

Spring Stampede 1997: The NWO Civil War Begins

Spring Stampede 1997

Date: April 6, 1997

Location: Tupelo Coliseum, Tupelo, Mississippi

Attendance: 8,356

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Bobby Heenan, Dusty Rhodes

I had planned on continuing with the 1998 shows but it occurred to me that I was going to run out of PPVs in my series of Nitro reviews. This is only a few months after where I am in that series though so I won't be too far removed at least. This is a B show with no Hogan, Piper, or anyone else for the most part and a main event of Savage vs. Page in a grudge match. Savage joined the NWO at SuperBrawl and was put with Page to bring DDP up to the main event. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about Page vs. Savage of course. On and the Steiners vs. Outsiders for the millionth time. The third match talked about is the Women's Title match. See what we're up against here?

This is where Uncensored 96 happened. It HAS TO be better than that right?

Nash has said that he'll fight all of WCW if he has to. Scott Hall is missing and has been for THREE WEEKS, but they've announced him up to this point just because. Therefore it'll be a handicap match for the titles with Nash vs. Steiners.

Rey Mysterio Jr. vs. Ultimo Dragon

No Sonny with Dragon here. Dragon takes him to the mat to start and then Rey takes Dragon down to the mat as well. There's a camel clutch but Dragon quickly escapes. We get to a standoff so Dragon hits the rapidfire kicks to take Rey down.

Flair has a big announcement later tonight. Dragon hooks an armbar and they're still on the mat. Back up and he hits a kind of spinning crucifix into a modified version of what we call Shock Treatment.

Powerbomb is followed by a hot shot and then a sleeper by Dragon. Not a Dragon Sleeper but a sleeper by Dragon that is. A BIG Liger Bomb puts Rey down but Dragon won't cover. There haven't been any pin attempts between falls and it's kind of hurting the match. Tombstone gets two and it's back to the sleeper. Rey comes back with a spinwheel kick but Dragon kicks him down because Rey can't follow up.

Gordbuster sets up an Indian Deathlock. Rey gets out and manages to kick Dragon off to the floor to get a breather. Sleeper #3 goes on by Dragon but Rey counters into one of his own to a BIG pop. Dragon gets thrown to the floor again and Rey hits a dive up and over the top. And let's cut to Lee Marshall to get a statement from Kevin Nash. Instead it's Syxx and we can't hear him so there was NO POINT to this.

Back to see Rey dropping the dime for a delayed two. Rey loads up a moonsault press but Dragon dropkicks him off the top and Mysterio crashes down onto the floor. Dragon dives over the top but hurts himself at the same time. Back in Rey tries a Lionsault press but Dragon dropkicks him out of the air in a cool counter. Giant swing by Dragon puts both guys down. They trade fast pinfall attempts for two each and an enziguri puts Rey down. Super rana gets two for Dragon. Tiger and dragon suplexes by Dragon are both countered by Rey and a standing rana gets the pin for Mysterio.

Rating: C+. It was an entertaining match but for the most part it was a mess. They kept seeing to be missing the chemistry out there and that's a bad thing most of the time. Also the mat work is the wrong idea here. Not a bad match at all but this was one of those matches you expected more from. Dragon would win the TV Title the next night.

Marshall tries to get to talk to Nash again but gets Syxx again. The Steiners try to jump through the door but security stops them. Scott gets maced and handcuffed. Ok then.

Women's Title: Akira Hokuto vs. Madusa

This was a weird title as it only existed for a few years. It was won in December of 96 and defended a handful of times ever. It was vacated in the summer, won in Japan in September and never mentioned on WCW TV more than twice again. Later on they actually introduced a Women's Cruiserweight Championship. Hokuto is champion coming in. For some reason that I'll never fathom, Lee Marshall, the guy WCW fired for being horrible at commentary, is talking about this match.

They start off fast with Madusa hammering her down in the corner but walking into a clothesline. Akira chokes her in the corner and covers for two as Madusa bridges out. She hits some hair slams for two and Hokuto goes to the corner. Madusa hits a Stratusphere to take her down but Hokuto is right back on the leg. Madusa fights off Onoo and hits a pair of dropkicks. The American hits a German on the Japanese woman but Sonny distracts again. Luna Vachon comes in and takes out Madusa's knee so that Akira can retain.

