closing segment with Bret coming to the ring with a

pipe. He wants the NWO out here right now so here are Nash and Jarrett with ball bats. Remember when people fought with their fists instead of metal objects? Bret gets beaten down so Anderson (with a bucket. A bucket?) and Funk (branding iron) come out. Didn't Funk say he didn't care? The old guys clean house but Funk thinks something is up.

Anderson throws the bucket of water on Bret, cleaning the bruises off his face. As you should have seen coming, Bret takes off his shirt and reveals an NWO shirt (because OF COURSE). Cue the New Age Outlaws (as Tenay calls them) but they're quickly taken down. Sid and Benoit come out and take beatings as well, only to have Funk hit Nash low (because Sid and Benoit are worthless when compared to a legend like Funk) and go for the branding iron to end the show.

Overall Rating:

SLRAMYBIBAWRPFBYAAWHNWHTAOGWCAYOPPBATETGAJAEACDJWMAARATSTCFYHMPDAWSISGYO
OAJAWFTDWRISIAYRHMDYRHDTTSOF.

For so long Russo and may you be impaled by a wild rhinoceros, preferably female, because you are a woman hating neanderthal who has treated a once great wrestling company as your own personal playground because you aren't talented enough to get a job anywhere else and couldn't do jack without McMahon, Austin and Rock around to save the company from your horrible movie plots disguised as wrestling stories. I'm so glad you're out of a job and wait for the day when reality sets in and you realize how much damage you really have done to the sport of wrestling.

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

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

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

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

Thunder – January 6, 2000: It's Creeping Closer

Thunder

Date: January 6, 2000

Location: Civic Center, Florence, South Carolina

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Scott Hudson, Mike Tenay

It's a new year and please, for the love of all things good and not made of Russo, make it be a new Thunder. Almost the only stories coming out of Nitro are new Tag Team Champions....who had to run away so we could get to the NWO stuff, and the new commissioner....who was beaten up by the NWO to end the show. Heaven forbid WCW let anyone new (as new as Commissioner Terry Funk could be) get over. Let's get to it.

Clips from Nitro of the major stories.

The NWO drags Arn Anderson into the arena. Have they just had him held hostage for three days now? Why am I still surprised by these things?

Cruiserweight Title: Asya vs. Madusa

Well at least it's not more man vs. woman. Madusa is defending and has Spice in her corner as part of a pairing that has never actually been explained. The interference (and the stupid) start before the match as Oklahoma comes out to do commentary because we need a four man booth.

Madusa grabs the ropes to block a dropkick as Oklahoma is ripping on Madusa for holding a man's title when she should be at home cooking for her husband. So apparently Oklahoma will be portraying Jeff Jarrett in a feud that is nowhere near as interesting as Jarrett vs. Chyna. The Revolution distracts the referee so Saturn can jump Asya, allowing Madusa to hit the German suplex (Oklahoma: "A move originated by a man!") to retain.

Madusa yells at Oklahoma and the Powers That Be and gets a barbecue sauce bottle broken over her head. Well at least that's what the other announcers say happen because we have to see the Filthy Animals run in to save Asya. Why they're saving Asya isn't clear as their teams were feuding, but it makes as much sense as anything else.

The announcers run down the card.

Juventud Guerrera and Psychosis come out with the former doing his Rock imitation and throwing Schiavone out of the commentary booth.

Here's Terry Funk to beat up the luchadors and give Tony his seat back. I'm so glad they wasted that minute on an angle (if that qualified as an angle) that was over as soon as it started. Funk says the NWO can do this the easy way by bringing Arn Anderson out here right now, or the hard way by making him deal with it himself. Jarrett comes out, swears a bit, and says they'll be out here in an hour.

Saturn tells the Filthy Animals to be, and I quote, "like a midget at a urinal: on their toes." Before they get much further, Juventud runs in and takes over the interview from Gene. So is Juvy just there to make Russo and Ferrara chuckle at this point?

The NWO beats up Arn Anderson. This angle would work so much better with Flair than Funk, but can you blame Flair for not wanting to get destroyed in the Carolinas all over again for the sake of putting over the NWO?

Gene brings out Booker T for a chat about Stevie Ray's actions. Booker brings up Stevie's injury and how he needed someone to watch his back. The only person that would was Midnight, and Stevie needs to accept that Midnight is going to be around. Stevie comes out and says Midnight isn't ready because she's cost him four matches. He wants a match with Midnight tonight, and if Stevie wins, Midnight is gone. If Midnight wins though, Harlem Heat is back together with Midnight as a member. You can see the other booking hands getting in on these stories as this, while not very interesting, is completely logical.

David Flair, Crowbar and Daffney are watching on a monitor as the NWO pours hot coffee on Anderson. At what point are these guys arrested?

Flair looks concerned.

PG-13/Chavo Guerrero Jr. vs. 3 Count

That's quite the odd pairing. We're promised a 3 Count concert after the match. Well I'm sold. Shannon can't hit a Fameasser on Chavo to start so it's off to Shane and JC. Evan gets bored on the apron and springboards in with a dropkick before decking Chavo and diving onto Wolfie.

Everything breaks down and Chavo hits Shannon's tornado DDT, only to have Shane hit him with the green circle for the win. Nothing match, but what are you expecting from a minute and a half long six man tag?

We get the concert, making this by far and away the most entertaining show of the year so far.

David walks away from his partners.

Funk beats up security for not finding Arn. He's kind of got a point actually.

The Wall vs. Jerry Flynn

This is a shoot fight because that's what wrestling fans tune in to see: boring wrestlers pretending to shoot on each other. Tank Abbott comes out and to watch because he's still employed for reasons I don't understand. Wall dominates to start but Flynn comes back with his limited assortment of kicks. Jerry takes it outside and whips him into the barricade before slugging away back inside. Back in and Jerry strikes even more but stops to yell at Abbott, earning him a shot to the back of the head, giving Wall the pin. More worthless stuff as people with no business on TV get pushed.

Abbott beats up Wall and Doug Dillinger post match.

David finds Funk.

US Title: Jeff Jarrett vs. Norman Smiley

Bunkhouse Brawl with Jeff defending. Smiley's Hardcore Title is off to the side for reasons unclear but it might have something to do with the

shoulder pads he's wearing. He bails to the floor to start so Jeff throws a trashcan at his head to take over. Smiley is sent into a chair and screams a lot but finally fights back with a trashcan lid and a kendo stick shot. Norman doesn't want to cover due to fear and a guitar shot sets up the Stroke to retain. Another two and a half minute gimmick match.

Post match David and Terry come out and choke Jarrett with the crowbar as Terry demands the NWO get out here. After a break, the NWO brings out Anderson and Nash has a challenge: a match with Funk at Souled Out with the Commissioner's job on the line. Funk agrees if it's a one on one hardcore match with the NWO banned from ringside.

On top of that, he wants a hardcore match against Bret for the title tonight, even though he cares more about hurting Bret than winning the belt. Notice how he worded that: he doesn't say the title is worthless like Goldberg did to Rick Steiner with the TV Title, but that there's something he wants more. Bret agrees and threatens to kill Funk tonight. That's so far outside something Bret would normally say and it doesn't work coming from him. Hart suggests a swap of Jarrett for Anderson, but Arn can't help but get in a shot at Jarrett, earning him a ball bat shot from Bret.

Disco sells his Rolex to pay off some of his debt to the Mafia.

Stevie Ray yells at Funk for no apparent reason.

Midnight vs. Stevie Ray

No Booker at ringside. After appearing in the ring, Midnight dropkicks Stevie into the corner and slugs away, only to eat a clothesline and some right hands. A slam and elbow get two on Midnight with Stevie pulling up off the cover. He does the same thing after a back elbow but stops to stare at the camera in an unintentionally (I think?) funny spot. We hit the chinlock for a bit before Stevie forearms Midnight down again.

There's a side slam and Stevie loads up the slapjack, but Booker runs out to say this has to be a fair match. Stevie actually agrees and powerslams Midnight for no cover as he checks her arm instead. That's the mating

call of a wacky finish though as Midnight rolls him up for the surprise pin.

Rating: D. The match had a goofy finish but at least it wasn't the most illogical thing in the world. Russo's booking gets annoying when you have stuff come out of nowhere and doesn't have any kind of foundation. Stevie letting her up time after time and then getting caught in his arrogance was set up over the course of the match and was paid off at the end. That's far better storytelling than almost anything else Russo does, which makes me think he isn't in charge of this story.

Kidman and Konnan introduce Okerlund to a good looking blonde, who I believe is Pamela Paulshock. She immediately gets on my nerves by calling Gene sexy. Gene Okerlund has never been sexy in his life. Stop these lies.

Back from a break with Gene calling out Page for a chat. Page denies Kimberly cheating with Buff but says Bagwell did hit on her. He'd like Bagwell out here right now but only gets him to the stage. We get sex jokes, gay jokes, and low testicular fortitude jokes, triggering a big brawl.

The Artist still won't record. This isn't going anywhere is it?

Juvy does the interview with Bam Bam Bigelow as Gene is talking to Paulshock. Before they get anywhere, Kanyon blasts Bigelow with a champagne bottle.

Kevin Nash vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

And never mind as Bigelow is down on the stage where Steiner and Jarrett get him into a wheelbarrow. Nash hits Bigelow with a ball bat and the match (yes this was a match) is over in 22 seconds. I guess the multiple matches on Monday were enough for Nash this week.

