

WrestleWar 1992: WCW's Best Match Ever

Wrestle War 1992

Date: May 17, 1992

Location: Jacksonville Memorial Coliseum, Jacksonville, Florida

Attendance: 6,000

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jesse Ventura

This show is about one thing and one thing only: War Games. Sting's Squadron vs. The Dangerous Alliance in the ultimate blowoff match which is widely considered the best match in WCW in the 1990s. Other than that, everything is bonus as this is worth the price of admission on its own. I'll likely be shifting towards more stuff I want to do after I finish ECW and SNME so this is kind of a preview of that. Let's get to it.

The opening video doesn't talk about anything but the War Games. This is the original version so a bunch of the matches are NOT missing like the home video version. Tony and Eric welcome us to the show and are the hosts I guess. This is going to be Sting's first match in about a month.

Jesse calls the show War Games. At least he's realistic about it.

US Tag Titles: Greg Valentine/Terry Taylor vs. Freebirds

It amazes me how far tag wrestling has fallen. There are midcard tag titles here. The Freebirds are faces here and for the life of me I don't get what was seen in Valentine and Taylor as a team. There are two rings here which is always kind of strange but it's still cool. The Freebirds both use the DDT here so they're looking for the quick win. Fonzie from ECW is the referee here.

Taylor and Hayes start us off and the fans more or less hate Taylor. At least they're smart. It's just strange seeing the Freebirds as faces. Also Greg Valentine is a champion in 1992. What's weird about this picture? A backhand chop is a judo chop according to Jim. For those of you unsure, the Freebirds are Jimmy Garvin (no one of note really) and Michael Hayes, who is currently the head writer for Smackdown.

ALL Freebirds so far but this is a long match so there's plenty of time left. We're about eight minutes in and the champions haven't been on offense longer than maybe 20 seconds yet. I could watch Valentine fall on his face every day. It's just perfectly done. The heels take over for a bit and I emphasize the bit part since Garvin takes over again to get us to even.

Hayes gets a hot tag and cleans house. The crowd is hot tonight which gives me a good feeling about the main event. Hayes gets hit in the back of the head with the Five Arm, Terry's finisher but it only gets two. Fans are completely behind the Freebirds. Taylor gets a gutwrench powerbomb for two on Hayes which is a move I wish we saw more often. We're nearly fifteen minutes in and Jesse says it's too early to go for the figure four.

Valentine works on the arm which is just weird for him but whatever. This has been a good match so I can live with that. Another hot tag to Garvin and he cleans house. Everything goes insane and Garvin gets a DDT on Taylor for the pin and the titles. Solid opener and the crowd is happy so everything worked. The titles would be retired in July so it's not like it means much.

Rating: B. Great opener here as the crowd was way into it and the title change works well to open a show. Starting a show with a good tag match is pretty much a universally good idea and this was no exception. I'm not a fan of any of these four but this was a very solid match and has me wanting to watch

more of the show, which is exactly the point of an opener.

Johnny B. Badd vs. Tracy Smothers

WCW had this weird tendency to have totally random matches like this to flesh out their PPVs which are always odd. They're not particularly bad but they're just odd. Badd is fairly flamboyant at this point but is popular to a degree I guess. Ok given that pop he's very popular. Imagine a gay Little Richard. That's the only way to describe this guy. He's very much in the mold of Rico, down to the makeup and the feathers on the clothes. Women put money in his kneepads.

Badd gets a rollup about three seconds in for two. Tracy Smothers is more commonly known as a member of the FBI. This would be a Cruiserweight match four or five years later. Jesse always had this theory that the loser of a #1 contender match (this isn't one) wouldn't be able to get another chance at a title shot for a year minimum. In WWF's tag division back in the late 80s that was true but not here.

Smothers could throw some karate stuff in when he wanted to and it's very fun. Smothers hits a top rope back elbow and I love it. I have no idea why I love that move so much but I always have. Mostly Smothers so far but nothing that bad. Sunset flip is blocked but Smothers puts his arms up and gets taken over anyway. Does no one ever watch old tapes at all?

It turns into a boxing match which makes me wonder something. Badd's finisher is a left hook punch. Why does he not do that right after the match starts? A top rope sunset flip gets the more famous guy two and then the punch ends it.