Rating: F+. Madusa looked like Kaitlyn a little bit so I can't call it a full on failure, but dang this was boring. At the end of the day you can't bring out a title once every four months and expect us to care about it. Nothing to see in the match either with both chicks doing basic stuff for five minutes.

TV Title: Prince Iaukea vs. Steven Regal

So on February 13, 1997, the WWF's young Samoan Rocky Maivia beat the blue blood Hunter Hearst Helmsley for the Intercontinental Title. On February 17, 1997, WCW's young Samoan Prince Iaukea beat the blue blood Lord Steven Regal for the TV Title. Now I'm sure this was a TOTAL coincidence right?

Iaukea had nothing to offer in the ring and lost the title the next night.

Regal stalls for awhile so we're told that Scott Steiner has been arrested. The Prince takes him to the mat with a headlock as Tony tries to explain that Iaukea is one of the lines of defense against the NWO. Dennis Rodman is part of the NWO and since we hate him, let's plug his movie and air clips of it tomorrow night on Nitro! Regal comes back with a knee lift but it's right back to the headlock by the Prince.

Cross body gets two for the champ. Regal complains about a punch so Heenan says that Iaukea doesn't know that he's the champion right now. Prince takes him down with a test of strength so Regal hooks a headscissors and nips up into an eye poke. It's now a singles match for the tag titles with Rick vs. Nash. Regal hooks a full nelson and then pounds him down in the corner.

The Prince Hawaiians Up and then does nothing at all with it. Regal easily takes him into the corner and hits a pair of knees to the face. A cross body by Prince misses and Regal takes control again. He whips the Prince into the corner and tries a rollup but Iaukea sits on him and gets the pin to retain.

Rating: D. Iaukea was just so boring it's unreal. He never had anything special about him and it never caught on with the fans at all. Regal is great but he can't work miracles here, and despite Iaukea holding the belt for almost two months, he never got any better for the most part. Nothing to see here.

Regal beats up the Prince post match and puts him in the Regal Stretch.

Here's Flair for some big announcement. Gene thinks that it's Flair returning to the ring. Flair says that the Horsemen will win tonight and that he's back on May 1. He says Anderson will be back but it never happened. As for Flair and Piper....Kevin

Greene is coming to WCW. Seriously, that's practically a direct quote. Flair wants the NWO in Charlotte and he doesn't care who it is because the Horsemen are going to run them out of here. WHY DID IT TAKE THEM 10 MONTHS TO FREAKING DO THAT???

Jeff Jarrett/Steve McMichael vs. Public Enemy

Can Jarrett carry three people? I certainly hope so or this is going to be awful. Mongo vs. Rocco to start us off and it's time to stall. Rocco finds Mongo's lack of talent disturbing so he chats with known ring general Johnny Grunge. Mongo tackles both enemies and it's a double Horsemen strut. Off to Jarrett (thank goodness) vs. Grunge and Double J hooks an abdominal stretch.

Johnny gets out of it and tries a leapfrog but gets caught by an uppercut from Grunge. Jeff gets knocked to the floor and teases walking out but comes back and counts with the referee. Back to the starters and it's a Mongo chinlock on Rock. McMichael works on the back with a backbreaker and a tilt-a-whirl for two. Everything breaks down and they go split screen.

Rock is thrown into the side of a covered wagon. I'll give WCW this: their PPV sets tended to be really cool and definitely not generic like most WWE ones today. Grunge tries to put Debra on the table but Jeff saves with a chair. As Rock is thrown into a steer, Grunge dives through a table. Back to the ring and it's completely broken down. Debra trips Rocco and it's briefcase time. Jeff cleans house with dropkicks but Rock gets the briefcase. Figure Four to Grunge but Rock blasts Jeff with the case and Jarrett is pinned while holding Grunge in the hold.

Rating: D. This wasn't as horrible as I was expecting. I thought it was going to be horrible but it wasn't all that bad. It furthers the really annoying Horsemen split which would finally happen after many more months. Boring match for

the most part but the wagon spot was kind of cool.

Gene talks to Harlem Heat who are in a four corners match tonight, as singles competitors with Luger and Giant. The winner gets a shot at Hogan, so who do you think is going to win eventually? Sherri says her guys are ready. This would be the match where Booker rants about Hogan and calls him the N word before immediately panicking. It's censored in this version (home video) and he says sucka but you can read his lips saying the other word.