Tag Team Titles: Konnan/Kidman vs. Crowbar/David Flair

David/Crowbar won the titles on Monday in the ridiculous tournament. David comes out with his belt on backwards because he's crazy you see. Crowbar hammers on Kidman to start, meaning they're already wising up by

keeping Flair on the apron. A back elbow to the jaw puts Kidman down but YOU STILL CAN'T POWERBOMB CROWBAR EVEN THOUGH PEOPLE HAVE DONE IT AND THIS JOKE IS OLD. Off to David for a suplex as we get the old standard Schiavone hype for basic moves.

Crowbar comes in with a springboard missile dropkick and a guillotine legdrop for two with Konnan making the save. I had forgotten who Kidman's partner was until then. Kidman counters another powerbomb (oh come on now Crowbar. Even you aren't that crazy) but David breaks up the shooting star. Crowbar tries a top rope hurricanrana but Rey grabs Kidman's leg to make the save. Cue a limping Arn Anderson as Konnan comes in to clean house. In the melee, Anderson hits Konnan with the crowbar to give Flair the pin.

Rating: D+. Totally watchable match while Kidman and Crowbar were in there but it's clear that Flair just isn't all that good. The Anderson stuff is getting annoying as they're beating this story into our heads, but unfortunately they're wasting the Tag Team Titles on this. Maybe the Revolution and Filthy Animals could be fighting over the belts, but we need them on another team that doesn't deserve them so we can see David Flair in the ring.

The Revolution comes out and beats down the Animals again.

Terry Funk vs. Bret Hart

Non-title hardcore match. Bret is in shorts instead of ring gear and hammers Funk to the floor early on. Terry starts throwing in the chairs as is his customs but Bret throws him face first into one of them and nails Funk with the bat. They both head outside with Terry taking a chair to the head. All Bret so far. Back in and Funk gets in a few left hands and takes it right back outside for a chair to Bret's shoulder.

Terry sends him into the cart of weapons but misses the moonsault onto a trashcan onto Bret, allowing the champ to blast him in the head with another chair. Hart Pillmanizes the leg and knocks the referee down (why?), so let's cut to Arn Anderson putting on a referee's shirt. David Flair comes in and asks to take the spot instead, which Arn reluctantly allows. Cue the NWO with the bats to Funk and Nash decks David. Nash

Jackknifes Funk through the stage to end the show.

Rating: F+. A match? You think this was a match? I'll skip complaining about how horrible this was as you took Bret Hart and Terry Funk and put them in a street fight instead of anything resembling a wrestling match because ratings are going to plummet if you don't have some kind of violence right? Also, this is twice since Funk has debuted as commissioner that he's been beaten down to end the show. Flair had this one right all the way.

Overall Rating: F+. The wrestling still sucks, but they're moving tiny steps in the right direction. Look at the Harlem Heat story for example: there's finally some logic to it and you can tell what's going on without needing to take notes. The main event makes sense too, as poor as the wrestling has been. We're transitioning into the boring period instead of the crazy stuff, which makes me sigh and wonder what else is on instead of wanting to steal plutonium to go back in time and bash Russo's head in with a pipe wrench. They're moving in the right direction, but it's WAY too late to make things right at this point.

That's it for Thunder on Thursdays as it only took four months for Smackdown to run them out of their time slot.

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

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

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

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

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



When we last left WCW, they were the undisputed kings of the Monday Night Wars and that's certainly still the case as they come into 1998. Things were so good that they decided to more than double the amount of television they were airing per week. To say this might have been too much too soon is an understatement but WCW had done stupider stuff before.

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

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

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

You can pick up the book from Amazon [here](#).

From the UK Amazon [here](#).

From the Canadian Amazon [here](#).

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

Also you can still get any of my previous books on the WWE Championship, Monday Night Raw from 1998 and 2001, Monday Nitro from 1995-97, In Your House, Summerslam, Starrcade, ECW Pay Per Views, Royal Rumble, Saturday Night's Main Event, the WWF and WCW pay per views from 1998 and Clash of the Champions at my author's page [here](#).

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

KB

Thunder – December 23, 1999:

A New Breed Of Failing

Thunder

Date: December 23, 1999

Location: Wicomico Civic Center, Salisbury, Maryland

Attendance: 4,000

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Mike Tenay, Scott Hudson

On Monday, this company replaced wrestling with some weird shoot style which involves whatever Russo and Ferrara feeling like throwing out there being presented as the new reality. The big story was the reformation of the NWO because....normally I would complain here but it was probably the most logical thing all night. I have no idea what I'm about to watch but let's get to it.

We open with a recap of Monday's main story. The two minute version doesn't make it any better than the three hour edition.

Tenay promises to prove that Thunder is special again.

Here's the NWO to open things up and Tony is RIGHT THERE to tell us how strong the NWO really is. Bret brags about all the gold and says they couldn't make this any more black and white. This has been in the works for over a month and the stupid wrestling fans never saw it coming. We see some clips of the Outsiders helping Bret out over the last few months with Bret conveniently never seeing a thing.

This is the one and only one thing I can give Russo some slack on: the big conspiracy stories don't hold up if you know what to look for, so tying all this together probably did work a lot better when this show was airing live. Basically the NWO lead Goldberg and Benoit along so the four of them wound up with all the belts and it was a big swerve all along. It still doesn't make up for Monday's debacle or the holes in the logic, but at least it's there. On the screwjob at Starrcade, Bret: "That was better than Shawn Michaels!"

Nash rips on the fans for only cheering the Outsiders because they wanted to be hip. They're a bunch of \$5 an hour workers who have no idea what it

takes to be this great. They've never needed the people but they don't mind taking the money. Hall says a bunch of stuff that has to be censored but Jeff cleans it up by declaring this crowd the first annual slapnuts convention. Again he declares himself the chosen one, which makes me wonder why he isn't the World Champion.

Jeff: "No one saw it coming!" Hall: "I didn't know where we were half the time." This NWO is only going to be the elite, because once you've had the black, you never go back. That line is SO out of place from Jarrett. Cue Goldberg, who is quickly told he sucks. He's going to rip the NWO's hearts out and it's not going to be who's next but who's left.

The announcers eat up time by running down the card. Tenay is lead announcer and Tony is playing second fiddle. That's quite odd to see.

Token footage of Leia Meow stretching.

Two helmeted bikers arrive.

Benoit says he prefers life's hard decisions because they require sacrifice. He modeled himself after Bret for living his life the way he believed it should be lived. That ended Monday, so tonight he's taking Bret's heart.

PG-13 vs. Varsity Club

Steiner and Rotundo here but first, a rap from PG-13. Leia is forced to exercise before the match and I'm sure you get the idea here. PG-13 gets beaten down to start and Steiner runs over JC Ice. Sullivan says the Varsity Club is too smart to get conned like Goldberg. A combination of clotheslines and Steiner Lines knock PG-13 into oblivion but the referee throws it out. Tenay says it's a double DQ, even though PG-13 literally had no offense.

Wolfie D. is put in the Tree of Woe for a low blow from Meow. Who in the world thought these teams needed to be brought in?

David Flair beats up a fast food worker for not getting his order right.

Russo is yelling at Hennig in his office, which has been put back

together but still has the damage from Piper. So they dragged the broken walls to the arena and set them back up? Hennig didn't seem to know what was going on in the big scheme but here are the bikers to interrupt. It's the Harris Twins who turn over Russo's table and yell at him for screwing with their lives.

Here are the Filthy Animals and Jim Duggan with something to say. Eddie says the Animals are a lot of things but above all else, they're Americans. The Revolution left them by the roadside but they're back to knock the Revolution down. Kidman and Konnan say the same thing as Eddie, albeit in very, very different methods of speaking. Rey promises to beat the Revolution like the dogs they are.

Duggan of course says H0 and USA. He wants to make the Revolution his personal H0 so here's the Revolution with Dean ranting about the flag of the Revelation (yes the Revelation because Dean doesn't even care what stable he's in). Saturn starts talking about Fred Flintstone never realizing that the rack of ribs is too big for his car, making him by far the most entertaining thing in this story. Shane wants to break Duggan's neck and complains about Americans. The fans are the ones that suck off the government programs and Duggan's comeback is just him being an idiot. Apparently there's a match tonight.

Russo sends Hennig and Jarrett after Creative Control.

Tank Abbott vs. La Parka

A right hand puts La Parka down and Tank hammers away in the corner. La Parka hits him with the chair and gets knocked out cold for a no contest.

Tank knocks Doug Dillinger out too.

Norman Smiley hides from Goldberg. Why is Goldberg having issues finding the NWO? Why didn't he just wait for them to come through the curtain earlier?

The Artist still has issues recording his music but still won't speak. Paisley gets on the producer for questioning the lyrics.

Hardcore Title: Fit Finlay vs. Norman Smiley

Smiley is defending but Finlay knocks him into the weapons cart to get things going. They fight into the crowd and into the back as we hit the hardcore requirement from the WWF. Knobbs shows up and helps beat Norman up in the concession stand. They lower a metal door and try to crush Norman but Meng makes the save. Norman is thrown on top of Finlay for the pin.

Meng gives Norman the Death Grip post "match".

Jeff Jarrett finds a paper.

