

Clash of the Champions Count-Up – #17: This Is A Free Show. Remember That.

Clash of the Champions 17

Date: November 19, 1991

Location: Savannah Civic Center, Savannah, Georgia

Attendance: 6,922

Commentators: Jim Ross, Tony Schiavone

This is a show that I remember watching on a tape quite a few times. This is a stacked card with five title matches and the reveal of the major storyline at the time. There had been a lot of massive gift boxes being delivered to Sting and tonight we got to find out who had delivered guys like Cactus Jack and Abdullah the Butcher to try to hurt Sting and take him out. This is a nostalgia show for me but it still looks good. Let's get to it.

We list off the title matches and everything looks good, but Rick Steiner is getting a world title shot vs. Luger. Well you can't win everything I guess.

Tony and Jim run down the high points which is nothing of note. Missy and Eric, with THICK hair, talk about Missy's interview with the newest rookie in the company: Marcus Alexander Bagwell.

Thomas Rich vs. Big Josh

TON of notes here. For one thing this is a lumberjack match. For those of you that aren't old school enough or can't get the name change, that would be Tommy Rich, as in the former NWA World Champion. Big Josh is the guy famous in WCW for dancing with bear cubs. In WWF he's most famous for being the original Doink the Clown. Rich is in a group called the York Foundation led by Alexandra York, more famously known as Terri

Runnels.

Ok now for the match even though I'm spent from all those notes. They used to be friends (a long time ago for you Veronica Mars fans. For those of you that don't get that, go watch it as it's a very underrated show) and then Rich turned heel so it's a revenge match. Josh is this wilderness dude that wears jean shorts and a flannel shirt to the ring. The lumberjacks are a bunch of midcarders that mean nothing of note.

The Freebirds, I guess faces at this point, throw Rich back in. Richard Morton and Terrance Taylor, members of the Foundation, beat Josh up on the floor as you would expect them to. The match itself is nothing for the most part as it's just filler for the lumberjack stuff. Taylor accidentally hooks Rich's leg and Josh hits his seated senton to end it.

Rating: D. This was nothing at all. It filled in 8 minutes and wasn't interesting in the slightest. Other than Sting this is one of the worst times for WCW other than its end as Flair was gone so no one bought Luger as champion. This was a good example of it: a guy that dances with bear cubs fighting a bunch of Wall Street guys that were barely able to beat jobbers. See why this was a bad time for the company? Boring match.

Firebreaker Chip vs. Bobby Eaton

Chip was part of a team with Todd Champion who were called the Patriots. Eaton was about to become a member of the Dangerous Alliance. Chip was this young guy that never really did much but I think they won the US Tag Titles at one point. The crowd is about as alive as Christian's chances of main eventing Wrestlemania next year (get over it fanboys. It's never happening).

Eaton was one of the best workers of the 80s and was still great at this point. It's a shame this isn't a tag match where

he's one of the best ever. This is just pure filler and Eaton hits a suplex and a bridge to get the pin. Yeah whatever.

Rating: D-. This was like the first match but just without an angle going with it. The crowd was dead and there was nothing of note here. There was nothing of note here but the wrestling was decent. This was just a match. That's a good way to put it: this was just a match between two decent guy. Other than that there's absolutely nothing here. It's not horrific or anything but it's just there.

Ad for Starrcade, which was the first Battlebowl and my first WCW show. I can't wait for that show, even though it's pretty terrible.

It's time for the box thing and Sting's entrance is something else. He's just the US Champion here but he's by far and away the most popular guy in the company and possibly the top star in the world at this point. A bunch of muscle guys bring this carriage without wheels thing out. There's a name for it but I can't think of it and it doesn't really matter.

A woman (Madusa) pops out and tries to seduce Sting. This of course doesn't work as Sting is a HERO. With his back turned though (Sting never was the smartest guy in the world) Lex Luger pops out of the carriage and hits Sting in his knee that was destroyed about a year and a half or so ago. In a funny bit Luger hits the left knee and the with Sting does goes after the right knee. Sting shakes his head and shouts NO and then Luger grabs the left one which is the bad one. An army of faces run him off after not a lot of knee damage. This comes into play later on.

Diamond Studd vs. Tom Zenk

The Diamond guy would go to WWF soon and imitate Al Pacino with a name of Razor Ramon. This match started in the break for some reason. Sting is being attended to in the back so we cut this down to a quarter of the screen. Sting is put in an

ambulance and taken to a hospital. Back to the match and Zenk kicks Diamond Dude in the head and hits a crucifix to end it. He takes a Diamond Death Drop (Razor's Edge) afterwards.

