

Bunkhouse Stampede – TNA Wishes They Could Be This Stupid

Bunkhouse Stampede

Date: January 24, 1988

Location: Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, Uniondale, New York

Attendance: 6,000

Commentators: Bob Caudle, Jim Ross

This is a show I've been trying to track down for a long time. This is actually the second PPV for Jim Crockett (read as WCW) but the first on a full scale. Based on the success of Vince and everything he had accomplished, Crockett tried to take a shot at it as well. Back in 87, Crockett put up Starrcade 87 as his first PPV.

Vince made the Survivor Series on the same night and said to the cable companies that if they didn't air Survivor Series, they wouldn't get to air Wrestlemania IV. They caved, and Crockett got crushed. The companies more or less threatened Vince's life after that, so here we are in January and Crockett's second attempt at a national PPV.

Vince, being the jerk that he is, put on a free TV show the same night that featured a battle royal called the Royal Rumble. Needless to say, not a lot of people bought this show either. And looking at the card, why would you? There are four matches, with the final one being the show's namesake: the Bunkhouse Stampede. It's a battle royal in a cage. Now for those of you that think this makes no sense, YOU'RE RIGHT.

Oh but it gets better. To eliminate someone, you have to shove them out the door or thrown them out of the cage over the top.

Take a guess as to A, who came up with it, B, who is in it, and C, who the clear winner is. We'll get to that later. For now, let's get this over with.

Now keep in mind: this is the first time a large portion of the country has seen or likely even heard of Jim Crockett Promotions. In other words, this is their national debut. Keep that in mind as you read some of this stuff.

The first thing we see is that the place is EMPTY. Yes, while the official attendance is listed as 6,000, most of them aren't there yet. Why is that do you ask? Well, it could be because bell time was listed on the tickets at 8PM. The show started at 7PM. The PPV feed started at 6PM. See what I'm working with here?

NWA TV Title: Bobby Eaton vs. Nikita Koloff

Eaton is half of the Midnight Express, who are the US Tag Champions here. Koloff is a monster. In other words, this would be like Batista vs. Carlito. Koloff, the Russian evil man, is a face here due to Magnum TA's car wreck. It was overly complicated but it was all they could do. Caudle was a good commentator that was underrated. Also, why is the TV Title being defended on a PPV?

They mention the contrast of styles before they make contact. I think Eaton's mullet is alive. Surprisingly, Eaton has a gut on him. Naturally since there so many empty seats, we need to keep going to a wide shot. Sure why not. We get a LONG feeling out process as Cornette tries desperately to coach Bobby. Back in this era, he was the best in the world and had lapped everyone else at drawing heat as a manager.

We keep stalling as we're about five minutes into this and the most exciting thing has been a hammerlock. Koloff works the arm as you can see a big Winston Cigarettes ad in the background. That's just odd by today's standard. Hey look at all those empty seats! Tony is your ring announcer who says

we're five minutes in with fifteen to go. I have a bad feeling about this.

They fight on the floor and the fans want to cheer for this. They really do. The referee looks like he's about 80 years old. Cornette gets in an argument with the cameraman over following him. That's kind of amusing. You can hear him yelling the whole match. Normally the AUDIENCE would drown him out but not here.

We hit the headlock again as this is just boring. The fans pop off a SLAM. See? The crowd wants to like this stuff but they can't get into it because of far too high of a level of suck. More headlockage as this match sucks. We hit the floor again. Nothing of note happens other than Koloff taking over by posting him. Cornette is apparently waddling around the ring. Ten minutes down, ten to go.

Back in and Eaton is in control again. Now we go to a hammerlock. Seriously, half of this match has been them doing mat holds for like 4 minutes at a time. Eaton hits a missile dropkick for the first interesting move of the show so far. Ah never mind. Back to the hammerlock. Sorry, thought we were doing something interesting there for a minute. Didn't mean to confuse anyone.

Koloff taps but that doesn't mean anything for about 6 more years in America. Cornette runs through every insult he can think of in a 20 second period and it actually wakes me up for a bit. We're still in the hammerlock mind you. Five minutes left. Jim truly is making this bearable with his yelling at Nikita. Of fifteen minutes, probably seven has been hammerlock. Four minutes left. HE BROKE THE HAMMERLOCK!