Goldberg chokes Jarrett against a wall and says he's coming for the NWO when they least expect it.

Creative Control comes out to say they're no longer Creative Control. Now they're Ron and Don Harris because I guess that's supposed to make us care about them. They and their country accents are coming for the Powers That Be. Side note: if they're the Powers That Be, why do we never hear another voice?

Ron Harris/Don Harris vs. Curt Hennig/Jeff Jarrett

And there's no Jarrett, so the heel is now in a handicap match. Hennig tries to fight back as Tony tries to keep the Twins straight. The Twins throw Hennig around and a side slam gives we'll say Ron the pin. Total squash in less than two minutes.

The NWO comes out gives the Harris the NWO treatment, complete with spray paint.

Bam Bam Bigelow vs. Maestro

Kanyon comes out to do commentary for reasons of storyline development and immediately starts a BRING BACK JUVY chant. Well it's a one man chant but you get the idea. Maestro goes right at Bigelow to start but gets thrown away when trying a bulldog. Symphony comes in to prevent the diving headbutt so Bigelow dives at her anyway, sending Symphony running away. The distraction lets Kanyon hit Bigelow with a champagne bucket to give Maestro the pin.

Diamond Dallas Page says there's nothing between Buff Bagwell and his wife. He's booked against the Wall but won't fight him until he gets a match with Bagwell.

Recap of Madusa and Karagias.

Evan is in the ring and YES! IT! IS! TIME! Evan says it's time for a comeback and introduces us to his friends Shannon Moore and Shane Helms. Their collective names: 3 Count. They may not be N'Sync or the Backstreet Boys but they'll charm the pants off everyone's girlfriend. Now hit the music. We get a music video for the yet to be named single, spliced together with the guys singing the song (I Can't Get You Out Of My Heart). The tasteless fans hate the song and here's a now serious Chavo Guerrero to clean house with dropkicks.

I know they're not the best remembered team but I loved these guys and thought they were a great idea. Boy bands were huge back then so why not go with a gimmick based on them? It's certainly better than Evan being the schnook who keeps getting beaten up by women every other week.

David Flair shows up at a gas station and runs into a guy named Crowbar. The Misfits show up and beat the two of them down for no adequately explored reason.

Konnan/Kidman/Jim Duggan vs. Revolution

Saturn/Malenko/Asya here with Shane on commentary. Konnan hammers on Malenko to start and Kidman comes in with a slingshot legdrop. Off to Saturn who eats a Bodog and a high cross body for two. Asya gets knocked off the apron as well but Saturn suplexes Kidman in half.

Back to Malenko for two off a suplex, followed by Saturn's top rope elbow for the same. Duggan gets the hot tag and cleans house with his variety of right hands and slams. He goes to hit Asya but takes a low blow from Saturn. Shane wants Duggan to denounce America and everything breaks down. The hobbling Rey distracts Dean and Saturn, setting up a sloppy double sunset flip to give the Animals the pin.

Rating: D+. Boring match but somehow this was the first one tonight to

break three minutes. Duggan (why is he still the janitor?) doesn't fit in this story and there's no reason for the Animals vs. the Revolution to keep going other than they have nothing else to do. At least they gave this match something close to time.

The Revolution gets in some crutches shots to make themselves feel better.

Kevin Nash vs. The Wall

It's Hall's turn to be on commentary. Nash takes him into the corner for some knees to the ribs to start but Wall comes back with right hands to the head. A clothesline and big boot put Nash down and it's Hall coming in with the pipe for the DQ.

Wall gets spray painted and beaten up even more.

Post break, Wall gets off a stretcher.

As Nash gets in the shower, Hall finds Goldberg in his room. Back to the shower, where Nash doesn't seem to notice the camera, and Goldberg is there too. Is he multiplying or something? We see both Outsiders out cold. Is it possible to like, SLOW DOWN on having him go through the NW0?

WCW World Title: Bret Hart vs. Chris Benoit

Benoit is challenging of course and erupts on Hart in the corner to get things going. They fight over to the announcers' table with the champ getting control. Back inside with Bret dropping a leg and an elbow, followed by a DDT for two. Benoit fights back with a kick to the ribs and elbow to the jaw for two of his own. The champ nails a low blow as the fans are just silent. Benoit reverses him into the corner and grabs the Crossface, drawing in Jarrett for the DQ.

Rating: D. Just a punch and kick match until the finish with no one believing that Benoit was going over here. That silence for Bret tells you everything you need to know though: this storyline is just a disaster. Monday was too much for the fans to take and there's no reason to care. They weren't even booing, but rather just sitting there in silence. That's a bad sign after your big angle of the year.

Cue Goldberg to spear Jarrett and chase Bret to the back. Bret gets away in a car but Goldberg sees the Powers That Be's limo. One right hand through the window and see you in June Goldberg. By the way, for those of you that have never seen it, that injury is what Nash said killed the Fingerpoke of Doom fallout story with Goldberg rising up through the ranks to get Hogan. You read that right.

Overall Rating: F. You know the amazing thing about this show? That Bret vs. Benoit match took place after the show was supposed to end. Why is that amazing? That match (the longest of the night at 4:54) took us to our grand total of less than 21 minutes of wrestling. In other words, in the two hours Thunder was scheduled to be on the air, the total time spent on wrestling (and that's including Norman vs. Finlay in the back) was 15:41. If you add in the World Title match, the total time was 20:35. It took overtime to break 20 minutes of wrestling on a two hour show. That is unacceptable.

Now onto the good. This show wasn't the abomination that we saw on Monday. It was a disaster and one of the worst wrestling shows I've ever seen with almost no action, mostly worthless matches and a story that ran in two hours instead of two to six months, but it was NOT this past Monday. They reigned things way back in tonight and it made the show tolerable, but that certainly doesn't mean it's good. I think I can live with it like this, but there are far more changes needed here than WCW has time for.

The show isn't airing next week due to a college football game so that's it for Thunder in 1999.

Thunder – December 16, 1999:

The Storm Before The Big Storm

Thunder

Date: December 16, 1999

Location: Mobile Civic Center, Mobile, Alabama

Attendance: 3,889

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Scott Hudson, Juventud Guerrera

It's the final show before Starrcade and the big question is how can WCW screw this up even further. In theory we're getting big stars again tonight, but as we saw last week, that means nothing if the longest match is like four minutes and nothing comes from it. Also, how many big names lose heading into the biggest show of the year? Let's get to it.

Here are Sid and Benoit to open the show, apparently having forgotten Sid destroying Benoit at Fall Brawl three months ago. Sid talks about the war with the Outsiders and guarantees that it's a war they can't win. There are no escapes or retreats, but plenty of surrenders. Actually there won't be because you made sure it was a powerbomb match so neither guy has to job.

Benoit talks about Hall's history in ladder matches, while making sure to name drop the WWF as many times as he can. This Sunday, Benoit becomes the new king of the ladder. A challenge is made for a tag match tonight but here are Hennig/Creative Control/La Parka/Shane. Curt says the Outsiders are busy fighting Goldberg/Hart in a House of Pain match tonight, so Benoit and Sid can fight each other or be suspended for six months without pay. Who gave Hennig authority?

Juventud Guerrera comes out for commentary and does two Rock lines before the segment is over. I get the idea here but it's just not that funny.

Sting jumps Diamond Dallas Page for the attack on Monday. Page looks for Sting after a break.

Vampiro vs. Buff Bagwell

For the first time, we hear about Vampiro getting five minutes with Oklahoma if he beats Dr. Death on Sunday. A bad shoulder puts Vampiro down and here's Oklahoma to watch. Vampiro strikes away in the corner but gets slammed down off the top. Buff counters a hurricanrana with a powerbomb but let's look at singer Aaron Neville in the crowd along with the less than 2000 people who paid to get in. A superkick puts Buff on the floor but Vampiro has to glare at Oklahoma, which brings in Jerry Only and Williams for a standoff. As they fight, Oklahoma gets in a barbecue bottle shot, setting up the Blockbuster for the pin.

Rating: D. This was another waste of time with the match just being there as a backdrop for the Oklahoma/Williams/Misfits nonsense. But at least we got to see the barbecue spot, and that's funny because it's something Jim Ross done and Jim Ross being himself is funny in some way I guess. Right?

Vampiro gets covered in barbecue sauce to continue the unfunny joke.

Prince Iaukea and Paisley don't have much to say. Literally, Prince's new thing is he doesn't talk.

The Artist Form of Prince Iaukea vs. Evan Karagias

Non-title and Evan now has Spice with him. Well that's an upgrade. Juvy says this will be the jabroni match of the week. Jot that down: a champion is a jabroni. Prince points at Evan so Evan twists the finger back. Some right hands set up a springboard cross body for two on Prince but Iaukea dropkicks him out to the floor. Cue Madusa to fight with Spice because this show can't have a five minute match without someone coming to the ring. Paisley gets beaten up as well as Evan hits a missile dropkick on Prince. He tries to break up the girls though and Iaukea grabs a rollup for the pin, three days before a title defense.

Madusa slaps Evan post match so he leaves with Spice.

Page and Sting go at it in the back when another Sting comes up to go after the original Sting. It's clearly Luger, but in case it wasn't obvious enough, Page shouts LUGER as the fake Sting leaves.

