

What Killed WCW (WCW Clue)

Part 4

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For those of you that haven't heard the history, here was the new plan that for some reason that I'm not sure God himself understands. Nick Patrick, the referee, had been very biased towards the NWO in the recent months. He was supposed to make a fast count, leading to Bret Hart running down and saying he wouldn't let this become Montreal all over again (not in those words but that was the idea). Two things caused this cluster of a plan to fall apart: Patrick counts a relatively normal count, and Hart is there before the bell rings. With Patrick counting normal speed, it looks like Sting just got pinned in a normal match.

Another problem with the whole fast count thing: Sting stayed down. You can see him getting up about 20 seconds later when Bret is arguing with Patrick. If this was supposed to be a fast count then Sting should have popped up a split second after the three correct? Instead he popped up almost half a minute later and looked like he could barely get up if his life depended on it. If this was supposed to be a fast count, why did no one tell Sting that was the finish? Could it be that he knew it would bomb?

The announcers don't bring up Patrick's heel tactics, and they touch on it being a fast count. They don't have time because instead of Hart running down to the ring like he was supposed to, he was already there, so he stops the bell from ringing about two seconds after the pin. He says it won't happen again, which makes no sense to non-WWF fans, or to wrestling

fans in general. Since he was a referee earlier in the night, he is apparently has refereeing powers all night, so he jumps in as referee. Sting hits the splash, the scorpion, and he gets the title to end the show. Two weeks later, the title is held up vacant, and Sting FINALLY pins Hogan mostly clean in LATE FEBRUARY (this was three days after Christmas) at Superbrawl.

The whole thing just made no sense and everyone saw that it was nothing but a way to get the buyrate for Superbrawl up. Hogan and the NWO should have died then and there. Hogan should have disappeared until about June before coming back in the red and yellow, begging for the fans' forgiveness while Sting slowly accepts the fans again and becomes the surfer or at least a normal looking wrestler. Instead, it's the same things over and over again. All the fans, myself included, had their intelligence insulted. I and many other fans I knew at the time started watching Raw and loved what we were seeing, because it wasn't WCW. I never left.

Sting would wind up holding the title for about two months until Savage beat him for it at Spring Stampede, only to lose it back to Hogan the next night. Goldberg beat him for it three months later. To say the fans didn't react well is an understatement. The next night on Nitro the ratings were GREAT. The lead for Nitro stayed intact until the fans started getting what was going on.

Once the fans were told the title would be held up, they started to watch Raw more often. You couple this with the introduction of Mike Tyson and Steve Austin getting the world title and the lead was gone. About a week after Mania, Raw won for the first time in nearly two years. While the content on Raw was a major factor in this, there was no reason for WCW fans to watch Raw until they got screwed over here.

Sting had been this hero for WCW and would end the NWO once and for all. That was supposed to happen, much like Austin

winning the title at Mania. Sting was supposed to destroy Hogan but that just didn't happen for some reason. That reason would be Hogan didn't want to lose clean like that and when he got the title back just a few months later, everything fell apart. WCW proved they had learned nothing a little over a year later in the Fingerpoke of Doom. The fans wanted something new and WCW decided that wasn't going to happen. The rest is history.

In case you didn't get it, this is another suspect.

In reverse chronological order:

1. David Arquette Wins World Title – May 7, 2000
2. The Radicalz Jump Ship – January 17, 2000
3. Vince Russo Hired – October 5, 1999
4. Formation of NWO Wolfpac – May 4, 1998
5. Starrcade 1997 – December 28, 1997

Now with that one, we can jump back a good distance in time, because from about the time that Hall jumped the guardrail until Starrcade 1997, they pretty much could do no wrong. They made a fortune, they dominated the ratings and they were the dominant company in the wrestling world. Even before then, you could probably argue that they didn't have any glaring errors until you get back to June 1994 and the signing of Hulk Hogan.

The first reaction a lot of people are going to have is "but KB, that got them to their success later." Well yes that's true. However, let's take a look at what they're giving up. First and foremost: money. Hogan was going to have a heavy pricetag and I've heard (and no I have no hard proof of this so if someone says I'm wrong and has proof I'll certainly say I'm wrong) that it was in the neighborhood of seven hundred grand per PPV appearance. Then again, this is Ted Turner's company, so money doesn't mean much.

However, there's one major thing that Hogan seemed (emphasis on that word) to change: the youth movement. Let's take a look

at some of the WCW roster that was gone soon after Hogan took over and some of the people that were brought up to the top.

Steve Austin: went from being US Champion, TV Champion and tag champion to losing to Jim Duggan in about 30 seconds. Now the interesting thing: Austin had been developing this character that was anti-authority and anti-old school, wore black trunks and had started swearing a lot. He got hurt and then was released for not being marketable. Austin had allegedly been in line for a world title feud for Starrcade with Flair but then Hogan got there, "retired" Flair and held the title for a year and a half, defending the world title against Brutus Beefcake at Starrcade. So Austin was replaced (allegedly) by Duggan and Beefcake and left WCW at age 29.

