

Inside the Steel Cage – Not As Bad As You Would Expect

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Commentators: Gorilla Monsoon, Alfred Hayes, Johnny Valiant, Vince McMahon

Host: Gorilla Monsoon, Johnny Valentine

How many details can I give you here? It's from the mid eighties and that's about all I can give you. There was another version of this but this is the older one, which should make it a bit more interesting. Let's get to it.

All matches are cage matches.

Andre the Giant vs. Big John Studd

This is joined in progress and Andre is just maybe a foot or two shorter than the top of the cage. I think this is from Toronto but I'm not sure. Andre bites away and opens up Studd. That cage is SHAKING. The lighting is rather bad here for the most part. This is before 1985 based on Andre's hair. You can barely see them for a few seconds here but it picks up a bit.

Andre misses a diving headbutt and Studd heads for the door which gets him nowhere. This is a lot of laying around and choking on the mat with the occasional big clubbing forearm shot. Studd goes for the door again but can't get through one more time. Monsoon kind of implies any part of getting out of the cage counts rather than just the feet. They've spent about four minutes now laying down near the door now.

Andre finally stands up and stares at Studd for a bit. Ah never mind he must have worn himself out so we're going to lay down a bit more. The slug it out and Studd surprisingly wins. Studd has a chance to leave and like the stupid heel that he is he doesn't go for it and charges again, running into a big

boot. Andre gets a slam and then goes to the TOP ROPE and jumps off with a huge sit down splash onto Studd's chest. FREAKING DOUBLE OW MAN! The exit from the cage is academic as Studd is for all intents and purposes, dead.

Rating: D+. Well the match was incredibly boring with them just kind of laying around for the most part but DANG that ending was awesome with Studd getting destroyed to end this. That was a mind blowing ending with Andre coming down HARD on Studd. This was the second biggest feud in the company at the time which resulted in Andre beating Studd in a slam match at Mania.

We get a clip of the same kind of ending with Andre vs. Kamala. Just like two minutes here so I can't call it a match. Andre dominates and drops the same seated splash (seated senton like Rey but the guy is already down).

It's another ending to a match but this one is a bit more famous. It's Snuka vs. Muraco and the legendary cage dive ending. What's not often remembered is that happened after the match ended. Snuka gets a flying headbutt and Muraco stumbled out onto the floor to retain. Apparently Dreamer, Bubba Ray Dudley and of course Mick Foley were all in attendance. That really is an amazing sight and was the biggest spot ever at the time.

Adrian Adonis/Randy Savage vs. Tito Santana/Bruno Sammartino

Wild brawl to start with Adonis vs. Santana and Bruno vs. Savage. Savage is the IC Champion at this point. You only win with both guys getting to the floor. They're MOVING out there. Apparently the door is only going to be opened upon request. So it's like a shave around the ears? Bruno, an old veteran of cage matches, stops Savage from trying to escape.

Even Adonis is running so you can tell they're serious here. Bruno is beating the tar out of Savage here. I love the way he throws boots. This was actually a hot feud as Bruno came out

of retirement to feud with Savage which in reality was a way to get his son some spots on TV. Tito makes a nice save to keep Savage in the door and Bruno crotches Adrian just because it's fun. Gorilla says his wish just came true. I don't want to know what that means. Tito is busted and it's not bad.

It's kind of odd to see someone use a kick as their main offense when you're so used to seeing punches being the main thing. Savage goes for a double axe from the top but runs into the fist of Santana and the heels are in trouble. Savage is bleeding BAD. He manages to stop Santana though.

Adonis goes up and dives off the top, hitting Sammartino with a knee drop. Unfortunately that's because he botched it for the most part and kind of fell off the top of the cage onto Bruno. Savage gets a leg over the top but runs into the taco salesman from Tijuana. The heels are slammed together allowing Bruno to get out the door and Santana over the top to end this.

Rating: A-. Sweet goodness this was a war. They beat the living crap out of each other and none of the four ever stopped at all. Bruno could bring on the violence when he wanted to and apparently he wanted to do so here. This was a very good match with all four guys working very hard and never stopping once in about ten minutes. I liked it.

Another quick three minute version of a match I already reviewed in full which is Tito vs. Valentine with Tito getting the title back. Check the WWF Grudge Matches review for the full thing if you're interested. I'm not reviewing a three minute part of a match I already did in full. Tito wins what was a good match.

WWF Title: Bruno Sammartino vs. George Steele

This is from some time in the 60s but Gorilla doesn't know when. Back then Steele was a top heel so this would have been a big time fight. The cage is weird looking as it's more or

less wire walls rather than a traditional cage. Steele has riot gear police officers bring him out. This is still escape rules. Naturally the commentary is from the 80s rather than back in the day as there likely wasn't commentary done for this originally.

This is clipped to an extent. Bruno hammers him as this is probably the culmination of what was a major feud. Steele looks identical to what he would for the rest of his career. Steele actually gets a low blow before eating a turnbuckle. He rubs the stuffing into Bruno's eyes which blinds him but George won't just leave. This is in Philadelphia apparently. Apparently Styrofoam stuffing is blinding.