Rating: C-. Just a wrestling match here but nothing that bad. Johnny would get a decent push soon enough but not a big one for a few years. He got very good very fast but at the moment he was just a comedy character. Smothers was in a tag team but his partner left so he was kind of stuck on his own and no one really cared. Decent enough match though.

The Freebirds talk about how awesome they are and make rock and roll song references. We hear about the NWA Tag Title Tournament which crippled the insanely hot WCW stuff in the next few months. Apparently Stairway to Heaven was a Lynard Skynard song too. I know wrestling rewrites history but dang man.

Scotty Flamingo vs. Marcus Bagwell

Raven vs. Buff Bagwell in case you're young. Raven vs. a less talented Dolph Ziggler in case you're REALLY young. I have no idea what Scotty Flamingo's character was supposed to be but his pink tights and kind of afro are just a weird combination. Jesse gets on Ross for being in high school while Jesse was in Vietnam. Crowd is kind of dead for this and I can't say I particularly blame them. Both of these guys are relatively young and not very good yet.

How exactly do you whip someone with authority? There is a grand total of nothing going on here. It's not bad but it's just there. After like seven minutes, Bagwell hits the Perfectplex but Scotty gets the ropes. He rolls up Bagwell and uses the ropes to get the pin.

Rating: C. Just an average match again and nothing particularly good. It was just kind of there: nothing particularly good, nothing particularly bad, but nothing I'm going to remember in about 40 minutes either way. They got better with different gimmicks later on but at this point they were pretty bad.

Ad for Beach Blast which was an AWESOME show.

Abdullah and Cactus were beating up Simmons at Superbrawl and JYD who is apparently a legend of some kind comes down and saves him.

Mr. Hughes/Cactus Jack vs. Ron Simmons/Junkyard Dog

No idea why Hughes is there instead of Abdullah but whatever. Cactus jumps JYD on the way to the ring and beats the living tar out of him. And people wonder why I love Foley. Being this insane wasn't done back in the day so Jack was definitely a scary character back then. Simmons was a hot thing back then and would be world champion in the fall. JYD gets taken off so this more or less becomes a singles match.

Mr. Hughes vs. Ron Simmons

Officially isn't a handicap but Jack is acting like a manager here. You could really tell they were getting the idea of how useful Foley could be around this time and it worked. Simmons beats them both up and I'm sure this had nothing to do with the racial issues going on behind the scenes at this point. I always liked him back then though as he was kind of a Rock like character as he was a beast athletically but not much on the mic at all.

We get a Bill Watts reference but I don't think he had taken over yet. Hughes was a guy that I never got the appeal of but he did his job very well as a big monster that anyone could bring in for a quick feud with a face. This is a glorified squash for Simmons as there was no way he was going to lose here. Simmons hits a spinebuster and after Cactus comes in a shot to the knee ends it. Kind of weird.

Rating: D+. Nothing that special here but it was a way to get Simmons over which was the idea here. It was also less than six minutes long which was a good thing for them here as Hughes was never really that good. Jack vs. Simmons would turn out to be a decent little match and feud but it never went anywhere due to Watts and the NWA screwing it up.

Super Invader vs. Todd Champion

Super Invader is Hercules in a mask. Champion was half of a tag team that was completely awful but got the US Tag Titles anyway. Harley Race is Invader's manager here which doesn't

help him that much. This isn't much at all but it's just filler until the main event because everyone worth anything is in that match. We go to a chinlock early on as this isn't much of a match at all.

Something tells me they weren't planning on this being anything resembling a classic at all as yet again it's just there because they're fairly competent in the ring and can fill a total of 8 minutes or so out there. Jesse mentions that he's got a job at Beach Blast, which would wind up being the judge in the bikini contest.

Invader does the jump off the top into a boot while clearly doing nothing but going to the top to jump into the boot so the other guy can take over spot. Champion makes a very brief comeback and a powerbomb ends it.

Rating: D. This was just bad. The majority of the match is a chinlock and since Hercules was on the downside of his career and not very good even at his best, this wasn't anything at all of note. Boring match and can we please get on to something else?

Big Josh vs. Richard Morton

Big Josh used to be Doink and now he's a woodsman that dances with bear cubs. Morton used to be in the Rock N Roll Express and now is part of a corporate stable that was managed by Alexandra York, as in Terri Runnels. Something tells me that again this isn't going to be an incredibly interesting match. After this though there are far less filler matches and things pick up a lot of steam, which is definitely a good thing.

