

Spring Stampede 1998: With Bales Of Hay And Covered Wagons

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Date: April 19, 1998

Location: Denver Coliseum, Denver, Colorado

Attendance: 7,428

Commentators: Bobby Heenan, Tony Schiavone, Mike Tenay

So we jump ahead a little bit from Road Wild 1997 and into the era where Raw has finally taken the lead. They've won two weeks in a row, so obviously in WCW's mind, it means it's time to shake things up. Sting is champion here and is defending against Savage in the main event. Hogan is in a tag match with a bat on a pole. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about the problems that the NWO has been having lately. This would result in the split of the NWO and the birth of NWO Wolfpack.

We open with breaking news: Savage's arm is ok and won't be in a cast. Oh and the main event is No DQ. So the NWO is in disarray and cheating is legal? I wonder where that might go.

Goldberg vs. Saturn

Goldberg is 73-0 at this point and has a US Title match the next night. It's weird seeing Saturn with hair. Goldberg throws him around to start with some I think suplexes and beats up Kidman too. Back in Saturn kicks him in the back and trips him to the mat. A middle rope elbow gets two. A series of kicks in the corner looks to set up a suplex but Goldberg counters into one of his own.

Goldie takes over again and hits the gorilla press into the

powerslam to crush Saturn. Saturn tries to get him to follow onto the floor and clotheslines him on the top rope. Superkick won't put Goldberg down. Out to the floor they go and Saturn hits a rana on Goldberg. This is probably the most damage he's ever taken up to this point. See, that's how you build up monsters: slowly bring them along and then get to whatever match you want. WWE doesn't quite get that today. Armbar is easily countered with raw power and a superkick puts Saturn down.

It's clear Goldberg is almost spent at this point and we're maybe six minutes in. Spear looks to set up the Jackhammer but Saturn hits him low. Sometimes it's the easiest things that are the solutions. Saturn tries a superplex but Goldberg gorilla presses him off the middle rope. After destroying the Flock, Saturn hooks the Rings of Saturn. Like that's going to work. He gets to his feet, throws Saturn into a fireman's carry and then up onto his shoulders for what's called a Jackhammer but is more like a powerslam. Either way it makes him 74-0.

Rating: D+. Not bad here and it went on too long for a Goldberg match. He would do the Flock match MUCH better the next night and it became much more entertaining. This was more or less the last match he would have that didn't have a title on the line until the end of the year other than a stupid battle royal. This would have been better had he not been blown up halfway through.

Chavo Guerrero Jr. vs. Ultimo Dragon

This should be good. Eddie is with Chavo and gets the majority of the heat from the crowd. Chavo wraps him up on the mat to start and sends Dragon into the corner, resulting in the handstand. Dragon takes over and throws on a stump puller which is countered into the bridging Indian Deathlock. That gets boring so Chavo comes back with a bunch of dropkicks and a chinlock. So much for the exciting part.

Elbow drop gets two and it's back to the chinlock by Chavo. Oh wait now it's a headscissors. Dragon reverses into a camel clutch and then a surfboard. At least they're not staying in one hold for a long time. Chavo catches the handspring elbow and they fight over a German Suplex. That results in an O'Connor Roll and La Majistral by Dragon but Chavo comes back and rolls him up for two. Cool sequence.

More rollups both get two counts and Chavo goes up. Dragon crotches him with a kick and looks for the super rana but Chavo elbows his way out of it. Dragon suplexes him to the floor from the apron and hits the Asai Moonsault. Eddie yells at Chavo and threatens him if he loses. I think Eddie is like a coach or something here. Chavo goes back in and hits a huge flip dive (called a suicide dive) and might have hurt Dragon's shoulder in the process. Back in the ring and a double clothesline puts both guys down.

Chavo hits what might have been a low blow by mistake off a leapfrog but Chavo won't go for the kill like that. Eddie FREAKS on him, slapping Chavo in the face. Chavo loads up a brainbuster but Dragon escapes with a rollup. A second attempt works but the tornado DDT is countered into the Dragon Sleeper for the tap out.

Rating: B-. This started slow but it got going pretty well. Dragon was a guy that got pushed better than most did and it was cool to see someone outside of the main stars get pushed like he did. Eddie and Chavo would feud for a little while longer, resulting in Chavo going insane. Good match here and it probably would have been a better choice for an opener.

