

On This Day: January 3, 1987 – Saturday Night's Main Event #9: The End Of The Feud Before The Huge Feud

Saturday Night's Main Event 9

Date: January 3, 1987

Location; Hartford Civic Center, Hartford, Connecticut

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jesse Ventura

Well we're around the time of Mania 3 but first Hogan has a big feud to end. This time it's Paul Orndorff who he's feuded with forever and it's in a cage. Other than that there isn't much at all, but that's a semi-famous match if nothing else so it more than makes up for it. Two more after this as I try to finish this series off today. This is really just filler until we get to Mania so don't expect much. Let's get to it.

Orndorff says Hulkamania dies tonight. That needs to be copyrighted as whoever owned it would make a fortune.

Hogan says he'll win from inside a cage.

Adonis says Piper will pay tonight.

Steele has a surprise for Savage.

Race says JYD will bow to him.

JYD says he'll bow to no one.

All other theme songs bow to this one though.

Vince says welcome to the insurance capital of the world. Are you kidding me?

Orndorff, with his right arm clearly being smaller already,

refuses to be interviewed. He was making \$20,000 a night at times so how can you turn that down?

WWF World Title: Paul Orndorff vs. Hulk Hogan

This is the first cage match on network TV apparently. Well that's kind of cool. Paul has stolen Hogan's music at this point which is such a great heel tactic and someone needs to steal it today. Hogan says it's time for a new start but the cage is a dead end for Orndorff. His eyes are bugging out of his head so he's liked coked half to death.

Today this would be the main event of a major PPV like the Rumble with ease, if not Mania. In other words, this was HUGE. Orndorff jumps him early and we're off to the races. Jess says the winner is the new champion. Does that mean the title is vacant? There are two officials here so keep that in mind as it'll come into play later. Orndorff gets over the top but Hogan grabs him by the hair, allowing Jesse to get my favorite of his lines ever: Hogan would not be champion if Mr. Wonderful was bald. The delivery of it is just great.

Jesse is oddly hypocritical here by saying anything goes in a cage but then complaining about Hogan choking with a bandana. Vince keeps calling Hogan Champion Hogan. He's done it at least 5 times in as many minutes. Danny Davis, the future evil referee, has the door locked for Hogan but unlocked for Orndorff. In a rather stupid moment, Hogan blocks a shot into the cage and rams Orndorff in, but Hogan winds up going in as well. Weird.

We get to the famous finish as both guys climb up on opposite sides and hit the floor at the seemingly same time where Davis names Orndorff as referee but Marella (Gorilla Monsoon's son in some not that well known trivia) says it was Hogan. Jesse and Vince got at it over this. Fink says it's a tie so we're going to continue!

One key thing here is Orndorff is taking it to Hogan. He's not

a bit afraid of Hogan at all and isn't your traditional challenger as he's smaller than Hogan. One thing I've always wondered: why doesn't Orndorff throw Hogan in and then just step back out and win the title? Davis is taken away thanks to Hogan hitting him earlier. Hogan Hulks Up and beats the living heck out of Wonderful, just completely destroying him for a long time before a leg drop (set up by a backbreaker of all things) lets him get out. He beats up Heenan for fun afterwards as a total jerk since Heenan wasn't even facing him.

Rating: B. You need the context of this match to get why it's so good. This was the final blowoff to this feud that went on for at least half a year. It was the undisputed top feud in the company and drew a TON of money. Also keep in mind that this was the first televised cage match ever on national TV. It was a PPV-level main event on free TV so how could it not be huge? However, it was only the appetizer as soon after this, Hogan would get a trophy for being world champion for three years. Andre would get a smaller one for being undefeated for fifteen years. The Frenchman wasn't happy with it.

Replays show Hogan won the tie by about a tenth of a second. Jesse talks about their legs being straight or bent which makes no sense but whatever.

Savage is listed as the Intercontinental Champion of the World. Savage tells Liz to shut up and threatens to slap her. He was LIVID here.

Intercontinental Title: George Steele vs. Randy Savage

Vince wanted Liz like no other. To be fair she does look great here. George again says he has a surprise and comes out with an action figure of himself. He gives it to Liz but Savage takes it and throws it down. Soon thereafter he's flying through the air as Steele throws him all over the place.

Savage comes back and sets for the elbow but some music hits and the roof gets blown off. RICKY FREAKING STEAMBOAT makes his return and stares down Savage. Macho loses his mind and no one can get Steamboat back. Steele gets the advantage as they finally get Ricky back to the locker room.

Steele kidnaps Liz and carries her away before he finally comes back. A buckle gets ripped open which was always a weird thing. Vince: "He's only salivating on him." It was a different time I guess. Steele bites his arm a bunch of times for some reason as Jesse asks why isn't he being better fed. Savage gets hit by a foreign object but clocks Steele with the bell to retain. A post match beatdown is attempted but Steamboat comes down for the save.

Rating: D+. Match was a glorified comedy match but most of the encounters for these two were. The main thing here obviously is that it set up Savage vs. Steamboat in the legendary showdown at Mania III. Back in the day they built up shows from a far longer away time which made them feel more epic. That and Mania was the only PPV of the year so it really was the huge show to build up to.

Harley Race and Heenan talk about how everyone will bow. They even make Gene bow in a strange moment.

JYD says he won't bow. I could go for some Breaking Benjamin now.

Junkyard Dog vs. Harley Race

JYD jumps him early but the evil referee is in there again. Belly to belly hits but Race drops a headbutt and hurts himself to let JYD take over. Race could bump like few others. It was just like an acrobat or something. Dog puts the crown and robe on so Heenan jumps him for the DQ. Heenan and Race beat him down afterwards and make him bow which doesn't work at all.

Rating: D+. Nothing special here at all but since JYD is in there what did you really expect? This was again just a setup for Mania where they had a somewhat better match. I wasn't wild on this one at all but I never liked the feud as a whole.

Heenan tells Paul he's the world champion and he'll get the tape to prove it. We see the video again and it's still the same.

Adrian Adonis is back after Piper beat him up.

Piper says he has heart.

Roddy Piper vs. Adrian Adonis

Adonis is the Rico of this era so Piper of course can't stand him. He gets hooked in the ropes and is having the tar beaten out of him. This is another really short match as Piper beats him up for a good while and they fight to the floor. Adonis blasts him with his perfume in the eyes and Piper gets counted out. The idea wasn't to have a good match but to set up the real match at Mania again.

Rating: N/A. Nothing of note here as like I said this was just a setup for Piper's retirement match at Mania which was a much more entertaining match which likely is because of it getting more than 3 minutes.

Hogan, in a swank Hulk jacket, says he isn't worried about Heenan's plan. His voice sounds awful here.

Blackjack Mulligan vs. Jimmy Jack Funk

Mulligan is the father of Barry Windham, father in law of IRS and grandfather of Husky Harris. This is the battle of Texas or something like that. Funk is in some Lone Ranger style mask and we have a female referee. There's an inset interview with Mulligan where he blasts Funk and makes some stupid jokes. For you lucha libre fans, Funk is the older brother of Art Barr. A jumping back elbow wins for Mulligan.

Rating: N/A. Neither of these guys ever meant anything.

Overall Rating: C-. This wasn't about the wrestling other than the opener but it set the table for Mania in a big way as Adonis vs. Piper and Savage vs. Steamboat are now set. The opener is a famous match and worth seeing for the sake of history if nothing else. The rest of the show is weak wrestling-wise, but it was about storyline building and on that front it wins. Good enough show though and nothing horrible.

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