Morton dressed somewhat up is a very bizarre sight. Less than a minute in and we're at five people going to the concession stand etc. Make that six. Much like the last three matches there's no point to this at all and is just there to cover some time. Morton rips the shirt open on Josh and he gets ticked off. I guess he's a redneck Hogan fan or something.

Morton looks like he always has which takes away the whole heel thing here. No one ever accused him of being the smartest guy I guess though. This is a weird power vs. speed/mat based thing. It's not bad I guess but it's just not that interesting. Josh hits a nice belly to belly which is just pure power. You can tell the announcers are pretty bored as they're talking about War Games instead. I can't blame them as there isn't much to say here. Josh just kind of beats him up a good bit and then hits his seated senton for the pin.

Rating: D+. Nothing of note here but it's not bad I guess. The three or four filler matches in a row are FAR too many though and the show is suffering because of it. These are both good workers but with no point to the match at all, this was just there. It's not bad but it needed a reason to care about it as the wrestling isn't good enough to carry it on its own.

Light Heavyweight Title: Flying Brian vs. Z-Man

This should be awesome. These two used to be the US Tag Champions. Jesse wants the cheating to start before the match even begins. I love heel announcers when they're good at what they do and he's one of the best of them. They keep doing the same stuff because they know each other so well. That's an old tactic but it works very well no matter what so I can't complain.

Crowd is oddly dead here, but I think it's because there hasn't been much to cheer for in about an hour. Jesse does some play by play here which is very different. Him basically drooling over the idea of a punch being thrown is great. This starts off pretty slowly but it's going with the slow build as you can tell the ending is going to be awesome. Z-Man misses a Vader Bomb so Pillman can take over again.

And now it's half crab time for no apparent reason. Pillman would soon join up with Austin to make the Hollywood Blondes who were as awesome as you can be in a 6 month reign as a

team. A figure four goes on and Z-Man has a bad knee. They're going with a more mat based and psychology heavy match here and it's working rather well. The crowd is hot for it which is a good thing.

Z-Man can sell the knee work very well too. Crucifix, one of Pillman's signature moves, gets two. Jesse is BEGGING for them to cheat. Z-Man gets a cross body but goes too high with it and nearly breaks Pillman's neck (which more or less happened at last year's Wrestle War which we'll get to later) but it only gets two.

Both guys are down and more or less out. In a nice bit of psychology, Z-Man fakes a knee injury and kicks Pillman as he's coming down in a cross body. Nice move out of Bret Hart's book...although that might not have been written yet. Z-Man misses a missile dropkick and Pillman gets a rollup to retain. Nice ending.

Rating: B+. Another very good match here. Pillman was just awesome at this point and this was no exception. Excellent match here with two guys just going out there and having a blast. Z-Man was insane for the most part and it's a shame because he was so good in the ring when he wasn't ticked off. This was a great match with a mixture of a lot of styles. I can't quite get it into the A range, but it's well worth watching if you're bored.

Steiner Brothers vs. Tatsumi Fujiname/Takayuki Iizuka

The winners are #1 contenders to the IWGP Tag Titles, held by a team called Big Bad and Dangerous, more commonly known as IC's wet dream: Vader and Bam Bam Bigelow. Why the WCW Tag Champions would want to get the New Japan Tag Titles is beyond me but soon enough the NWA would screw up everything by taking everyone in WCW that meant anything and some NJPW guys and putting them in a tag title tournament which just HAD to be held at Great American Bash.

Back in the day, WCW was all that the NWA had. They just didn't want to admit that without WCW, the NWA was dead. The WCW tag titles meant more than the NWA Titles and everyone knew it except the NWA. So of course they hijacked the PPV for their own stuff and it bombed but whatever. That's another review for another day.

For those of you that have never heard of him, Fujinami is absolutely awesome in every sense of the word. Iizuka didn't mean anything at this point but he would become a fairly big deal in tag wrestling in Japan over the 90s. Nothing huge though. Jesse goes into a small rant about Japan taking all the jobs and you can hear the politics in his voice already. Scott breaks out the Blockbuster which is even rarer than the Screwdriver. It's a fallaway slam with a floatover. It's very hard to hit and he mostly botches the first. Second is great though.