Eddie rips into Chavo post match.

TV Title: Booker T vs. Chris Benoit

Benoit is challenging and there is no time limit due to some draws they've had. Feeling out process to start until Benoit gets sent to the floor. I think they're both faces here. Back

in and Benoit goes for the knee as is his custom. Booker kicks him back to the floor before it can do enough damage though. That's a good enough counter I guess. Booker clotheslines him to the mat and hooks an armbar.

Benoit is like screw that and comes up swinging, pounding Booker into the corner and adding some stomps for good effect. Back to another armbar by Booker but it's the same result, as Benoit comes back with a chop. A belly to back suplex gets two. Benoit dropkicks him down and hits the Swan Dive for a very delayed two. Snap suplex by the Canadian is countered into one by Booker but he can't follow up.

Back elbow gets two for Benoit. The real snap suplex gets two. Something I forgot I that this is in Denver, so the altitude is going to become an issue with the breathing. Benoit hits rolling Germans followed by a wicked belly to back superplex which gets a very close two. The champ hits a sidewalk slam out of nowhere but he can't follow up. Forearm puts Benoit down and a flapjack sets up the Spinarooni. Ax kick hits the referee by mistake and there's the Crossface, but there's no referee for the tap out. Benoit goes to get the referee and gets caught by the side kick for the pin and Booker retains.

Rating: C+. Pretty good match here with Benoit doing a lot of high impact stuff as you would expect. Again here the booking is for TV instead of PPV, as Benoit would get the title less than two weeks later on Thunder. These two would go on to have a best of seven series which was totally awesome. There was always good chemistry between them.

Replay shows that Benoit pulled the referee into the ax kick.

Curt Hennig vs. British Bulldog

Rude and Jim Neidhart are the seconds here and will be handcuffed together. A cop does the handcuffing. I would say note that for later, but since it's Curt Hennig vs. British Bulldog, it's really not worth doing. They stall FOREVER

before the cuffs finally go on. Why these two are fighting isn't worth explaining apparently.

Bulldog jumps Hennig as we look at the handcuffs being fastened. Smith works on the big leg brace and they head to the floor. Rude goes after Bulldog but Neidhart won't allow it. Hennig gets a shot to the head back inside as this is going nowhere. Smith works on the leg some more and Neidhart still won't let Rude in. Despite the big knee brace on his knee, Curt tries to knee Smith in the face. Now it's Sharpshooter time but the cop goes after Neidhart. He slips Rude the keys and Neidhart is cuffed to the post. Rude breaks up the powerslam and Hennig posts Smith for the pin.

Rating: F. Read the description and I think you'll get why this is an F. There was nothing to this at all and the ending was stupid. I have no idea why they were fighting or why Neidhart was there, but from what I can tell it was a Hart Family thing, even though Bret was legally prohibited from associating with Neidhart and Bulldog (seriously).

The cop was Vincent and it's a three on one beatdown on Bulldog.

Cruiserweight Title: Prince Iaukea vs. Chris Jericho

Prince is challenging and he doesn't even have music. I don't think Jericho does either. Maybe it's my audio but for some reason neither guy had music. Jericho dedicates this to Malenko who is injured. The Man of 1004 Holds is mentioned. He has music after his promo so I guess it was a tech issue. Prince takes him to the mat with a headlock which Jericho escapes, but he poses too much and Prince takes him down again.

Chris gets knocked to the floor and back in it's time for headlock #3. Jericho hooks a drop toehold to put him into 619 position and adds a suplex for two. Off to a chinlock as this is a pretty boring match so far. Jericho goes up and jumps

into the feet of the Prince and Iaukea starts what I guess you would call a comeback with a Samoan Drop. Springboard splash gets two.

Victory Roll is countered into the Walls but Prince is right in front of the ropes. Jericho tries a middle rope sunset flip but Iaukea falls on him for two. They go up top and crash down onto the floor in a scary fall. Both guys crawl back in and slug it out a bit and Prince counters another Lontamer attempt into a rollup for two. Northern lights suplex gets two for Iaukea. Iaukea tries a top rope sunset flip but Jericho counters into the Lontamer to retain.

