

I Want To Talk A Little Bit About Wrestlers Sticking To Their Strengths

For some reason wrestling fans expect wrestlers to be able to do everything. I'm not sure where this comes from but I think it has something to do with the theory that wrestling is based around being able to do a lot of moves. This is another of those ideas that needs to be crushed and needs to be crushed quickly. Today I'm going to be talking about wrestlers using the moves that they're supposed to use and why the amount of moves someone uses is completely irrelevant to their talent level. Let's get to it.

Back in 1997, Shawn Michaels had a "knee injury" and couldn't wrestle at Wrestlemania 13, so instead he did commentary on the world title match. That night, Sid defended the world title against the Undertaker. During the match, Sid was in control and Shawn said something like "Sid doesn't deviate from his game plan that much, because that power takes him everywhere he needs to go."

That right there is a lesson that a large amount of wrestling fans need to learn. Today, you hear people talking about guys like Punk and Bryan and using the words Best in the World to describe them. Their justification for this seems to be that Punk and Bryan put on long and entertaining matches with a wide variety of moves. These same fans tend to criticize guys like Hogan and Cena for using a much smaller moveset.

Think about it: how many times have you heard someone criticize Cena because "he only knows five moves"? If you've heard it once, you've heard it way too many times. This is a stupid thing to say for a number of

reasons which we'll cover today. Not only is this stupid to say about Cena, but it's a stupid thing to say about anyone.

Let's take a look at the greatest wrestler of all time: Hulk Hogan. Love him, hate him, whatever you think about him, there is zero denying that since 1980, no one has had a bigger influence on professional wrestling. No one has been a bigger star than Hogan and few have become a bigger household name (which is another article for another time as well). In short, he's the biggest star ever in wrestling and there isn't much to argue about that.

Now that being said, I don't think anyone would call Hogan a ring general, in the sense that he wrestled a lot of matches the exact same way. Hogan had a formula to his matches and he rarely shifted from that formula. There isn't much denying of that, nor is there really any denying that Hogan used probably less than ten different moves (punch, big boot, legdrop, high knee, choke, back rake, suplex, ax bomber and that's about all that jumps to mind) in his entire career.

Here's the big secret though: there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. Hogan wrestled a very basic style and found something that worked (aside: how many botches can you think of from Hogan when he was in the red and yellow? I'd be impressed if you could come up with more than five. The guy was a very safe worker which he never gets credit for) so he never really shifted from it.

Why did Hogan never change or mix it up? Well why should he have done so? Hogan got some of the biggest reactions for well over 20 years doing the exact same stuff, and it never stopped working. Hogan got to the top of the wrestling world using the same formula and it never stopped at all. Somehow being the biggest star ever made him into the worst wrestler

ever.

Another subject that often gets the same reaction is the current biggest star in the world, John Cena. I've never been what you would call a Cena hater. I've never come close to one and I likely never will be one. I'm not a huge Cena fan either, but I respect the guy. One of the biggest knocks on Cena is that he doesn't have as wide ranging of a moveset as Bryan or Punk. This is another criticism that has a true premise (Bryan and Punk likely do have more variety in their offense) but an untrue conclusion (this makes them better wrestlers).

Cena's offense (which has more than five moves: shoulder block, AA, STF, Shuffle, top rope legdrop, spinout slam. There, idea proven wrong) is one based around firing up the crowd at the right times. Look at his matches with Punk. I don't think anyone would suggest that they're boring and I don't think anyone would suggest they're bad. Cena and Hogan both are masters at making comebacks and working a crowd, just like guys like Bret and Shawn were.

This is what makes Hogan and Cena great: they know how to work a crowd. Look at the biggest names in the history of wrestling (in no order): Hogan, Cena, Rock, Austin. What do these four have in common? Among many other things, they play to the crowd. That's what makes them great. They get the fans to care about them and get the crowd to care about them. The true test of the greatness of a wrestler is the amount of a reaction they can draw from an audience.

Think of it like this: when is the last time you remember Cena coming out to no reaction? Ask the same question about Rock, Austin or Hogan. The people respond to them and care about them. How many wrestlers have you seen come out and no one moves? How many times have you seen a tag match

with the hot tag without a reaction from the crowd? The match may be fine from a technical standpoint, but no one cares at all. I can't count how many indy matches I've watched with a lot of flips and high flying moves and ten minutes after the match I can't remember the people in it. That's not a good sign.

Let's take a look at another side of this. Another criticism of guys like Cena or Hogan is that they don't know how to perform moves like Punk and Bryan do. Is this honestly believed? Do you think Cena couldn't do a hurricanrana if he tried to and practiced it? Let's take a look at this from the other perspective: what do you think would happen if Punk tried to AA the Big Show? Even with months if not years of physical training, do you think he could pull it off on that frame? Cena uses his physical abilities in the right way. Here's another example of that which might make a little more sense.

When the names of worst wrestlers in the world are brought up, one that is often mentioned is The Great Khali. Usually when people say this, I roll my eyes because it's clear these people have little idea what they're talking about. Khali is legitimately over 7'0 and weighs probably 400lbs or so. He has physical attributes that only a handful of people on the planet have. In other words, almost no one in the wrestling world are built like Khali.

SO WHY WOULD PEOPLE WANT HIM TO WRESTLE LIKE EVERYONE ELSE??? Khali doesn't run the ropes or use armbars and wristlocks because it would be REALLY stupid for him to do so. He's a freaking giant, meaning that everything he does is enhanced. Khali using a simple move like a chop isn't the same as say Michael McGillicutty using a chop. You're talking about a guy's arm probably being ten feet off the ground and coming down with 400lbs of weight powering it. His size alone makes it look painful.

No, Khali can't get down on the mat like a Bret Hart or fly through the air like a Kofi Kingston, but Bret Hart can't make power moves look as devastating as Khali and Kofi can't realistically use a chokebomb as a finisher. It would make no sense for them to try because that's not their natural strength. Complaining because Khali can't perform basic wrestling moves is ridiculous because he doesn't need to perform them to be effective.

In short, the idea that a wrestler's ability is tied to the amount of moves that he uses is ridiculous. To say that for example Daniel Bryan is a better wrestler than Cena because he uses a ton of submissions makes no sense. If that's what determined who the best wrestlers in the world were, William Regal vs. Dean Malenko would have headlined about seven Wrestlemanias in a row. Wrestling is a performance first, not an athletic event first. It's about using what works, not using everything there is.