The Russian Sickle, his old finisher, hits and we're at a standstill. Ah never mind, more hammerlock. We're told Eaton does something awesome. Not that we saw it or anything as we were on a shot of some fans. Three minutes to go. Two minutes

left. Nothing but hammerlock in between there. He breaks the hold again but that lasts all of 8 seconds as we HIT IT AGAIN. With a minute to go, he's still cranking on the arm. Is he an Anderson in disguise?

You know, Eaton is stupid. The arm stuff doesn't work for 15 minutes so he KEEPS DOING IT. Koloff just beats him up for a bit and lets the time run out. Yeah, that's how it ends. He gets the tennis racket post match but Stan Lane comes in for the double beatdown. Koloff would lose the title TWO DAYS later to Mike Rotunda. Clearly they couldn't put that on the PPV right?

Rating: F. Nu uh. No. This was not working. Seriously, over half of this was hammerlock. I was losing my mind with boredom here, but Cornette brought me back from the brink. This is how you open your PPV? Seriously? Awful excuse for a match if there has ever been one.

Jim and Bob analyze the match but a referee walks in front of them. Oh dear.

Western States Heritage Title: Larry Zbyszko vs. Barry Windham

This belt lasted for about a year and a half. The name is from the fact that it started in the UWF out of Tulsa. What you're looking at here are the only two men to ever have the title. Keep in mind that the WESTERN STATES Title is being defended in New York. Larry is just as annoying looking as he used to be. Again, no reason for this to be on the card or anything. It's just there.

Barry is champion here and Larry has Baby Doll, the original Diva for lack of a better term with him. She looked ok but good for the late 80s. Since it's a Larry match, the required stall gets about two minutes. Since this is a PPV though, that's just your initial stall. I'd bet on more coming. A headlock hits after about four minutes. The crowd is rather irritated after the last debacle of a match.

I was right: Larry is stalling. Apparently there's a history here. Don't worry about telling us what it is or anything. Windham has a bad knee. Why you ask? Eh not told that either. Why would you need to know anything unimportant like that? Larry tries a dropkick. WOW. Even Ross makes fun of it. Oh no. LARRY USES A HAMMERLOCK! AHHHHHH!!!

Windham gets a freaky looking rollup as Zbyszko is sitting on the mat and Windham wraps his legs around him from behind. He rolls over and gets a rollup for two. Cool looking move. Windham calls the referee a bastard when he's asked if he gives up in a leg lock. Larry uses what we would call an ankle lock. Wow that's weird to see in the 80s.

Windham goes up and misses an elbow off the top that looked awful. It looked like he just jumped and hoped it would have hit. Larry works on the knee, which at least is consistency, although he switches things up rather than just using the same hold. ARE YOU LISTENING BOBBY EATON? Again, WHY DO THESE TWO HATE EACH OTHER? It's never been explained. Also, when did Larry learn karate?

In an impressive move, Larry has a headlock on and Barry hits a belly to back for the counter with one arm. Dang impressive looking. He then calls Baby Doll a witch. Barry goes for a suplex but his knee gives out and Larry crashes to the mat. Isn't that the same thing as a regular suplex? We go to the floor (called the streets for no apparent reason by JR) as this is FAR better than the previous match. It still sucks, but it's better I guess.

We're fifteen minutes in according to Tony. See what happens when you do more than just hammerlocks? We're getting covers and various other shots like that but it's still Zbyszko and Windham. In other words, it's pretty freaking boring. And on that note both guys fall down. Great. Just great.

Barry does six punches in the corner. Six? What the heck? Down

goes the referee. That's just what this match needed. Baby Doll's shoe goes into Windham's head for the pin. That's the only title change in the belt's history as it would be dropped in like a year with no one caring.

Rating: D-. This was boring, but to be fair this was light years ahead of the previous match. At the end of the day, Larry Zbyszko singles matches can only be so good. This wasn't horrible, but NO ONE cared at all. At least we're half done with the card.

NWA World Title: Ric Flair vs. Hawk

Ok, Hawk coming out to Ozzy and Iron Man...is one of the coolest things I've ever seen. It's PERFECT for that team and worked really well. Flair is of course Flair and since it's early 88, this should be good because he's in it. People like talking about Shawn having great matches in the mid 90s, but Flair in the late 80s was able to take guys like Hawk and get good matches out of him. Let's see if that's the case here.