Rating: C. It got better but dang it was boring when it started. Iaukea was a guy for the life of me I don't get why they kept pushing. The match wasn't bad but Jericho was carrying it. Not from a wrestling perspective because Iaukea was ok, but why would I care about him? All there is to him is that he's from the islands. That's not a reason for me to care and I don't.

Here are Bagwell and Steiner for the next tag match but Bagwell has a cast on his hand. The announcers don't buy that it's real, so I'm going with Bagwell having every bone broken into 99 places. They say they're ready but the match has to be canceled. Dillon and Gene come out and Dillon says that Bagwell is right: Buff does need a doctor's release. SO THEY BRING A DOCTOR OUT TO EXAMINE HIM HERE. YOU KNOW, ON A PAY PER VIEW! Dillon says something about Bagwell so Buff grabs him with the bad hand to prove it's ok. Match on.

Buff Bagwell/Scott Steiner vs. Rick Steiner/Lex Luger

Rick charges down the aisle to get at Scott but Bagwell jumps him. Rick powerslams him down but Scott comes in for the save from behind. Scott comes in legally because Rick is down already. Buff and Scott trade off another two times so it's Buff vs. Rick at the moment. Off to a chinlock by Bagwell and

then one by Steiner. Rick fights up and clotheslines Bagwell and makes the hot tag. Scott breaks up the Rack but Rick runs him off. Rack gets the submission.

Rating: D. Another bad match here. The whole point of this was to tease the Steiners clashing some more and it didn't happen....again. I think it would finally happen at some point but of course WCW waited until it didn't mean anything anymore. Nothing match and it was all about building to something later on.

Gene says call the Hotline.

La Parka vs. Psychosis

This is a bonus match. Feeling out process to start which is stupid for a reason I'll get into in a minute. Psychosis climbs the ropes and jumps backwards into a rana to send La Parka to the floor. A dive on the outside takes La Parka down but he gets in a kick back inside. A headscissors sends Psychosis to the floor and a dive puts him down on said floor. Psychosis throws him face first into the buckle and crotches him on the top. After a nearly horrible botch, Psychosis hits a rana to send La Parka down for two.

Out to the floor again and Psychosis hits a big flip dive from the top. Top rope splash misses and Parka gets a quick cover for two and then he breaks the count himself. La Parka puts him down again and pulls him up again. He misses a charge and gets caught by the guillotine legdrop for the pin by Psychosis.

Rating: D+. This is what I was going to get into earlier. There's no reason for us to care about this match, so all they can do is big spots and dives. They did some, but none of them were anything we haven't seen a million times before by more exciting people. That's the problem with bonus matches: there's no story, which is what wrestling is based on. If there's no story to a wrestling show, a match has to be

AWESOME to overcome that lack of a story. This wasn't and the match didn't work as a result.

The announcers talk about Sting/Nash/Savage and use a dog metaphor which makes no sense.

Hulk Hogan/Kevin Nash vs. The Giant/Roddy Piper

Bat on a pole match. Nash and Hogan are having issues so they have separate entrances. Piper goes for the bat while Hogan and Nash are talking but Hogan makes the save. Roddy gets caught in the Tree of Woe so Hogan stomps away. I guess they're starting because Hogan tags out to Nash almost immediately. Nash isn't in there long so it's back to Hogan, who rakes the back and wakes Piper up.

Giant and Piper both headbutt Hogan but it knocks Piper down. I guess he needed a nap? Hogan beats him with the weightlifting belt and goes up, but Giant makes the save...and spanks him. Nash finally makes the save as I don't like where this match is going. It's time for the battle of the giants and the namesake shoves Nash around but misses a charges into the corner.

Nash fires off some knees in the corner and does the boot choke. Both guys try big boots at the same time and both go down ala Kane/Undertaker (I think this one happened first actually). Double tag brings in Piper and Hogan and the Canadiscotsman pounds away on the head and in the corner, and on the head in the corner. Everything breaks down and Giant dropkicks Nash to the floor.

Piper puts Hogan in the sleeper then climbs the post with Giant shoving him up higher. Piper pulls it down but Hogan takes it away. Here's Disciple with a new bat (are you really wondering why?) which Hogan hits Giant with. Piper avoids a shot that goes into Nash and takes the bat from Hogan again. Disciple takes it from Piper and throws Hogan the other bat which goes upside Piper's back and it's over.