Rating: N/A. This was just a backdrop so that Sting could leave.

TV Title: P.N. News vs. Steve Austin

These two feuded forever and it never went much of anywhere. News is a very fat rapper and very white on top of that. You might have heard of the other guy. This is still the old NWA TV Title which is far better looking than the more famous WCW one. News would dominate Austin for the most part and then Austin would either get out on a time limit draw or a DQ or a count out or something like that.

News completely dominates for the most part here while wearing bright orange with the words Yo Baby Yo Baby Yo all over his tights. Basically Austin can't do anything here and knows it so he just tries to get in a shot where he can. He also has shoulder length blonde hair if you can imagine that. AUSTIN GOES LUCHA as he dives over the top with a flying forearm to save his lady friend.

For no apparent reason Austin goes for the stomach and of course that doesn't work. They're badly calling spots here as it amazes me that you could have a guy as talented as Austin stuck with a guy like News. Austin avoids an avalanche and uses his feet on the ropes to get the heel pin.

Rating: C-. Not bad here and Austin is always fun to watch. News wasn't as bad as his gimmick makes him sound but since this is WCW we can let that slide I think. This was short enough to not be that bad as Austin cheats to win again, which is the whole point to this feud. Short and not that awful. Austin would become part of the Dangerous Alliance soon and be repackaged as a killer which were the seeds of his legendary character.

Missy talks to Bagwell and we actually see videos of him training. He's 21 here and would be around for nearly 10 years which has to be one of the longest tenured guys in WCW history without leaving for anything other than injury.

It's time for the Top Ten, which was updated weekly and rarely made anything resembling sense.

10. Vader
9. Bobby Eaton
8. Bill Kazmaier
7. Cactus Jack
6. Barry Windham
5. Dustin Rhodes
4. Ron Simmons
3. Steve Austin
2. Rick Steiner
1. Sting

Yeah....just a few odd ones in there.

Cactus Jack vs. Van Hammer

Van Hammer is one of the weirdest cases in wrestling history. He was completely devoid of talent, his gimmick was that of a heavy metal guitarist and he couldn't really talk. That being said, he was the second most popular guy in the company after Sting. I LOVED this guy and for the life of me I don't know why. This was by far his biggest feud as he never did anything of note after this but whatever.

Jack jumps Hammer as a fairly attractive woman looks like she's in ecstasy over him. Jack jumps him (Tony called it) and it's on. This wasn't a feud yet but it would become one. Hammer gets a dropkick to the stomach and we head to the floor. Hammer realizes he's fighting Cactus Jack on the floor and goes back to the ring immediately.

Cactus Clothesline and we're on the floor. It's all Foley here

until Van Hammer hits a clothesline to the back of the head which I think was one of his finishers. Jack gets Hammer's guitar and hits him in the throat with it for the pin, which was Hammer's first loss. They brawl to the back.

Rating: D+. This was pretty weak as Jack just beat him up for the most part and then cheated to win. This is probably too high though due to bias but that's the fun part of nostalgic shows. Hammer would never really improve but obviously Jack would.

We get ahold of Eric on the phone at a hospital where Sting is. Way before he starts talking though we hear Eric tell Tony to move his head in a funny moment.

At Halloween Havoc The Enforcers (Zbyszko and Anderson) broke Barry Windham's arm by slamming it in a car door, putting him out. Windham tried to keep wrestling but couldn't, so Dustin Rhodes, his partner, has a mystery partner for the tag title match tonight. This is going to be awesome.

Tag Titles: Enforcers vs. Dustin Rhodes/???

The champions don't know who they're fighting yet. Rhodes comes out with Windham who is in street clothes. We bring out Dustin's partner but he's in a black robe with a big dragon mask on. Oh you know where this is going. Dustin takes the dragon mask off and there's a hood over his head.

If you didn't get it, it's RICKY FREAKING STEAMBOAT. Anderson loses his mind over this, clearly shouting NOT RICKY STEAMBOAT!!! The fans freaking erupt as Steamboat had been doing WWF house shows as recently as three weeks or so before this. HUGE shock and to say this is going to be a classic is an understatement.