Bruno gets rocked by Steele for a good while as the camera and lighting is really different here but of course at the time no one knew what to do from a production standpoint as this was a very new idea back then. Bruno Hulks Up as Steele pounds away and then runs as Bruno can't be hurt. Sammartino destroys him by ramming him into the cage a bunch and then climbs out.

Rating: C-. Nothing great here but seeing something from this far back in time is always cool. Steele didn't change a bit in about twenty years and was still completely awesome the whole time. This was a pretty ok match but the clipping didn't help. Bruno was completely awesome in cages and this worked ok but at six minutes shown, how into a cage match can you get?

Bruno Sammartino vs. Roddy Piper

Not a title match here as this is from the mid 80s. We're in Boston here. Gorilla and Jesse talk about the experience you get in cage matches. Jesse wonders what you can actually learn in there which makes sense. Piper wears a Bears shirt which is around the time that the Bears beat the Patriots in the Super Bowl. He also hangs posters in the cage which is a nice touch.

Bruno comes out and goes straight for Piper, sending him into the cage. Piper is bleeding maybe a minute in. Bruno shoves

the poster in Piper's face as this is a big beatdown. This was another big feud as Piper had totally not respected Sammartino as most young heels didn't so Vince set this up before cutting almost all ties with Bruno. Granted that was mutual so that's not a fair criticism.

Piper gets a low blow to save the match and barely has his shirt off yet. Sammartino has to make a big save to keep Piper out as he might be busted open too. Piper seems more like he's just trying to escape while Bruno wants punishment. And there's Roddy's trunks going down. Ok then. Bruno kicks away and they slug it out. Jesse has kind of stopped talking here.

Roddy goes up and Bruno pounds on his supple Scottish balls. That's not quite enough for Bruno to get out but Bruno grabs a wooden chair as he's trying to leave and blasts Piper in the head with it to win. Jesse says that was cheating but it's a cage match so whatever I suppose.

Rating: B-. Not bad here and a bit longer than the previous one. Bruno was fun to watch and the fans always reacted to him. This was a veteran giving the young loudmouth a beating and that's something that is always going to work. Nothing great but a fun match either way.

WWF Title: Bob Backlund vs. Pat Patterson

This is from September of 79 apparently. Patterson is the IC Champion here and is a cage match expert but Backlund has never been in one. Patterson was more or less the top heel in the company by default here. They start off fast as Backlund is all fired up here. Patterson tries to get out early and that goes nowhere.

Both guys get incredibly close but can't get all the way out. Patterson almost gets out with Backlund literally dragging him back over the top by a single leg. They keep fighting to try to get out as this is definitely more about winning than violence which is fine. We clip the match to them being on the

mat and Patterson hammers away on a cut on Backlund's head. From what I can find only about three minutes out of 16 total were clipped so we get the vast majority here.

Patterson is busted too. Vince calls the WWF Champion a gallant lad. That's sweet. Patterson goes into the cage and Backlund goes for the kill. He winds up going into the cage though so forget about that I guess. Backlund gets the atomic drop which was one of his signature moves at the time. I guess Lombardi will have to be gentle tonight.

Patterson finds some brass knuckles and they go up. Pat can't get a shot with them and both guys go down. And then Backlund kicks Patterson in the head and the force of the kick launches Backlund backwards through the cage door and out to the floor. Patterson FREAKS in the ring after that even though he did nothing but lose cleanly. I guess that's why he's a heel.

Rating: B. Very solid match here with both guys beating the heck out of each other. Backlund was at this best at the end of a feud where he had to go off to beat someone and that's what he did here. This was either their fourth or fifth match against each other and Patterson had beaten him before. This was fun stuff though and it worked very well.

The final match is the main event of Mania II so it's copy and paste time again. It was joined in progress but not by much, maybe a minute or so.

WWF World Title: Hulk Hogan vs. King Kong Bundy

This is a cage match and the only one in Mania history if you don't count the Cell match at Mania 15 which most people don't. The story behind this is Bundy jumped Hogan at a SNME and hurt his ribs, which hadn't healed yet. Hogan wrestled against doctor's orders with tape all over his ribs. Simple but effective but kind of too simple as this was more or less thrown together about a month ago.

This is a very not surprising match with Bundy going for the ribs and Hogan having to fight through the pain. It's solid because it's Hogan doing what he does best but the total and complete lack of drama or anyone really caring for the most part is hurting it. Also having Jesse as lead announcer is a very odd choice.

Bundy rips the tape off of Hogan's ribs like a good heel and Hogan messes up as always by trying to pick Bundy up and of course he can't do it. There's nothing special going on here at all but it's working for the most part. Ah there's the Hulk Up. Very surprisingly we get a power slam here and not the traditional slam. Maybe his ribs really were hurt. He ties up Bundy and goes over the top to retain and end the show.

Rating: B-. It's Hogan against a monster heel not named Andre. What are you expecting here? This was his bread and butter and the fans popped for the end (only) so I guess you can call this a success. I'm a sucker for Hogan matches in the 80s so I'd say there's probably some bias in the rating but who cares? Fairly solid match but nothing unique about it at all other than the cage aspect.

Overall Rating: B-. The wrestling and action here are mostly great but at the same time the cage matches non stop get rather monotonous after awhile. They're good matches but at the same time you kind of want something else after the first few of them. It's good stuff to be sure but you might now want to watch it all in one sitting. Worth checking out though.

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