Jim Duggan/Midnight vs. Asya/Perry Saturn

Shane sits in on commentary. The guys start things off with Duggan cranking on the arm and putting on a chinlock maybe 45 seconds into the match. Back up and Duggan starts a clubberin before clotheslining Saturn into the corner. It's off to the girls with Midnight dropkicking her down so it's off to Saturn for MAN ON WOMAN VIOLENCE! Where would we be without that?

Saturn hammers away in the corner and scores with a suplex as Harlem Heat comes down. The girls collide and it's back to the guys with Duggan coming in for his old 80s offense. Everything breaks down and Midnight is sent to the floor, but Stevie throws her right back in. Shane comes in and clotheslines Saturn by mistake so Dean brings in the 2x4, only to have Duggan take it away and nail Saturn for the pin.

Rating: C-. Somehow, that's 7:20 worth of wrestling but even worse, it's probably as good as this show is going to have. The amount of time helped it a bit, but the problem this company has isn't the lack of good wrestling but the lack of wrestling period. It's very telling that I'm so starved for actual wrestling on these shows that a thirty second run from Duggan, who was a total brawler for most of his career, was one of the best parts of either Thunder or Nitro this week.

The Revolution beats down Duggan but Aaron Neville and Booker T. make the save. Was Neville really necessary there? WWF had Mike Tyson the year before this, but WCW has some country singer in his late 50s at this point.

David Flair screams at Gene Okerlund for no logical reason.

Sting swings his ball bat and looks for Luger.

Hardcore Title: Norman Smiley vs. David Flair

Norman, in Alabama football gear, uses a trashcan to block an early crowbar shot. They trade trashcan shots, followed by Norman's spinning slam. David breaks up the spanking dance with a trashcan lid to the head but Meng comes out and destroys David's teddy bear, sending Norman running away for.....wait for it.....a countout in a Hardcore Title match. Since that's against the rules, doesn't that mean that this match is

still going on over fifteen years later?

Smiley runs from the arena.

Sting wants Luger out here right now because he knows it was him under that mask. Cue Luger, still dressed as Sting, for a beating from the real version. Juvy thinks it's Ric Flair (Black Scorpion reference?) as Luger blocks the third Stinger Splash by raising a boot. Liz pulls the bat away from Luger, allowing Sting to Rack him (there's a rarity). That knocks Liz down though, allowing Luger to get in some cheap shots with the bat on Sting before running away.

Post break, Sting doesn't want medical help.

Luger drives away. Bye.

The Wall vs. Steve Williams

Oklahoma jumps in on commentary because what else is he going to do? Wall's shoulder block is stopped by the powers of AMERICA before Williams hammers away with right hands and a slam. Williams charges into a boot and let's cut to Chavo Guerrero selling stuff in the crowd. The fans chant for Chavo as Berlyn chases Oklahoma off and nails Williams with some foreign object for the DQ.

Rating: D. So not only are we seeing Ferrara as the Jim Ross impersonator, but now we have to sit through Steve Williams getting matches on TV? He's fun to watch for a power guy, but you would think there are other people who could perform the role just as well. Like, the Wall for example?

Wall and Berlyn argue.

Nitro recap.

Buzzkill has fans sign a petition. He doesn't actually say for what, but hopefully it's his release so he can go be Brad Armstrong in the indies.

Curt Hennig vs. Dustin Rhodes

Before the match, Dustin calls Jeff Jarrett slap happy and promises to be

his daddy Sunday night. Hennig jumps him to start but Dustin slams him right back down. This brings Shane inside but he gets caught in the corner for Shattered Dreams. Curt hammers away again and there go the lights. JUST LET THEM WRESTLE! Some guy dressed like Seven flies to the ring with a guitar and nails Dustin for the DQ. My goodness. You have Curt Hennig and Dustin Rhodes and think they need a screwy finish? Those two could wrestle a passable match in their sleep but they get two and a half minutes and a run-in? Really?

Jarrett (like it was going to be anyone else) and Hennig destroy Dustin post match.

After a break and some ads, Jeff Jarrett calls the Rhodes Family a bunch of slapnuts.

Chris Benoit/Sid Vicious vs. Creative Control/Curt Hennig/Shane/La Parka

Sid wants the Powers That Be to come out here and fight like men. The twins go after Benoit to start as Sid mauls the other three. Benoit comes back on the twins as Sid beats Hennig up on the floor. The twins get beaten up by Benoit's ladder but Gerald saves Patrick from the Crossface. Curt gets back in and nails Benoit with the ladder and that's a DQ. Nice two minute seven man handicap match.

Sid and Benoit get beaten down. What this has to do with or makes me want to see Sid vs. Nash and Benoit vs. Hall is beyond me. But at least the heels get to look strong and heels are cool right?

Piper is going to be the gatekeeper for the cage match tonight. Oh yay.

Kanyon vs. Diamond Dallas Page

Why this isn't on Starrcade instead of Page vs. David Flair is another of life's great mysteries. Guerrera calls Kanyon Shampoo instead of Champagne. The Champagne character works fine as Kanyon being in a movie and letting it go to his head makes sense, especially when you consider how minimal his contribution was (he was a stunt man) compared to all of the wrestlers who starred in the movie and don't act all stuck up. Now of course that wasn't intentional in this company, but it's a nice touch.

Anyway, Page comes out to talk trash of his own but gets gum spat in his face to get things going.

Biggs does commentary as Page hits a neckbreaker but can't hit an early Diamond Cutter. A Rock Bottom gets two for Page until Canyon comes back with a lot of choking. Canyon loads up a tilt-a-whirl but Page busts out a headscissors of all things to take Canyon down. That's a new one for him. The announcers babble on about green cards as Canyon stomps away in the corner. Page comes back with a clothesline and some punches but Biggs gets up on the apron, only to hit his client by mistake. There's the Diamond Cutter but David Flair comes in with the crowbar to knock Page silly and give Canyon the win.

Rating: D+. Not a horrible match but the run-in continues to screw with whatever good stuff this show could have going for it. At least Canyon has a new character which works well enough for him, but what has happened to Diamond Dallas Page recently? The guy has gone from World Champion to just there in about eight months.

Bam Bam Bigelow runs in but gets laid out by a champagne bottle.

Piper beats up Creative Control with a pipe.

Bret walks to the ring until the director yells CUT.

Nash can't find Hall. Uh oh.

Starrcade ad.

A medic runs into the Outsiders' locker room, apparently due to an attack on Scott Hall.

Tag Team Titles: Outsiders vs. Goldberg/Bret Hart

The Outsiders are defending and this is a House of Pain match, which means a cage with a roof on it but you win by handcuffing your opponents to the cage. In other words, it's a way to keep people from having to job. Roddy Piper is gatekeeper but Creative Control and Jeff Jarrett beats him down during the entrances. Nash and Hart fight in the ring as Goldberg runs out and attacks Jarrett and the twins as Piper shrugs off a

beating, including a series of lead pipe shots, to clean house.

Goldberg rips the cage door off so he and Piper (now with the lead pipe) can come in. Jeff follows them in with guitars for Goldberg and Piper but Goldberg shrugs it off and spears Jeff down. Nash gets the pipe and hits Goldberg, allowing Jeff (fine ten seconds after the spear) to help chain Goldberg and Hart to the cage, presumably retaining the titles. Piper gets chained as well and Nash and Jarrett attack with the pipe before leaving. Goldberg rips the handcuffs from the cage to end the show.

No match of course but WOW. Nash just beat the main event of Starrcade in less than three minutes. Piper no sold pipe shots, Goldberg no sold a guitar shot, Jarrett no sold a spear, and then Goldberg no sold a beating with a pipe and ripped the handcuffs off. The World Title match wasn't mentioned throughout this mess and basically the entire thing was a way to blow off a meaningless TV angle instead of focusing on the main event of Starrcade. Finally, well done on bringing that cage in. I'm so glad WCW spent the money to have it shipped over for a five minute appearance.

Overall Rating: F-. We are three days before Starrcade. Think about that as you look at the card and you'll understand why this is a failure. Vince Russo has turned this company into a show where I'm looking forward to Janitor Jim Duggan appearances because I might get thirty seconds of brawling disguised as wrestling. That's what I've sunk to after all these messes over the last few months and now I get to see the Granddaddy of Them All dragged through the mud. It can't.....it can't.....it's going to get worse isn't it?

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of 1998 Pay Per View reviews at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00UYAMB8U>

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

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

Thunder – December 9, 1999: Now With A-List Awful

Thunder

Date: December 9, 1999

Location: Dane County Coliseum, Madison, Wisconsin

Attendance: 3,953

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Juventud Guerrera

I can't believe I'm saying this but there's a slight chance this could be an interesting episode. On Nitro, Russo promised A-List stars on this show. Now given how things work around here, you could have Steve Austin, Hulk Hogan and the Rock in every segment and somehow WCW would manage to screw it up, but at least the stars would be more interesting. Let's get to it.

Here are the Outsiders with a ladder to get things going. Hall sets it up and pretends to fall off, which would be funnier if Hall wasn't a constant threat to have a major accident every five minutes. He knows Benoit is just in this match for the raise and knows he can't handle a regular match, so he's asked for it to be a ladder match. Benoit should go rent a tape of the ladder match with Shawn to see what he's getting into.