Steamboat and Anderson start us off as the champions are trying to adjust on the fly. It's a big brawl immediately on the floor for a bit. It's ALL Rhodes and Steamboat here as

they clean house. Larry's arm gets worked over to start and it's been one sided so far. Tony makes the stupid statement of you have to be a good singles wrestler to be a good tag wrestler. I'm not sure on that one. Now that I'm back from making a thread on it, let's continue.

Anderson breaks tradition and comes off the top with a double axe that actually connects! That's the extent of Anderson's offense though as this continues to be one sided. Larry comes in and slows things down (shocking isn't it?). Ricky uses martial arts and that's using one of Larry's moves some how. Well to an extent that's true but it's worded oddly.

The heels take over with good old fashioned double teaming. Can anyone sell a sunset flip like Arn Anderson? If they have I'd certainly like to see it. Why do wrestling companies always insist on showing us shots of the crowd in the middle of the match? We know they're there and we can tell if they're enjoying it or not. We don't have to see them to prove it.

Arn and Larry use some great double team stuff and Arn busts out a bearhug. They work on Ricky's back as this has been a very fun match. They switch out when the referee is busy and swear they tagged. Moments later Dustin and Ricky make a tag but the referee didn't see it. The referee is of course Nick Patrick so did you expect anything less than nefarious means?

Dustin gets the hot tag and comes in to clean house, beating the heck out of both guys. He hits the bulldog on Arn and makes a blind tag. Arn doesn't know it and walks into the cross body off the top and there's no way you're getting up from that. The roof is blown off again as the new champions celebrate.

Rating: A-. This was a great match including a great surprise for the partner. This was a televised title change which is something you never saw back in the day. They went old school here with the heels cheating and the faces working hard and

everything worked. It's a great match and considering this was on free TV, you can't go wrong at all.

The Enforcers are mad about losing apparently because they didn't sign to fight Steamboat. Arn and Eaton would team up to get the tag titles in a few months which became part of WrestleWar 92 which had probably the best gimmick match in WCW history. I'm looking forward to that one.

We get a music video about Jushin Liger, complete with clips of him beating up someone named Pegasus Kid. I'm sure he would never go anywhere.

Dangerously (Heyman) has the contract for the US Title match later tonight. There's a clause in it that says if Sting can't be there by the time the bell rings, Rude gets the title by forfeit. In a funny line Heyman says "I'm not lying this time." Always a good sign that he has to point that out.

Jim is on the phone with Eric again who is with Sting. Ok never mind he's not with Sting. Sting is apparently leaving and Eric tells him about the loophole where he's going to have to forfeit and apparently steals an ambulance.

Light Heavyweight Title: Johnny B. Badd vs. Brian Pillman

These two would put on a classic at Fall Brawl 95. Unfortunately that was when Badd had stopped having an overly flamboyant character and was getting ridiculously good ridiculously fast. On the way to the ring Badd has women putting money in his garter belt. What does that tell you? This title would evolve into the Cruiserweight Title in a few years and actually mean something.

Pillman and Liger had one of the best openers ever in a few months at Superbrawl but something tells me this isn't going to be anything like that. The weight limit here is 236lbs for no adequately explained reason. Badd's manager is Teddy "Peanut" Long. Has this guy EVER not been working? We hear

again that Badd was a boxer which I think was at least partially true.

Pillman was completely awesome at this point while Badd was the opposite, which makes for an interesting dynamic here. They brawl to the floor and I'm trying to figure out if Badd is a heel or a face. Well the people are booing him but I'm not sure what that really proves in this case. Badd takes over for a bit but Pillman hits a nice spinwheel kick.

Badd totally botches the top rope sunset flip but Teddy has the referee for no apparent reason. We do the ram the wrestler into the guy on the apron for the rollup to end it. They managed to mess up the cradle too. Badd knocks out Long afterwards.

Rating: D+. Badd just isn't that good. There's no other way to put it: he's just not that good. Pillman was more or less carrying this and while it's not bad, it's certainly not that good. Like I said though, Badd would improve a lot and in 95, these guys would have some wars.

United States Title: Rick Rude vs. Sting

Rude had debuted like a month earlier and had guaranteed that he would win the US Title from Sting. Paul cuts a promo talking about how Sting isn't here but of course as he does the ambulance pulls up and Sting goes in the wrong door. His buddies help him out and the first is on the ramp. Sting is limping horribly and he manages to press slam Rude on the ramp which is impressive even if he's healthy.