Wow it's awesome seeing Dillon with Flair. The Big Gold Belt looks right on Flair. At the same time though, Hawk fighting for the world title? Really? Naturally, Flair can't hurt him. Hawk...really can't do much. That's the only way to put it. He can't do much. For the most part this is just Flair bumping like a mad man for Hawk to make him look believable. Ah and there's a bearhug. At least that's something you would expect. This has been ALL Hawk.

Ross says some of Flair's chops are karate or judo chops. There's something amusing about that. Hawk kicks him in the face which looked painful. He no sells an eye rake. Seriously? No selling an eye rake? Flair goes to his old standby, a low blow, to break things up. Why not use what works? They talk about how great Flair is. Isn't that the truth? He's fighting HAWK and we're getting an ok match out of it. Let that sink in a bit.

Hawk hits his one offensive move, the neckbreaker, to pull things to even for a few seconds. Flair goes for the knee and hooks the Figure Four as we're in pure 80s Flair formula. Think about it: how many times have you seen Flair do the following match? Flair gets beaten down by the face for awhile, Flair gets a shot, usually cheating, to take over, Flair does general offense before circling in on the knee, Figure Four, Figure Four is reversed, face makes the comeback, face is seconds away from his finisher, something goes wrong, Flair puts his feet on the ropes for the pin, or there's a DQ.

See what I mean? It happens all the time and that for the most part is the Flair Formula. The thing is, while he did it so many times, he had VERY good matches because of it. He gets slammed off the top since it's a Flair match, and here comes Hawk. And down goes the referee. Hawk clotheslines Flair over the ropes, which I'd bet is a DQ later on.

Hawk has been spent for about 10 minutes now. Hawk gets a top rope suplex and there's STILL no referee. JJ pops him with a chair for no reaction at the 20 minute mark. Flair hits him with it and Hawk kicks out of that as the referee is finally back up. Flair hits him with the chair again for the cheap DQ. He gets beaten up again after the match.

Rating: C-. To say Flair carried this is an understatement. Hawk was nothing but a placeholder here as Flair did his thing out there. It came off ok but ONLY due to Flair. He plugged Hawk into his formula and sold like the master that he is out there. By FAR and away the best match of the night so far.

We now get the show's credits to kill time as we're setting up the cage. Literally, Bob Caudle is just reading the credits off for a few minutes.

For no apparent reason, we go over some of Zbyszko vs. Windham. I wouldn't want to get to the main event either.

We go over the participants for the Bunkhouse Stampede,

beginning with Dusty Rhodes. Not only did Dusty come up with this, but he won ALL FOUR OF THEM. The idea is you show up in your Bunkhouse clothes, meaning jeans and cowboy boots or whatever, because everyone wanted to be a cowboy. You could also bring weapons in.

The idea here was that you had to win another of these before to get into this final match. Fair enough. Idiotic, but fair enough. For some reason they keep saying it's the 3rd annual but it's the fourth. Ah ok we're only talking about Dusty and throwing out a one liner about Luger. Got it.

Bunkhouse Stampede

Dusty Rhodes, Tully Blanchard, Ivan Koloff, The Warlord (wearing a Lifeguard shirt for no apparent reason), Arn Anderson, Lex Luger, The Barbarian, Animal.

Dusty gets a big entrance of course with all his accomplishments listed. Did I mention he was booking at the time? Seriously, ONLY DUSTY had anything listed about him, including the match he won to qualify here, his world title reigns, his US Title reigns, and his TV Title reigns. No one else got anything but their normal entrances. This could get bad fast. All eight are in there at once. There aren't any weapons like promised or anything.

Remember, it's a battle royal in a cage where you have to throw them over the ropes or through the door. My goodness this is idiotic. Apparently it's unheard of for someone to win three straight Bunkhouse Stampedes. That could be because this is THE THIRD ONE! Wow Dusty lowered some IQs. Everyone is in some screwed up street clothes of some kind and this is just idiotic.