Nash wants to talk about all the people around here with chips on their shoulders, including Sid. If Sid wants to walk around like a big man, Nash has a powerbomb waiting on him. This brings out Sid to say that he's the man. Nash: "Is Vader booked?" Sid charges the ring and goes after Nash, knocking the ladder over in the process. He loads up Nash for the powerbomb but Hall nails him in the back with the ladder. Dustin Rhodes runs out for the save, drawing out Jeff Jarrett and Benoit with the bad guys getting the better of it and setting up a likely six man main event.

Tenay talks about Rhonda Singh getting a Cruiserweight Title shot tonight

but Madusa comes out to say Singh isn't a cruiserweight. Singh is getting a title shot over Madusa's dead body. "Does this body look dead to you?" Well it's certainly in need of support.

Juventud Guerrera and Psychosis come out with Juvi's Rock impression getting SILENCE. Apparently Juvy is joining Tenay in the booth for the night. Oh good grief this is going to be a long night.

Nitro recap.

Dean Malenko vs. Booker T.

Well that's better than most matches we get on this show so maybe things are looking up. Maybe I should stop having false hope. Before the match, Shane Douglas challenges Jim Duggan to find three friends for an eight man tag at Starrcade. If the Revolution loses, they'll be WCW's janitors for a month, but if Duggan loses, he renounces his American citizenship. Well sure, why not. Malenko calls Dave Penzer a typical American and Saturn quotes Stripes.

Booker (with Stevie) nails Dean with a forearm and the ax kick to start but Dean pokes him in the eye and sends him outside. Saturn and Stevie get into it on the floor as Booker goes back inside for a spinebuster. Booker loads up another ax kick but Shane nails him in the head with the cast, setting up the Cloverleaf on the unconscious Booker for the quick win.

Duggan comes out to make the save, exciting Juvy WAY too much. Yeah the Revolution is getting more screen time, but it's leading to a Jim Duggan match. That's the disconnect with Russo: he knows how to make the buildup work, but the end result is usually a disaster.

Sid, Benoit and Rhodes jump Creative Control and Shane outside Russo's office. After a break, the six man is made.

The Artist Formerly Known As Prince Iaukea vs. Vampiro

Iaukea comes out to a bunch of candles as we enter another Russo standard: giving someone a really lame character which is somehow better than the one they previously had but still stupid. Juvy calls Vampiro a

jabroni for stealing the Juvy Driver. The bell rings and let's cut to Oklahoma coming out instead of watching the openin....maybe Oklahoma is the better option here.

We come back to the ring to see Prince blowing a kiss to Paisley (later known as Queen Sharmell) and superkicking Vampiro down. That's nice and all, but let's cut to Roddy Piper who is GETTING OUT OF A LIMO. Back to the ring with Vampiro whipping him into the barricade but heading back inside for a spinebuster from Prince. Oklahoma hits on Paisley as Vampiro lands on his feet out of a monkey flip and superkicks Prince for the pin. This match was less than two and a half minutes long and somehow squeezed in Oklahoma's entrance, Oklahoma hitting on Paisely, Piper getting out of a limo and two superkicks.

Prince goes after Oklahoma post match and gets beaten up by Dr. Death.

Russo fires Mona for losing on Monday. Good. Go be the adorable Molly Holly and get to actually show off a bit instead. Rhonda Singh comes in and thanks Russo as Hennig and the twins snicker at her weight. She has a plan to get ratings. Could that plan be to have a boss who makes sure that every viewer knows that women are totally beneath him and how powerful he is over them? Oh and that Singh is fat and we should all laugh at her?

Roddy Piper and Nick Patrick have a chat for the sake of plot convenience. There's a new ruling that says all referee decisions are final. When was this not the case?

Saturn and Stevie Ray fight in the back.

Goldberg/Bret Hart get a Tag Team Title shot tonight and don't have much to say about it.

Rhonda Singh vs. Madusa

Evan Karagias is on commentary, so I guess the title match was dropped somewhere in the 40 minutes since it was announced. Singh shoves her down to start and runs her over with the power of fat. Evan uses pop lyrics to describe his feelings for Madusa, who avoids a middle rope splash. A

quick middle rope dropkick knocks Singh down as Evan gets on the apron. Madusa kisses him but it's just a distraction so Singh can miss a charge and knock Karagias off the apron, allowing Madusa to get a rollup pin.

Time for Singh's big ratings ploy: stripping! Juvy loves it but the lights start flickering. You can see someone jumping Singh and knocking her out.

David Flair starts talking about his match in the Block (boiler room) with Jerry Flynn. He starts saying To Be The Man but cracks up instead.

We're about halfway through the show. Total match time: 5:53.

Stevie nails Saturn with a Surge container.

David Flair goes to fight Flynn in the boiler room but runs into Buzzkill, who wants them to give peace a chance. David tries to hit him with the crowbar but Flynn takes him down. Cue Tank Abbott for the first time in about six and a half months to lay out Flynn. This was billed as a match, believe it or not.

Tag Team Titles: Goldberg/Bret Hart vs. Creative Control

Bret and we'll say Gerald get things going with Hart hammering on the arm. The twins start double teaming to take over as the fans already want Goldberg. A clothesline gets a very quick two count from Slick Johnson, drawing in Roddy Piper for you "wrestling isn't enough for you so here's something else" entertainment. Goldberg comes in without a tag and cleans house with a spear, setting up a double finish with the Sharpshooter and Jackhammer to give us new champions.

Rating: D. Longest match of the night so far at three minutes and featured the illegal man getting the pin, a crooked referee, a replacement referee, and an argument between referees. Somehow that equals out to nothing to see here other than Russo's favorite story: wacky partners about to fight at Starrcade. I believe this makes Hart the first Triple Crown Champion of two companies.

Post match Bret shakes Goldberg's hand and says may the best man win at Starrcade.

Stevie and Saturn fight some more but Juvy says this doesn't matter. Neither does most of this show, but at least it doesn't matter with bigger names this week.

Saturn vs. Stevie Ray

Stevie starts fast with a corner clothesline but tries again and eats two boots to the face. Snake Eyes and a t-bone suplex set up a dropkick for two on Stevie but he comes back with a press slam. The referee breaks up a stomping in the corner, earning him a bump in the process. I can't believe it but they managed to make it five whole matches before the first ref bump. Cue Creative Control to lay out Stevie, giving Saturn the cheap pin (with feet on the ropes like he should be doing).

Russo tells Piper that he'll never work in this business again.

Sting doesn't care about Diamond Dallas "Trash's" (is he related to Hollywood Scum Hogan?) problems but approves of Liz. You stupid, stupid man.

Total Package vs. Buff Bagwell

Juvy on Luger: "That's the juice!" DDP comes out for commentary as Buff grabs a headlock to start. Luger shrugs off some arm cranking but misses a clothesline and gets slammed twice. Bagwell kicks him low and gets two off a neckbreaker, sending Luger outside. Page: "I'm going to shoot my own angle." He gets up and gets in a fight with Bagwell, drawing out the agents to break it up for the no contest. We're still waiting on a match to break three minutes tonight (the Tag Title match was three minutes even).

Duggan asks Russo for a match tonight but is told no one cares about him.

Jim Duggan vs. Asya

ENOUGH OF THE MAN VS. WOMAN STUFF! It worked with Chyna but this has been old for weeks now. And no match as Creative Control, La Parka and Hennig run in to beat down Duggan. The Revolution comes out with hot dogs and pies to make it a big mess. Harlem Heat comes out for the save.

Benoit/Sid/Rhodes are ready for the main event.

Sting vs. Diamond Dallas Page

Liz is with Sting. Sting hits the Splash and has the Deathlock on in less than 30 seconds but Page makes the ropes. The referee is decked (with Page changing directions to hit him) 50 seconds in and here's Luger to lay out Sting with the ball bat. Page adds a Diamond Cutter for the pin. Diamond Dallas Page vs. Sting can't even make a minute and forty seconds.

Scott Hall/Kevin Nash/Jeff Jarrett vs. Chris Benoit/Dustin Rhodes/Sid Vicious

It's a huge brawl to start with Jeff and Chris being the only ones left in the ring for a slugout. Benoit hits something like an Irish Curse before tagging in Rhodes, who is sent into Nash's forearm. Kevin comes in for some knees in the corner before it's off to Hall for some right hands.

That's the extent of the offense from Hall on Thunder so he brings Nash in for a single clothesline before it's back to Jarrett. Rhodes gets caught in a sleeper but suplexes his way out, setting up a double tag to the monsters. Everything breaks down and Sid clotheslines the Outsiders down. The powerbomb is broken up by a guitar shot and Nash pins Sid.

Rating: D-. Oh screw off WCW. This was the longest match of the night at a riveting four minutes and twelve seconds. They're clearly setting up the next incarnation of the NWO with Hall/Nash/Jarrett and my goodness it's not interesting. When the Outsiders are only in there for a handful of seconds each, why am I supposed to be interested in setting them dominate a company? Again?