Crowd is electric here. This is ALL Sting as he realizes if he stops moving at all then Rude can get to his knee. Rude gets to it anyway and wraps the knee around the post. I remember FREAKING when this was on. Rude Awakening is blocked which I think had only been done in WWF by Warrior and Hogan at this point. Rude gets knocked down but rams into the knee on the way down.

Heyman gets a phone shot to the back of the head for a false finish. Ross is losing his mind of course and Dangerously is going nuts. DDT puts Rude down but a chop block and tights get Rude the title. This was like four minutes long but it never once slowed down at all. Rude would hold the belt for over a year and had to forfeit due to injury.

Rating: B+. This is WAY high, but the atmosphere here and the energy is completely insane. For less than five minutes long to get that kind of a reaction and do a TON of other stuff in the process, this means a ton. Let's see what this accomplished.

1. It gets Rude over. Sting was the MAN in WCW and Rude just beat him for his title in his second match with the company. Rude had been a glorified midcarder until his last maybe five months in WWF and now he's a total tough guy that beat Sting and is the US Champion.

2. It frees up Sting to fight Luger for the world title. Sting was clearly destined to win the world title but he had to get rid of the US belt first. This was like Cena losing the US Title to Orlando Jordan (yes young fans, that happened) before he could beat JBL for the world title.

3. It keeps Sting strong. It in essence took Madusa, Luger, Dangerously and Rude plus a cell phone and a bad knee to beat Sting. To manage to keep him strong and make Rude looks strong at the same time is a great thing. Sting keeps his credibility and Rude gets the rub.

4. It gives Sting a feud to come back to once he wins the world title. And dang was that feud awesome.

Not bad for four minutes and 50 seconds, counting the thirty seconds it took to get to the ring for the champion.

We go to Dangerously, Rude and Madusa who say it was all a setup and Luger was in on it too. He says WCW answers to him

and forms the Dangerous Alliance who would eventually get Zbyszko, Anderson, Eaton and Austin to join Rude. Dangerously had been fired from being a commentator so he formed this team to get back at WCW. He would do the same thing with a guy named Brock after he was fired by Vince after the Invasion. Arn Anderson later said that this was one of the best groups of talent he had ever seen, and only WCW could manage to screw it up. That's just funny.

Ron Simmons says he'll be back from his wrist injury soon enough. Him winning the world title was mind blowing to say the least.

We recap Rick Steiner pinning Luger in a tag match and beating up Race.

WCW World Title: Rick Steiner vs. Lex Luger

This was supposed to be Simmons but the aforementioned wrist injury kept that from happening. Scott was also hurt if you were wondering why the more talented one isn't in there instead. Steiner takes it to the mat and Luger is just beaten there. We hear about Scott having a one night manager's license or something. This is where WCW got stupid at times: instead of having a license or something, he can't just be there for his brother's biggest match ever? WWF did it too and it was stupid then as well so shut up about my WWF bias. Yes I like WWF more and I'm going to cut them more slack. I like them more and have since I can remember. So to the people that keep complaining about it, let it go.

Steiner dominates early as you would expect. Steiner keeps dominating but Race yells at him and that somehow gives Luger the advantage. Did he scare a guy named the Dog Faced Gremlin into losing his advantage? Luger throws in a low blow and takes over. Luger pounds on him but Steiner just kind of shakes it off and makes his comeback. The top rope bulldog gets two as Luger puts his foot on the rope. Mr. Hughes, the

bodyguard, and Scott Steiner come in and do nothing of importance. It lets Luger get a belt shot to Steiner to end it though.

Rating: D. The lack of drama hurts it as this was just literally thrown on at the end. It's not horrible but seriously, RICK STEINER? No one else was available? This was just a weird match and while it's watchable, it's certainly not very good. It came and went though so there's always that.

Tony and Jim talk about the hotline where they'll have the decision on whether the tag title switch stands. LANCE RUSSELL and Gordon Solie are doing the talking. Any old school fan just came to that.

Overall Rating: A-. This was a free show. I actually forgot about that a few times during the tape. To say the card is stacked and a lot happens here is an understatement. They fit 9 matches, five of which were title matches with two changes, into a two hour card. How's THAT for efficiency? There's also a major stable being formed and a classic tag match. Couple this in with the fact that this was thrown on TV for free and that the WWF PPV of the month was the abysmal Survivor Series and this is as one sided as it can get.