US Title: Dean Malenko vs. Chris Benoit

Dean is champion coming in. They go into the corner almost immediately and it's a clean break. They go to the mat and neither guy can get control for more than a few seconds. Malenko is sent to the floor but he runs back in almost immediately. Malenko takes him to the mat and works on the knee as Woman screams. Benoit kicks him off and it's back to a stalemate.

Benoit hooks a top wristlock and things slow back down again. Back up into a test of strength which neither can really win. Benoit does the always amazing bridge which he holds while Malenko lands on him. Chris takes him to the mat and works on the arm before into a chinlock and surfboard hold. It's a Benoit match so of course they're flying through holds. Malenko escapes with a belly to back suplex and takes over. Small package gets two for Dean.

Here come the chops from Benoit but they seem to wake Malenko up. Camel clutch goes on for a bit and then it's off to a short arm scissors. Benoit does the Shawn/Bulldog counter and both guys are down. Clothesline gets two for Chris. Now it's an abdominal stretch as the submission parade continues. Dean comes up with an interesting counter by dropping to one knee. I don't remember ever seeing that before.

Benoit works on the ribs some more and channels his inner

Dynamite with a snap suplex for two. Dean tries a vertical suplex but Benoit reverses into a reverse suplex...and here comes Jackie to ruin everything that they've got going on here. We've got a catfight on the floor and Jimmy Hart comes out...to do nothing.

Swan Dive hits and Jimmy is stealing the title. Here comes Eddie Guerrero and Dean gets draped over the top rope. Dean suplexes Benoit over the top and out to the floor, probably breaking the Canadian's hip. Arn Anderson comes out and beats up Dean but Kevin Sullivan comes out and Anderson lets him hit Benoit with a Singapore cane which gets the DQ.

Rating: B-. This was getting good until we had five run-ins inside of three minutes. This Benoit vs. Sullivan feud went on for over a year and I don't think anything was ever really settled. The ending here sucked but the match wasn't great in the first place. They were having a slow submission based match but it wasn't really that great. The last five minutes before the interference were good though.

Everyone other than Arn leave together and put the belt on Eddie's shoulder for some reason, in the third (that I know of) stolen belt storyline of the year. Dean says he wasn't supposed to be here, which was supposed to lead to some faction but it never came together.

Tag Titles: Kevin Nash vs. Rick Steiner

Only in WCW. Nick Patrick is referee because we need more gimmicks in this. Rick jumps him but gets knocked down almost immediately. DiBiase and Syxx are at ringside so this is 4-1. Nash pounds on him in the corner and hits his knees but runs into a boot. Belly to belly suplex looks like Rick is picking up a boulder. That suplex/powerslam move he uses gets two.

Syxx pulls the top rope down and Steiner crashes to the floor. Back in the side slam gets two. Why isn't Patrick fast counting him? The Outsiders are the champions coming in here.

DiBiase gets in a right hand and Nash hits the running crotch attack while Rick is in 619 position. Big boot puts Rick down as we're totally in squash territory. There's the Jackknife but Steiner kicks out. I don't remember many people ever doing that other than Undertaker.

Steiner hits him low on another Jackknife attempt which Patrick actually doesn't DQ him for. He's kind of doing a bad job of being an evil referee here. Rick hits the bulldog but it only gets two, even though Nash's shoulder never came up. Down goes Syxx but Nash comes back with a clothesline to take over again.

Syxx takes off the buckle pad and Snake Eyes onto the buckle sets up Snake Eyes on the buckle which sets up Snake Eyes on the buckle which sets up Snake Eyes on the buckle which sets up the Jackknife for the pin and a forced count (Patrick was hesitant) for the pin. The interesting thing here is that DiBiase says that's enough in the middle of this and Nash yells at him. DiBiase walks out.

Rating: D-. So Nash wins a squash on PPV in a one on one match for the titles. I guess the more important part here is that DiBiase looks to be defecting which would mean more if he was an actual wrestler. This would lead to him managing the Steiners which would last for awhile until I think February. The match sucked.

Luger and Giant are ready.

Stevie Ray vs. Booker T vs. Giant vs. Lex Luger

One fall to a finish here and the winner gets Hogan eventually. Luger vs. Booker to start which should be interesting. Feeling out process to start until Luger starts slamming Booker a few times. Off to Stevie who punches Luger down a bit but gets caught between Giant and Luger which goes badly as you can imagine. Off to Giant and Stevie looks scared. Stevie knocks Giant back and gets loudly booed but

Giant comes back with a clothesline.