Overall Rating: F-. Eight matches for a total time of 19:47. Do you know how hard it is to not have twenty minutes of wrestling in a two hour show? I can't remember the last time Smackdown had eight matches on a card or at least one match breaking ten minutes. This company has decided to just not have wrestling on its shows and that's not going to work for more than a few more weeks. Total disaster of a show here and one of the biggest wastes of time I can ever remember in wrestling. Well not really

wrestling on this show but you get the idea.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of 1998 Pay Per View reviews at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00UYAMB8U>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

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

Thunder – December 2, 1999: As Close As They Can Get

Thunder

Date: December 2, 1999

Location: Landon Arena, Topeka, Kansas

Attendance: 2,467

Commentators: Larry Zbyszko, Mike Tenay

After a week off due to Thanksgiving, we're back for one of the final live Thunders as the tapings would soon move to Tuesday nights. In other words, this might be the last "good" show in the series' run. We're less than three weeks away from Starrcade and the World Title scene is very slowly rounding into form. Unfortunately everything else is rounding into form and it's not a pretty sight. Let's get to it.

Hardcore Title: Norman Smiley vs. The Wall

Norman, the champion, is in karate attire and Berlyn comes out for commentary. There are weapons in the ring already but Norman relies on the power of the 80s with a Crane Kick pose, earning him a clothesline. Wall blasts Norman with some weapons shots as Berlyn is suddenly fine

with speaking English and demanding an apology from the big guy.

Norman keeps screaming as the beating continues but eventually kicks the trashcan into Wall's face. The Big Wiggle is teased but Wall hot shots him instead. The chokeslam is loaded up but Berlyn hits Wall with the belt, knocking him out with his hand still around Norman's throat. Norman covers while still being choked to retain the title.

Rating: D+. I love Norman. Even when he's just getting beaten up he's fun to watch as he's clearly trying, unlike so many of the other wrestlers on this show. Wall is fine for a big man, but do you really want him jobbing in one of his first singles matches? Just have him maul some people, like maybe those worthless cruiserweights. Actually we can't because they're getting beaten up later to further the parody of Jim Ross. I guess we just have to make the new monster lose in a comedy match.

Luger isn't happy that he's fighting Sid tonight.

Silver King wants his check back from Dr. Death, as apparently Williams hasn't cashed it for some reason. Football insults are hurled and death will come soon for Silver King.

Kaz Hayashi doesn't like Maestro. Time for a transition!

Kaz Hayashi vs. Maestro

No Symphony here, meaning my interest quickly fades. They hit the mat for a faster sequence than you would expect with Maestro getting two off a rollup. Tenay is of course talking about Jeff Jarrett, because Russo likes getting announcers involved. Kaz comes back with a dropkick but gets sent face first into the buckle. Choking and stomping ensue to show that Maestro is a heel. It's actually not clear otherwise, even with David Flair kidnapping him on Monday.

We hit the chinlock on Kaz and here's David with the crowbar. Kaz flips out of a German suplex and hits a dropkick but the referee gets bumped, bringing David inside. His crowbar hits Kaz by mistake, sending Maestro running for the hills. The unconscious Kaz wins by countout and is shocked when he wakes up.

Rating: D. Another day, another match with a stupid finish designed to get a bad angle over instead of the wrestling. Maestro is a guy whose looks deceive you as he had a decent match despite looking out of shape. Kaz is solid in the ring as well and can give you a good performance when he isn't cannon fodder for a David Flair feud.

Disco and Lash Leroux arrive but have to run from the Mamalukes.

Lex Luger loses his bag, takes Jimmy Hart's by mistake, then gets his own bag back. He tries to leave but has flat tires because....I have no idea actually.

Chavo Guerrero vs. Buzzkill

Buzzkill's entrance: "It's me, it's me, it's that B-U-Double Z!" Chavo tries to sell him some tyedye and a broken lava lamp, which Buzzkill tries to turn on despite a lack of electricity. The fans are ALL OVER this and Chavo only makes it worse by giving Buzzkill a Walkman to make him go down on the mat to the music, but it's only good for two. Chavo gives up on the sale but has a shirt for the referee, allowing Buzzkill to hit him with the briefcase for the pin.

Buzzkill is mad at himself for cheating, but borrows money from the referee to buy the tyedye and lamp from Chavo.

I'm pausing now and trying to compose myself. Normally I would write up some rant about how Russo doesn't get wrestling and what a waste of talent this is, but I can't bring myself to care. That was one of the stupidest segments I've ever seen I wrestling and it was painful to watch. There's nothing wrong with a comedy segment here and there, or even more than one a show. However, when your entire promotion is one comedy/stupid segment after another, you lose the benefit of the doubt. You lose your audience too but that's another story.

Chris Benoit is ready for his match with Liger, who he respects very much. For once, there's nothing else going on in a promo. The idea of Benoit vs. Liger is one of the only things that can bring me back after what I've sat through already.

Meng gets into his dressing room but Lash and Disco show up and swap his name plate for theirs.

Evan Karagias is in the back with Madusa and implies that he's rather, shall we say, antsy. Madusa promises him "everything" after Starrcade.

Long recap of Nitro. That doesn't help things, though at least it's shorter.

Luger is still worried, but he knows he's the best and has nothing to worry about. But doggone it, do people like him?

Sid is playing with a Luger action figure as Gene tells him that he has a powerbomb match vs. Nash at Starrcade. Gene doesn't have the match if that's not clear. Nash wouldn't take it after seeing Gene and Hogan team up against Steele and Fuji back in 84. Sid breaks the figure to show what's going to happen to Luger tonight.

Luger calls a cab. Can't he just walk to a bar or something and wait until the show is over?

The Mamalukes beat up some production guy and lock him in a freezer so he can give Disco and Lash a message.

Steve Williams vs. Villano IV/Villano V/Silver King

This should be short. Larry leaves the booth because Oklahoma disgusts him so much. For once, I can't say I disagree. The trio gets destroyed to start until Silver King nails a dropkick. A triple headbutt is shrugged off though and King gets press slammed. I'm missing a good chunk of the match, though as a consolation I do get a lot of shots of Oklahoma talking. Vampiro comes out to go after Oklahoma, which allows Silver King to sneak down and take his check. Williams pins a Villano off the Stampede in a quick match.

Luger is trying to get into his cab but the Mamalukes stop him to ask for Disco and Lash. In one of the smartest things Luger has ever said, he recommends the dressing room with their name on it. As this is going on, Silver King dives into the cab and leaves. Luger is completely thwarted, because that was the only cab (or form of transportation it seems) in all

of Topeka.

After a break, the Mamalukes are outside the dressing room door. Thankfully they're nice enough to not go in or do anything else until after the next match.

Jushin Thunder Liger vs. Chris Benoit

Please let it go long. Please let it go long. Please let it go long. Larry is back on commentary and annoyed at all the guest announcers screwing up. We can't start just yet though as Juventud Guerrera comes out for commentary with his arm in a sling and flanked by Psychosis and La Parka (rocking the red skeleton attire). Juvy sits in on commentary and he's going to be the focus of the match isn't he?

Liger rolls out of an early suplex attempt and they hit the mat for a technical sequence into a backslide attempt from Benoit but Liger powers into a sunset flip. A stalemate gets some polite applause from the crowd as Juvy says IT DOESN'T MATTER what the wrestlers are doing. Benoit is taken down in a test of strength but Liger can't break his bridge. The Liger Kick connects as Juvy takes credit for building the Cruiserweight division. He doesn't mention his current reign as the IWGP Junior Heavyweight Title but why should he do that?

Tenay announces Benoit vs. Nash on Nitro and a US Title shot in a ladder match at Starrcade. That's quite the schedule. Liger hooks his feet under Benoit's arms and takes him to the floor in a crash before putting on the Surfboard back inside. The brainbuster gets two and Liger wins a chop off. Benoit breaks up a tornado DDT attempt and it's a double clothesline to put both guys down. There's the snap suplex and a belly to back for two on Liger and Benoit nails him with a clothesline to the back of the head. Liger is able to crotch him down and nail a superplex, but the other cruiserweights come in for the double DQ.

Rating: B-. I want to complain about the ending destroying what could have been a great match, but this is such a rare treat these days that I can't bring myself to do it. Instead, I'll go on about what a shame it is that they bring in Jushin Thunder Liger and use him as a way to get over Juvy's (albeit funny) Rock imitation, which could have been done with

almost anyone on the roster. At least we got about seven minutes of Benoit vs. Liger though, which is better than anything else we were going to get.

Benoit and Liger clean house.

Buff promises to beat Meng tonight.

Speaking of Meng, the Mamalukes find him in the dressing room and get beaten up as you would expect.

Luger disguises his voice and calls the WCW offices to say he has a family emergency and needs to leave. Terry Taylor pops in to say....I'm assuming nice try as Buff's music was drowning him out. I don't know if that kind of thing is a Russo joke or if the WCW production guys all just stopped caring at once, because it's been a thing for months now and it's really annoying.

Buff Bagwell vs. Meng

Well it would have to be this match after that last segment wouldn't it? Meng throws him around like a Tongan monster throws around a pretty boy to start. Buff's right hands and clotheslines have no effect but some dropkicks stagger Meng. Apparently Buff has an easily built ego as Buff tries ten right hands in the corner, only to get dropped on the top rope before he gets to nine. Meng comes back with strikes in the corner as Larry thinks there's something up with the Outsiders and Russo. Gee Larry, YOU REALLY THINK SO???

A lot of choking ensues before Buff gets bent over Meng's knee in a backbreaker. Buff comes back with his swinging neckbreaker and a cross body for two as we have Mamalukes. Say it with me: the ref gets bumped, allowing the mobsters to beat up both guys for reasons not exactly clear. Meng fights them off and Buff goes up, only to miss Meng and hit the Blockbuster on Vito. The Tongan Death Grip gives Meng the win.