Mick Foley: he was probably the best promo man in the world for about a year, then had a huge feud with Vader where he got to incorporate more of his hardcore stuff. Foley and Kevin Sullivan won the tag titles in early 1994 and lost them to Paul Orndorff and Paul Roma before leaving in September, because there was no place for someone like Mick Foley there right? He was 29 when he left.

HHH: yep he was there too. He played a Connecticut blueblood who thought he was better than everyone else. They wanted to put him in a tag team, he wanted to be a singles guy. WCW released him and he was in WWF about 4 months later. He left at age 25. And no, you can't really blame that on Hogan.

I'm probably forgetting others. The thing is though, instead of pushing these guys, you saw guys like Orndorff and Roma and Duggan with titles and guys like John Tenta and Kamala and Beefcake and the Nasty Boys and One Man Gang being on TV and getting pushes and you have to wonder why these guys were in the spots they were in. Now again, you can't prove that these guys got depushed/pushed due to Hogan, but doesn't it seem a little strange that these changes all happened right around the time when Hogan arrived? I'm going to add this to the list

of suspects, but again there isn't much hard evidence for it.

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6. Hulk Hogan Hired – June 11, 1994

You know, I think that's about it. There are some major problems and blunders that WCW had before then, but I don't think there's anything that you can really point at which couldn't be recovered from. There is however one major thing that I think we need to talk about and that would be the idiocy of what they did with Ric Flair in 1991.

Now as we've gone over, Ted Turner bought Jim Crockett Promotions in the late 80s. However, he was a tycoon and didn't exactly have time to run a wrestling company. So Turner brought in a bunch of people that had no freaking clue how to run a wrestling company, with the main one being Jim Herd who arrived around 1991. Herd looked at Flair and thought that he was washed up and past his prime.

This was totally wrong as well since Flair was not only world champion but the top draw still. Herd thought the Nature Boy gimmick was stupid and wanted to change Flair into, and I'm not making this up, a bald gladiator. Yes, he wanted to drop one of the most famous gimmicks in history to make him a stupid character.

As Kevin Sullivan put it, "after we change Flair's gimmick, let's go change Babe Ruth's number." Flair, having a brain, told Herd that this wasn't going to work. Herd, being the idiot that he was, decided he knew more wrestling than Flair and told him that Flair would do it or be fired.

Now this is where Flair had him. Since, like everyone that knew what they were talking about, Flair knew that he could walk straight into the WWF and be launched right to the top of the show, he didn't back down. Herd fired him and Vince got a nice big present called Ric Flair just handed to him. Now let's get to the interesting part. When he was fired, Flair was still WCW and NWA champion.

Yes, Herd was dumb enough to fire him BEFORE changing the title. See what kind of idiot he was? He was stripped of the WCW Title which was then put in a match between Luger and Barry Windham, which was booed out of the building with chants of WE WANT FLAIR! The winner didn't matter, because no one was going to take them seriously as champion (noticing a recurring theme in this?), and why should they have? They never beat Flair for the title so they were in essence fighting for the number one contender spot.

No one bought it and the title was hurt badly for the next year and a half since instead of watching fake champions, they turned the channel to USA to see how the real WCW champion did in the WWF. Now the REAL interesting part lies in the NWA title. Like I said, Flair held both titles which were represented by the same belt.

The NWA had a policy for its world champions: you win the title, you pay 25,000 dollars as a deposit on it. The deal was done to prevent people from showing up in other companies with the title. In other words, you rented it. Once you lost the belt you got the money back with interest on it.

Now that's fine and good. Flair paid the deposit and all was well and good. However, once he was fired from WCW he was stripped of the belt and was told to return it to the NWA. Flair said he'd be glad to do it as soon as he was given his money back. Problem: the NWA didn't have it. Flair says well then you don't have a belt either. He took it to Vince and used it in a gimmick, calling himself the REAL world's

champion.

The NWA panicked since there was no way they could let this happen. They took Flair to court over it and were laughed out of the room since they had absolutely no case. They made a deal with Flair and weren't living up to their end of it. Therefore, there was nothing they could do to keep Flair from using the title on WWF TV. It was his property so he could do whatever he wanted with it. Eventually Flair went back to WCW and let them use the belt after they paid him what he was owed. The big gold belt became the WCW Title and the rest is history. Again though, I don't think you can really call that a candidate in this because they managed to recover and got out of the NWA before they could do much additional damage.

With that, we have our six final suspects as to who/what killed WCW. We'll now go through and look at which of these really was the worst. Now remember, what we're looking for here is the moment where once it had occurred, WCW was simply not going to be able to recover.

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