Rating: D. The match was boring, and what was up with switching the bat? The problem here was that the match was boring until the very end, which wasn't particularly good either. This was all about Hogan vs. Nash and Piper/Giant were just kind of there for the ride. The spanking spot was pretty stupid too. This led to the Wolfpack being formed soon.

Post match Hogan tells Nash to powerbomb Giant but as he sets for it, Hogan hits Nash with the bat.

US Title: Diamond Dallas Page vs. Raven

Page is defending, it's Raven's Rules, and the winner gets Goldberg tomorrow. Sick Boy runs in before the bell and grabs Page but DDP ducks a belt shot to put the diseased one down. A belly to back suplex and a forearm put Raven onto the floor. Page dives onto Raven and Sick Boy and they head back in. Raven tries the DDT but Page drives him into the corner to escape.

The Cutter is escaped as well and we head up the aisle. They walk up to the always cool set and Raven gets thrown off a stagecoach into a pile of hay. Raven gets thrown into a fence, some wagon wheels, and then through the website. He comes back and splashes Page onto a table. Gee that's kind of boring by comparison. There's a garbage can to the back and Page gets tied by a rope around the neck and brought back to the ring.

Sick Boy has a kitchen sink for some reason (Tony: "If you're in the Flock you have to.") which Raven hits Page with before adding some choking. Page escapes and drop toeholds Raven into it, using what Tony calls the Draino. Kidman comes in and misses a splash, hitting Raven with it. Page knocks Kidman to the floor but gets caught in the back which gets two for Bird Boy. Small package gets two for Page.

Here's Van Hammer for another run-in. Scratch that as his name is now just Hammer. I wouldn't want to get my giant jobbers names' wrong. Either way he kicks Sick Boy by mistake and is

sent to the floor, but Raven hits Page low. Here's Reese (7'2) with a chokebomb on Page, getting two for Raven. Lodi throws in a stop sign but Page clocks Raven and Hammer with it. Sick Boy takes a shot with it too and Kidman gets a Diamond Cutter. Horace Hogan debuts as the newest member of the Flock and blasts Page with it, allowing Raven to DDT Page onto the sink for the title.

Rating: C. The match was fun but it could have done with about three less Flock members. I'd have liked to see this be one on one because Raven could work well enough out there, especially in a brawl, to make something like this work. Raven would of course lose the title the next night to Goldberg. Also, Heenan says this was 20-30 minutes long. It's more like 12, but knowing Heenan he's bombed.

WCW World Title: Sting vs. Randy Savage

Savage is challenging and it's No DQ. Savage is very banged up with a bunch of injuries. He jumps Sting before the bell and we're ready to go. Savage fires right hands but that's one of his injuries so he has to stop after every punch. Sting rams it into the railing so they walk up the aisle and Savage is thrown through a wagon wheel. He goes into a fence and Sting hits him with a bale of hay.

Back towards (not into) the ring but Sting AGAIN misses his splash onto the barricade. Has that ever hit? Even once? Back into the ring and Sting reverses a piledriver. They go to the floor again and Sting hits a suplex followed by a kick to the ribs. Back inside and Savage hits a low blow and clotheslines Sting on the rope for two. Liz slides in a chair to put Sting onto, but here's Hogan to break up the elbow. Liz got knocked down somewhere in there and gets attended to. Sting gets up and hits the Death Drop but there's no referee. Cue Nash to powerbomb Sting and give Savage the title.

Rating: D. Another bad match to end a show of them. This was a

mess but not a big one as it only got ten minutes in total. That's something I'll address in a bit too as it makes little sense. The problems here were Hogan and Nash. This became all about them as Nash had no reason to screw Sting over other than to make Hogan mad. That's not good at all.

Overall Rating: D. It was bad, but there are some far worse shows. The main event wound up meaning nothing as Hogan got the title back the very next night. You know, because CLEARLY the solution to their ratings problems was a lack of Hogan. That's only partially sarcastic because their ratings run had come with him on top. Now when they put the title back on him and it didn't help....well they took it off him and put it on Goldberg about two and a half months later so I actually can't complain too much here. Anyway the show was bad but not totally bad, with some decent matches in there to help save it.

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