Iizuka is a high flier that would be decent today but back then was insane. This is the Scott Steiner that was completely awesome and everyone knew it. He's a one man wrecking crew here and takes down Iizuka with a combination powerbomb and elbow drop with help from Rick. Ok so maybe he's a one and a second man wrecking crew. Rick does one of my favorite spots ever as the Japanese guys have him up for a Doomsday Device but Rick pulls Fujinami out of the air while he's going for the clothesline and lands in a belly to belly suplex. It just looks amazing every time he did it which was rare.

They I guess heels work on Rick's leg which doesn't work that well at all. Basically this is the Steiners getting to show off and then let the other guys beat on them for a bit. Fujinami goes WAY old school by hooking an abdominal stretch and rolling back into a pin with it for two. The xenophobic crowd chants USA. Iizuka kicks the heck out of Scott who just tackles him and beats the tar out of him for his trouble.

Ok, I had to stop the tape for a second there because that

might have been the coolest spot I've ever seen. The Japanese guys both have top wristlocks on Scott and he lifts himself up and does a standing backflip to slingshot them into the corner and then misses a double clothesline to send them into the corner where Rick comes off with a double clothesline from the top rope. Keep in mind that Scott weighs about 270 and he did that with ease. This is getting a higher grade for that spot alone.

Dragon Sleeper (Fujinami invented it) is kind of on but Scott gets the rope. Rick gets the hot tag and everything goes crazy for a bit. Crowd is way into this. Rick gets him up on top and hits one heck of a belly to belly for the pin. Iizuka was in free fall for a little bit and it looked awesome.

Rating: A-. Better than the previous match but not by much. This had some of the coolest spots I can ever remember as Scott was just absolutely amazing at this time and he was showing off here. That backflip spot was incredible to say the least. The Steiners were gone in November when they went to the WWF, but if this is their last great match it was a freaking awesome one to say the least. Great match but never really any doubt as to the winners, which hurts it a bit.

And now, the greatest gimmick match in the history of WCW.

War Games: Sting's Squadron vs. Dangerous Alliance

Sting, Ricky Steamboat, Dustin Rhodes, Barry Windham, Nikita Koloff

Rick Rude, Steve Austin, Larry Zbyszko, Bobby Eaton, Arn Anderson

Sweet GOODNESS there is some talent in this match.

Ok so there isn't much of a backstory here. Back in 1992 the storyline pretty much went like this: Sting fights everybody. He feuded with about 5 people at once, most of which are in this match. At Halloween Havoc and the Clash of the Champions

that came just after it, Rude showed up and stole the US Title from Sting, forming this team. Sting won the world title at SuperBrawl and the Alliance wanted it off of him, no matter who did it (it would be Vader eventually but we'll get to that later).

Larry and Arn were a tag team and feuded with Barry and Dustin over the tag titles. Barry had also just gotten the TV Title off Austin. Ricky wanted to be US Champion, which was Rude at the moment. Anderson and Eaton had taken them from Rhodes and Windham before losing them to the Steiners two weeks before this. In short, everyone hates everyone and they don't care who they're fighting. Koloff is there...just because Sting needed a fifth guy more or less. He would go after Rude after this PPV.

For those of you new to War Games, the rules are pretty basic. You start with a man each and they fight for five minutes. After that five minutes we flip a coin and the winning team gets to send in their second man for a 2-1 advantage that lasts two minutes. After two minutes, the team that lost gets to even it up at 2-2 for two minutes. After that two minutes the team that won the toss sends in it's third man for two minutes. You alternate like that until it's 5-5, then first submission wins. No pinfalls at all. It's a double cage over both rings and there is nothing separating the two rings, so both cages only have three walls in essence, but it's really just one big cage.

This is the first time I've seen this match since I got into the IWC and since I started reviewing, so this is going to be a fresh look at it. Let's get to it.

Everyone is at ringside for this, so I'd expect a fight out there too. There are tops on the cages too. Crowd is just insane for Sting. Good grief that face team is STACKED. In a Dangerous Alliance huddle, we hear that Austin is starting for his team. He starts against Windham and it is ON immediately.

Heyman keeps running strategy and it's cool because what he's saying is actual strategy and makes sense.