Rating: D. Can we get some tougher referees? Or some wrestlers that aren't quite as careless and don't hit a referee on half the matches every show? I like that they're keeping Meng strong, even if it doesn't

seem likely to lead anywhere. You can always find a way to use someone like him, but in Russo's case he'll probably wind up as a bus driver with an unhealthy fear of parrots.

Meng beats up the mobsters for fun.

Gene is in the back with Mona and Jarrett and can't stop looking at her chest. Mona: "Do you see something you like Gene?" Jeff yells at her for taking half his interview time and calls her Miss Slappy. This Monday, Goldberg and Dustin Rhodes are on his hit list.

The Mamalukes drink Surge to make themselves feel better, though Johnny could go for a cheese sandwich.

Jeff Jarrett/Mona vs. Evan Karagias/Madusa

Is there a reason why Jarrett and Mona got together and I just missed it? Larry: "If he's so chosen, why is he in a match he doesn't want to be in?" Tenay wants Jeff fined and suspended for his actions on Monday. Evan and Mona get things started as Jarrett walks around ringside. He takes her down with ease to start but the camera goes to see Jarrett and Tenay yelling at each other. I wonder if that's what the TNA meetings were like.

Mona armdrags Madusa down but gets caught in a double backdrop. Now Jeff sits on the steps (which is nothing like when Mankind did the same to the Rock, appropriately enough against the Hollys) while Madusa cranks on an armbar. Back up and Mona slams her off the middle rope and crotches Evan, followed by a top rope hurricanrana. Madusa gets back with a German suplex though, allowing Evan to hit a corkscrew plancha for the pin.

Rating: D. So to recap we have a woman who is using sex to get a title shot at Starrcade, another woman who wrestles hard but gets beaten up at the end, but the whole thing is about Jeff Jarrett arguing with an announcer. They really thought this was the answer to women like Chyna?

Mona dropkicks Jarrett post match and eats a guitar to the head. Serves her right for trying in her match.

Long recap of Bret's WCW career. No real context or reason for this but

it's there.

The Revolution talks about having their own country. Saturn: "And our own continent! Asya!" Get out while you can boys.

Luger is on the phone with Russo and is told that the winner of the match with Sid gets a World Title match this Monday.

Gene is with Lash and Disco and recaps the Mafia angle. Wouldn't it have been better to do this EARLIER? They agree that they need each other to survive and Disco asks Lash not to do the splits tonight because dancing is his gimmick. I can't even roll my eyes at these terms being dropped anymore.

Disco Inferno/Lash Leroux vs. Perry Saturn/Dean Malenko

Shane makes fun of Disco and Lash's accents before the match. Cue the Mamalukes to go after Disco and Lash but the Revolution mocks them as well, triggering another brawl. Disco and Lash are smart enough to stand outside and watch as Asya hits the Italians low, allowing the Revolution to clean house. Security gets them out of here so Disco and Lash jump Saturn from behind and get two off a Russian legsweep.

Tenay announces Evan vs. Mona vs. Madusa on Monday with the Cruiserweight Title shot on the line. Logic would say Mona vs. Madusa in a singles match, but why do that when it can be men vs. women? Lash beats Saturn up even more and does the split into a punch spot, prompting Disco to angrily tag himself in. This time it's Disco knocking Saturn around but stopping to dance, allowing Dean to come in and kick Disco's head off (yet the hair still doesn't move). Disco fights back with a sunset flip but Saturn kicks him again to break it up.

The Last Dance is broken up and Disco gets sat on top, allowing Saturn to bulldog him out to the floor in a nice spot. Lash and Dean get tags and the Cajun cleans house on Malenko but Whiplash is broken up by Saturn. A superkick drops Lash to the floor where he almost gets into it with Asya, allowing Shane to get in a cast shot. The Cloverleaf on the unconscious Lash gets the win as Saturn holds Disco.

Rating: D+. Disco and Lash are prime examples of guys that were doing nothing but were given a unique story by Russo. Unfortunately, Russo's intelligence ends as soon as the matches start as they were cannon fodder for the Revolution in their first match as a team. It doesn't help that they've gotten into a buddy comedy instead of a tag team, but Russo thinks he's writing B movies instead of a wrestling show anyway.

Total Package vs. Sid Vicious

Winner gets Hart on Monday for the title. Bret comes out to do commentary and doesn't seem interested in talking about facing Sid. Luger does a quick easy way/hard way promo but gets caught holding pepper spray. Sid stomps him down with ease but gets hit low, allowing Luger to go into his offensive arsenal. Cue Liz as we get a double clothesline to put both guys down.

That's some clothesline as neither can get up after LESS THAN A MINUTE of action. Liz gets the pepper spray and goes for Luger but he takes the bottle away and sprays Sid, who powerbombs the referee, because pepper spray takes away your ability to feel a shirt. Luger grabs a rollup (with Sid's feet in the ropes) for the pin from a second referee and the title shot.

Post match Sid can suddenly see and powerbombs Luger to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. Let's recap quickly: interference – belt shot, interference – crowbar, briefcase shot, interference (didn't change ending), interference – double DQ, interference – sets up pin, double teaming, cast shot, pepper spray. The closest thing we had to a clean finish in nine matches was double teaming in a glorified handicap match. All night long we couldn't a rollup for a pin or just someone hitting their finisher to win without someone cheating or interfering? I know there are a lot of common criticisms against Russo, but with shows like these, they're not exactly unfounded.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of 1998 Pay Per View reviews at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00UYAMB8U>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

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

Thunder- November 18, 1999: Benoit Does It Again

Thunder

Date: November 18, 1999

Location: Allen County War Memorial, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Attendance: 3,283

Commentators: Scott Hudson, Larry Zbyszko

We're three days away from Mayhem and the interesting thing this week is can they keep up the wrestling on this show. Thunder has definitely become the wrestling show, with matches getting more time than Nitro gets most of the time, but with less star power and more bad interference. Let's get to it.

Opening sequence.

Jerry Flynn vs. Bam Bam Bigelow

Hardcore so Bigelow brings out some weapons but Flynn takes him away and nails Bigelow with a trashcan. Barbarian is out here with Flynn, despite Jerry beating him in an impromptu boiler room brawl Monday. Norman Smiley comes out but Hart sends Knobbs and Barbarian after him. Without noticing what's going on outside, Bigelow takes Flynn down with a clothesline. Thankfully he didn't ruin the mullet.

Time for the cookie sheet shots followed by the can lids crashing around

Flynn's head like cymbals. The flying headbutt misses though and Jerry hits something like a Van Daminator with the trashcan. Barbarian comes in like a schnook and gets beaten down, followed by a chair to Flynn to give Bigelow the three count.

Rating: D. There was nothing to this one other than Hart and Smiley shouting at each other a lot. That was the most entertaining part of the match, which is likely due to the idea of taking two entertaining guys and letting them entertain. This is different than Flynn who is there because he knows karate and Bigelow, who could be entertaining but not in a mess like this.

Disco can't get anyone to give him action on a bet for a match tonight.

Bagwell is looking for Chris Benoit.

Disco Inferno vs. Prince Iaukea

Non-title and Iaukea has new gear. Not interesting gear of course but it's new with some trunks and boots. Disco goes to the eyes to start but Iaukea smacks him in the back of the head. I'll give WCW 1999 this much: their heels had great hair. After begging off, Disco sends him into the corner and takes over with all of his usual stuff. A clothesline and middle rope elbow get two each on the Prince.

Iaukea's sunset flip doesn't work and Disco stays on him with elbows and chokes, followed by a chinlock to keep the fans bored. Iaukea comes back with an even less interesting offense (the high spot is a dropkick) until Disco drops him with a DDT. Thankfully for a change, we get silly as a messenger brings Disco a package. Inside is....a fish? Oh I get it: sleep with the fishes. The distraction lets Iaukea grab a rollup for the pin.

Rating: F. Is it bad that I want to see where the fish story is going? I know it's the mafia gambling stuff but it's more entertaining than most other stuff going on with this promotion. What isn't interesting however is the really dull wrestling in this match as neither guy knows how to keep an audience. Disco is nothing great but at least he has something unique with the dancing. Iaukea....what in the world do they see in him to keep him on the payroll?

Post match, Disco hits Iaukea with the fish. Remember that he has a title defense three days from now.

Evan Karagias says he's going to beat Savage for the love of his woman.

Van Hammer asks Curt Hennig to get counted out tonight and a fight breaks out. This story is one of the worst in the company and that covers a lot of ground.

Evan Karagias vs. The Maestro

The bubbles in Maestro's entrance are always odd to see. Maestro grabs a quick headlock to start and nails a shoulder. Evan comes back with a cross body but rolls outside to kiss Madusa. The delay works for a bit but Maestro comes back by raising a boot in the corner. Some forearms and a belly to back suplex get two on Evan as this is just a step ahead of the previous match.

More uppercuts set up a German suplex but Evan flips over the back and gets two of his own off a snap suplex. Madusa has to play cheerleader despite looking about 20 years older than she really is here. A spinebuster puts Evan down but Madusa gets on the apron and kisses Maestro. Evan kicks him down and checks on Madusa (who didn't seem to mind), allowing Maestro to roll him up for the pin.