Apparently the referee has to determine if a guy goes over the cage or through the door, since that's overly complicated I guess. Wow shoving people OVER A CAGE looks stupid. See, when it was a regular battle royal, IT MADE SENSE. Blanchard and

Anderson work together of course. Barbarian, Warlord and Koloff are in the same stable mind you so they'll likely work together. Koloff and Dusty climb the cage due to idiocy.

I'm watching people try to throw PEOPLE over a cage. Does that sound stupid to you or is it just me? How hard would it be to throw someone that is fighting back over a cage wall? Because to me, IT SOUNDS IMPOSSIBLE. Also, there are a lot of people walking around on the top ropes which is stupid too. No one is out or anything yet.

Arn saves himself from being thrown out the door as I realize how much this sounds like a really bad comedy sketch. Koloff is bleeding. Winner gets half a million dollars. Not sure if I said that or not but I don't want to stop the tape long enough to go back and read it. I feel sorry for Ross and Caudle trying to make this sound interesting or intense or whatever it's supposed to be.

Luger and Dusty just go off as we're supposed to believe that a guy that is built like Dusty is supposed to be in the same kind of condition as a stallion like Luger. Right. Oh yeah, and keep in mind this whole cowboy southern thing is in NEW YORK CITY. They continue to try to make this sound good and it's just failing. Wow this was ten days before I was born and 12 before Hogan lost the world title to Andre. Holy crap that's weird to think about.

Still no one out and we're almost 15 minutes into this. It's mainly just people in jeans hitting people with belts and boots. Yeah it's riveting in case you can't tell. Dusty's arm is bleeding from being worked over with a belt. Make this stop please. Animal tries to shove Anderson over the top. I want to break this match.

Koloff, like an idiot, although at this time he's one of two former world champions in there somehow, climbs over the cage to get away from Animal and gets knocked out to take us down

to seven. Oh sweet mercy kill me now. So let's just keep the camera on Koloff FOREVER as we see the EPIC DRAMA of him standing up. Animal and Warlord fight to the door and Warlord gets knocked to the door. Animal gets kicked in the head by Barbarian and it knocks both guys out in a stupid looking spot.

We have Dusty, Luger, Anderson, Blanchard and Barbarian left. Blanchard gets put in the Rack which at least hurts him. Some fan shouts about how gay this is. Thanks for that. Luger takes a Gourdbuster and the Horsemen try to throw him out. Since Luger didn't have any gourds on him though, he was fine and stays in.

Anderson, Luger and Blanchard fight by the door and they all go out after like three minutes of fighting. Arn at one point stood on the third step and choked Luger. Yeah he deserved to lose. So we have Barbarian vs. Dusty. Any bets on who wins here? Barbarian gets some brass knuckles and pops Dusty with them. Barbarian hits like three of his top rope headbutt finishers but Dusty fights back baby!

They climb to the top rope for the epic move known as the OH MAN THIS MATCH MAKES NO SENSE SO LET'S CLIMB UP SO WE CAN HAVE A REASON TO GET THROWN OVER THE CAGE! Yep, Dusty wins by hitting the stupid elbow to the head and we're done. Earl Hebner is the referee here but would be in WWF in 12 days for the famous twin angle. Dusty gets a big bronze cowboy boot. Give me a FREAKING BREAK!

We hear about Dusty was considering retiring before this but came back "for the people." So he was about to leave and came back for the people. So apparently by coming back for the people, he just had to come up with a PPV for himself and put himself over in it. Sure why not.

Rating: F. There was a cage match with a battle royal going on. This was a MASSIVE love letter from Dusty to Dusty. This

was all about getting him even FURTHER over and making things look even stupider. Somehow Dusty was the wildcard and the favorite at the same time. He's US Champion already but was going to retire. I give up. Just a joke of a main event and a show.

Overall Rating: S. As in I'm shaking my head over how idiotic this was. A four match show with three title matches and the main event is supposed to be the big debut? REALLY? This was just horrible on so many levels that I don't even know where to start. Dusty was more or less fired for this and Crockett sold out to Turner and WCW was officially born.

Just a boring show here with the best match being decent but WAY too long. The shortest match is over 19 minutes, but nothing here is any good. Horrible show and in contention for worst PPV ever. Oh and the lighting was the kind where you couldn't see past the second row anywhere. Horrible.