Both guys are really stiff in there and are just pounding on each other. Austin DIVES over both ropes and hits a clothesline. For those of you that haven't seen him before he hurt his neck and his knees became made of jelly, go find some of his stuff. He's a totally different but still very good worker. Windham rubs Austin's face into the cage to bust him open. There's a minute left before the next guy comes in. Windham bites the cut to open it up more. If you can't tell, this is a very violent match.

The Alliance wins the coin toss (check the coin) and they send their big man, Rick Rude, in to make it 2-1. Also, that's three world champions (Rude won the Big Gold Belt which is kind of a world title) in there I believe? The heels take over and Windham is in trouble. Rude's tights look like the Comi-Con logo. Steamboat ties it up and goes straight for Austin. Ticked off Steamboat is AWESOME. Dang it's nice to hear this without Tony Schiavone making bad war puns.

Windham is busted open. Steamboat and Windham are dominating here but Anderson, the best wrestler to never win a world title (arguably) comes in and cleans house. Rude and Anderson both hook a crab on Steamboat. This has been non-stop the whole time which is a major perk of it. For some reason they're all staying in the same ring. Well with five guys it's ok. And there goes Steamboat and Rude so scratch that theory.

Dustin Rhodes comes in to balance it out. If my math is right, he's the least successful guy in here? That's saying a lot. Steamboat gets Rude in a figure four, more or less making it 2-2. Zbyszko, another former world champion, is in to make it 4-3. He's been in trouble lately for being a screw-up and Rhodes beats the tar out of him as soon as he comes in. Madusa goes up the cage and slips Arn the phone but she and Sting have a standoff on the roof.

There is blood EVERYWHERE. The mat looks like an abstract painting. Sting, who has bad ribs thanks to Vader, evens things up and press slams Rude up into the air so that his back slams into the cage five times. Sting is just cleaning house here and we have two more guys left to come in. Arn gets the cage rake again and is bleeding too. Everyone is in one ring which is kind of cluttering but there they go. At least it didn't last long.

Eaton comes in as the last man for the Dangerous Alliance. Rhodes is bleeding a ton. Windham looks quite dead. Larry is messing with the turnbuckle. Keep that in mind as it'll come into play later. The ropes are clearly loose thanks to Larry and Rude doing whatever they were doing. Koloff comes in to FINALLY start the match beyond. No submissions could have counted until now.

Koloff is a wild card because a year or so earlier he had nailed Sting but claimed it had been meant for Luger so no one is sure if you can trust him. He pushes Sting out of the way to let Austin and Anderson hit him in a GREAT bit of continuity since Sting pushed Luger out of the way to start their whole issue. This is just pure insanity and never stopping at all.

Sting gets the Scorpion on Anderson but Eaton makes the save. They completely get the turnbuckle unhooked so there is no top rope and the buckle is just laying in the ring. Austin is bleeding like crazy. Rhodes' tights are polka dot now from blood on them. Larry tells Bobby to hold up Sting so he can hit him with the steel bar that came off the buckle. Sting ducks and Eaton takes it to the arm. Steamboat takes Larry out and Sting throws on an armbar for the submission and to blow the roof off the place. Heyman LOSES IT and everyone gets mad at Larry as the show ends. This broke up the Dangerous Alliance because they lost this and it kind of wound up turning Larry face but more or less he just retired.

Rating: A+. This right here is the best gimmick match blowoff to a feud ever. This match was about VIOLENCE and it worked incredibly well. The ending was great, the violence was great, most people bled, there is not a single dead spot in the nearly 25 minutes that this match ran, the crowd was white hot, and the feud ended here. This was it and everyone knew it so they left everything they had in the ring. Perfection for what it was supposed to be.

Overall Rating: B. The stuff that is good is good and the stuff that isn't good isn't good. I won't call it bad because it's not bad, but there's some stuff here that just doesn't need to be on PPV. However with 10 guys in the main event there's only so much you can do without filler. I'd watch this with a remote in my hand and fast forward some of the filler stuff.

It doesn't matter which you fast forward as they're all about the same and none breaks seven and a half minutes so it's not like they go on forever or anything. The main event is must see and the two matches prior to it are certainly worth watching. WCW in 1992 is a very underrated time and this plus Beach Blast are the best examples of that. And then Bill Watts came in and ruined all that but whatever. Well worth seeing overall, but make sure you watch the main event and take notes. It's that good.

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