Rating: D-. Boring wrestling, uninteresting characters, Madusa being a focus for reasons not exactly clear and the #1 contender to the Cruiserweight Title losing about ten minutes after the champion lost. The wrestling on this show isn't great, but the booking continues to be the real problem dragging this down. I guess they're setting it up that Evan is distracted by Madusa, but when the champion loses earlier in the night and Evan has never really done anything, the story is a huge mess.

The Revolution talks about Torrie being a Barbie doll. Shane wants to see Asya rip her apart, sending Saturn into a rant about taking the limbs off a Barbie. Shane: "Perry, IT WAS A FIGURE OF SPEECH!" Saturn: "My point exactly!"

Disco is panicking on the phone with Tony Marinara.

Benoit heard that Bagwell is looking for him. He leaves a few seconds before Bagwell shows up.

Nitro recap video, complete with Sid's half the brain line.

La Parka and Kaz Hayashi have another overdubbed interview with Hayashi sounding like he's from rural Georgia. I think these predated Kaientai's INDEED promos but they're around the same time.

Buff and Benoit finally get together with Bagwell asking Benoit not to use the suplexes or the Crossface on the bad neck. Benoit says Buff knew what he was getting into and they brawl.

Kaz Hayashi/La Parka vs. El Dandy/Silver King

Kaz has his own chair and even the announcers have to mention the dubbed voices. Dandy gets flipped around while trying to backslide Kaz so it's quickly off to La Parka vs. King. La Parka does his dance so King dropkicks him in the face and everything quickly breaks down. King and Dandy are headscissored to the floor and the fans are actually behind Kaz and Parka here. Dandy comes in and tries a right hand but hits his partner by mistake. After the calamity calms down, Kaz gets whipped into a gutbuster as we settle into a more standard formula.

A double slam gets two on Kaz but Dandy lets him walk over for the tag to La Parka. Things speed up with Silver coming in to help Dandy as the heels take over again. La Parka is sent to the floor so Kaz comes in, only to get tripped down a few seconds later. The heels screw up with King hitting Dandy, allowing Kaz to tag La Parka again. Everything breaks down with La Parka hitting a missile dropkick and Kaz adding a high cross body to King. La Parka's kind of Whisper in the Wind is enough to pin King.

Rating: C-. This got messy in the middle but I like the idea of La Parka and Kaz being these guys who can barely speak English but suddenly have the dubbed voices. I'm fine with these decent nothing matches on Thunder though, as they're clean enough to not make my head hurt and long enough to qualify as a match instead of an angle. It doesn't mean anything after the match ends but at least it was decent while it lasted.

La Parka chairs King post match.

Bagwell and Hennig get in a fight over something we don't hear.

Curt Hennig vs. Van Hammer

Larry goes on a rant against the term "Powers That Be". I kind of agree as WCW has announced that they're Russo and Ferrara so why not just go with that? Curt knees Hammer on the way in but gets thrown outside for a brawl. To keep up the stupidity of this show, we see a sign saying "I'm only here for the Nitro Girls." Maybe Russo is on to something about the fans being morons. Back in and Hennig starts in on the leg as Bagwell strolls out to follow up on a five minute old angle. All the oil on Buff's arms distracts Hennig so Hammer can get in a cheap shot and snap his throat across the top rope.

Curt goes after Buff but catches Hammer trying to jump him from behind with a kick to the ribs. Back in and Hennig slams Hammer's head against the mat as Buff plays cheerleader for Hammer. Apparently it works as Hammer comes back with a knee in the corner followed by a DDT, only to miss a middle rope flip dive. Curt is sent outside for a brawl with Bagwell, only to have Benoit come out and get sent into the barricade. Back up and Hammer is accidentally whipped into Buff, allowing Curt to hit the HennigPlex for the pin.

Rating: D-. I need a minute here. Let's try to figure this out. So the Powers That Be want to get rid of Hennig by saying he's gone as soon as he gets pinned, because a submission isn't good enough for them for whatever reason. At the same time, they want to screw with Bagwell by making him job all the time because wrestling is scripted, but Bagwell wants to rebel and win his REAL matches.

Now he's screwing with Hennig to get rid of him, presumably as a favor to the Powers That Be to get them off Bagwell's back? At the same time, Benoit is involved despite being in the final four of the World Title tournament because they have nothing better to do with him tonight and there's NO ONE else they could throw into this mess? The fact that I had to write out two paragraphs to understand this story, ignoring the fact that it completely exposes the business, sums up Russo's booking in a

nutshell: A stupid midcard feud took that long to understand and I don't even care now that I've figured it out.

Luger works out as Chavo sells Liz Amway jewelery. THIS story gets to continue but we're not likely to hear any more about La Parka and Kaz.

Lash Leroux vs. Kenny Kaos

Leroux takes him down to start but Kaos kicks him in the ribs and scores with a butterfly suplex. After a middle rope legdrop gets two, Lash botches a flip over the back but takes over anyway. Why let something like a big mishap screw up your quick match right? Kaos comes back with a boot to the face and a bunch of kicks and punches in the corner.

A gutwrench suplex gets two for Kaos but Lash comes back with a Russian legsweep and stomps of his own. Kaos is sent outside but Lash baseball slides into his leg to really take over. The leg is fine enough to catch a diving Cajun though and drive him back first into the barricade. So he's generic and doesn't sell. Back in and Lash escapes a slam and hits Whiplash for the pin.

Rating: D. In the old days, this would be filler on Saturday Night but now it's one of the later shows on Thunder. It really is apparent that no one cared about this show and they were clearly just filling in time. Again, I'd love to know what someone was high on when they picked Kaos to be a champion a year ago. That stuff could make me a fortune on the streets.

The Animals brag about Torrie being a martial arts expert. I smell an unfunny comedy bit coming up.

Vampiro wraps a chain around his hand.

Chavo Guerrero Jr. vs. Barbarian

Chavo comes out with his order forms for Barbarian, but Barbarian hits him in the back with the briefcase, setting up the Kick of Fear for the pin at 8 seconds.

Post match, Barbarian says he'll pay Chavo later. Well, at least it's

something for Chavo to do. Stupid yes but something.

Tournament recap.

Liz and Luger watch Meng from a monitor.

Meng vs. Vampiro

Vampiro gets taken down by the hair to start, which you would expect to have been the other way around. Meng loses a kick-off but Vampiro stupidly tries a headbutt. Well no one ever accused him of being smart. Now Meng headbutts the buckle but doesn't seem to phase it. A bunch of chops stagger Vampiro and Meng nails a decent dropkick. I remember Jesse Ventura freaking out when Haku hit those and I can't say I disagree.

Vampiro gets piledriven and sent to the floor for a whip into the barricade. Back inside and Meng is finally put down by a top rope spinwheel kick. That's the extent of Vampiro's offense though as his hurricanrana is countered with a powerbomb. Jerry Only of the Misfits comes in and takes the Tongan Death Grip and that's the match, presumably for a no contest.

Rating: D+. Meng is one of those guys that is kind of fun to watch, just due to him not selling almost everything and hurting as many people as he did. Unfortunately he's being set up with Luger, which is about as dull of a program as you can have. The ending here did nothing for anyone, but that really shouldn't be surprising.

Liz comes out to apologize to Meng and the monster is nice enough to stop lunging at her with the Death Grip as Luger is late with his cue. He finally shows up and chairs Meng down before crushing his knees with the chair.

Chris Benoit vs. Buff Bagwell

Ever the genius, Buff tries to slide under the ropes and gets stomped down. Chris takes over with a dropkick and a knee to the ribs but gets dropped ribs first onto the top rope. They head outside with Buff dropping Benoit's throat across the barricade before stomping away. Back inside and Buff keeps up the stomping motif as this is actually one of

the more entertaining matches of the night due to the charisma both guys have. Buff wasn't much in the ring but he had some energy to him.

A neckbreaker sets up a chinlock on Chris as I guess Buff is a heel all of a sudden. They trade punches and chops in the corner before Benoit takes it to the floor to give Bagwell the beating he deserves. Back in and Benoit hits the snap suplex and puts on a surfboard before "accidentally" kicking Buff low. They head outside again with Buff getting whipped into the barricade but Benoit makes the same mistake Buff made at the start and lets Bagwell get in some shops as he comes in.

Buff hammers away but has to grab the ropes to block a German suplex. That's fine with Benoit as he plows through Buff with a clothesline, only to miss the Swan Dive. Buff goes up for the Blockbuster but here's Hennig to break it up, allowing Benoit to slap on the Crossface for the win.

Rating: C+. So to recap, Benoit has gotten two of the longest matches of the Russo Era and has put in two of the best performances to date. Aside from Benoit being awesome, a lot of it goes to show that when you give the guys a chance to show what they can do, you more often than not get a good match. You can't do anything with two minutes and three plot devices at a time.

Benoit stares at Hennig and leaves, allowing Curt and Buff to brawl to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. They had something here with the self contained story of Bagwell/Benoit/Hennig ending with a match but I can't imagine this is going to be a recurring theme. Other than that though, this was your usual disaster with nonsensical ideas and booking decisions that seem to be more there for the amusement of Russo and Ferrara than anything else. I have no desire to see Mayhem more than I did two hours ago though, so the show was a waste of time.

No show next week due to Thanksgiving.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of 1998 Pay Per View reviews at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00UYAMB8U>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

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