Booker gets thrown around as well and it's time for a meeting on the floor. I keep forgetting this is a four corners match. That gets remedied by Giant vs. Luger who have a power lockup. Luger tries a slam but Giant falls on him for two. The tag in Harlem Heat and the brothers having to fight gets a big reaction from the crowd.

They lock up and Booker works on the arm. There's a lot of non contact here which makes sense for the most part. Booker tags in Lex and all is right with the world again. Stevie comes back with strikes and it's Booker with a side suplex to put Lex down. A knee drop misses and it's Giant time. A big elbow drop misses and Stevie comes in sans tag. An ax kick by Stevie doesn't work and neither does a side kick so they go to the knees to get Giant down.

Giant gets up with ease and a big boot puts Ray down. Off to Luger again for some elbow drops which get two. Belly to back puts Booker down but Stevie breaks up the Rack. Booker hooks a chinlock and the Harlem side kick gets two. Harlem Heat double team Luger and it's back to the chinlock. Lex suplexes his way out of it but Booker breaks it up. Giant breaks up a cover off an ax kick but there's no cover. Harlem Hangover misses and it's Stevie vs. Giant. Giant kicks Booker to the floor and calls for the chokeslam but tags in Luger so he can win with the Rack instead.

Rating: C+. This wasn't bad for the most part as it was really a tag match in disguise. That being said, it didn't mean a thing as Luger wouldn't get his title shot until August so this was kind of a waste of time. The match itself was pretty fun though as both teams played it like a tag match instead of the fourway which was the right idea.

Randy Savage vs. Diamond Dallas Page

We get the long walk to the ring with Savage and Liz. Savage

wants to make it a party. "SLIM JIMS FOR EVERYBODY!!!" This is the first main event for Page. He cuts a quick promo before the match about having to stand up for what he believes in. Savage did something to Kimberly so this is a revenge match. It's not important enough to mention, but it's worth revenge. Ok then. This is No DQ.

Savage stalls like he's in Memphis (it's close to it) but jumps Page to get us going. Page fights back and they go into the ring. He tries something like a suplex but I have no idea what it wound up being. A quick Cutter attempt is countered and Page is sent to the floor. They go into the crowd and the camera chasing after them is kind of cool. Page grabs a trashcan to blast Savage in the head. Savage is NWO in case that means anything to you.

They brawl back to the ring with some choking on the way. Savage hides behind Kimberly and Liz rakes Page's back. There's the ax handle to the floor and Page is sent into the floor. With Page down, Savage chases Kimberly but is stopped by an attractive chair. After a shot to the back he beats up Dave Penzer and brings in another chair. Coming back in Page manages something like a Van Daminator but with a shove instead of a spin kick.

Unfortunately for Page he can't follow up so Savage chokes away in the corner. Page makes a quick comeback but is knocked right back don. Discus lariat out of nowhere puts Savage down but Page is spent. Savage slams him three times and goes to the floor to get the bell. Kimberly steals it from him but Savage jumps anyway, right into the feet instead of the elbow. I HATE that spot. Cutter is countered with a low blow for two.

Savage beats up the referee after the count and hits a good piledriver on him. He takes the belt off of Mark Curtis and whips him a little bit. The elbow hits but there's no referee. Cue Nick Patrick in the sleeveless shirt of EVIL. Diamond Cutter out of NOWHERE hits and Patrick counts the pin because

of the Nash stuff earlier.

Rating: B-. Good match here with Page pulling off a great upset win to pop the crowd and send them home happy. The brawling wasn't great but they did it well enough for what the purpose here was. These two would feud over most of the summer and it brought Page up to the main event level that he would stay at for years.

Post match the whole NWO (including DiBiase) comes out as Nash has Patrick by the shirt. The fans want Sting but you know he's not coming out on this show. Patrick gets beaten down and Page is sent to the floor. Savage goes after Kimberly but Bischoff stops a smack. There's a shoving match and Savage drills Bischoff and the NWO FREAKS to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This was very much a filler show as nothing of note happened here at all. It's certainly not the worst show I've ever seen and I wouldn't call it bad, but I certainly wouldn't call it good either. Either way, things would only continue to be this way for the next few months with nothing significant happening until the fall when Sting vs. Hogan really got going.

Remember to like this on Facebook and follow me on Twitter @kbreviews