

On This Day: February 5, 1988 – Main Event #1: The Biggest Wrestling Broadcast Ever

The Main Event I

Date: February 5, 1988

Location: Market Square Arena, Indianapolis, Indiana

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jesse Ventura

So this is by far and away the most famous of these shows with one of the most famous endings in company history. This is live and as usual there was a full card before this part started. That being said, the two or three matches we get here are to put it mildly pretty bad.

The main focus here is Hogan vs. Andre the rematch. The main idea here is that Hogan might have gotten pinned at Mania and there might have been a slow count. This is still the highest rated wrestling program in the history of televised wrestling, drawing a 15.2 rating and 33 MILLION viewers on national television on a Friday night. In other words, over 10% of the entire country was watching this. Let that sink in for a bit. It was only an hour long but this was epic. Let's get to it.

Jesse has some leopard skin crown on or something like that. He's here from Hollywood or something apparently. He predicts Hogan loses, which is what he's predicted about a thousand times. He also says Honky and the Harts will win. Jesse's rant about Hogan is funny stuff as always.

We get a training montage of Hogan set to what would become Jake Roberts' music. He looks extra roidy here.

Honky says this isn't about fighting but romance as Liz wants him apparently. Elvis lyrics are added.

Intercontinental Title: Randy Savage vs. Honky Tonk Man

This was supposed to be the big other match at Mania but instead Savage got the world title due to Honky being a jerk. Savage cuts Liz off and says he'll win. DAng I love late 80s WWF. Massive pop for Savage as it's clear he's going to be a huge deal. This is an old stomping ground for Savage's indy company so he's a huge fan favorite. Honky dances for Liz while Randy has his attention on Jimmy.

Basically Honky has been the biggest jerk in the world to Savage and Liz lately so Randy wants to kill him, literally. Jimmy's interference gives Honky the early advantage but Savage remembers he's Randy Savage and it's 1988 so he takes over for a bit. He misses a charge though and Savage might be in trouble now.

Jimmy chokes Randy while Honky shakes his hips for Liz. Savage makes the superhero comeback but can't keep anything going for more than a few seconds at a time. The evildoers go after Liz while he's down but he wakes up and isn't very happy about this. He gets the double axe to Honky from the top to the outside and Honky is in trouble.

Another hits in the ring and it's all Savage now. Hart is brought in the hard way as Gorilla would say and Honky accidentally drills him so Savage can get....a sleeper hold? Peggy Sue goes after Liz for no apparent reason and Honky still can't get anything when Savage goes to save her. And Honky just takes the count out loss like a true heel.

Rating: C. Weak match here but the atmosphere and crowd were off the charts. This was a big feud and everyone wanted nothing more than to see Savage take Honky apart. This wasn't a great match and it's a shame that we never got a big blowoff match from these two as it would have drawn serious money on PPV as it did on house shows. The atmosphere carried this though.

Honky goes after Savage with the guitar after the match. I don't see why Savage doesn't charge as he could get there in time to avoid the shot. Jimmy hits him with the Megaphone and yet he avoids the shot anyway. Kind of odd but he clears the heels away and breaks the guitar.

We get a recap of Hogan vs. Andre which helps a lot as a lot of things I've read says that the three count was really confusing as was them saying the controversial count as we didn't know which they were talking about. We also see Andre attacking Hogan and the contract signing at the first Royal Rumble. Oh and DiBiase owns Andre's contract now.

DiBiase says money works for everything and that the Hulkamaniacs are nickels and dimes. Andre says he'll never stop once he gets his hands on Hogan. The idea is simple: Andre gets the title from Hogan and DiBiase buys it from Andre for a ton of money.

WWF Title: Andre the Giant vs. Hulk Hogan

So yeah, this is the biggest match ever on television and still is to this day. Again: it got a FIFTEEN in ratings. To put that in perspective, Jay Leno gets about a three. Hogan says there was no controversy in the count and that he's beaten Andre once and can again. He also says that he's invested into his fans. Good promo as you can tell Hogan thrives in this kind of environment. Now if only they had noticed something: Hogan has the OLD design for the title in the interview but as he walks out you see the famous winged eagle title debut. Nice job guys. That interview was probably taped in late 87.

The pop for Hogan is just absurd as he's almost at the height of his powers here. Ok so 87 was bigger but close enough. Hogan wants to start immediately but Hebner stops him. I've seen this match multiple times and this has me fired up very well. Andre stalls forever on the apron as Hogan is all kinds

of fired up. Hogan gives the sign for slamming him and Andre's face says nothing but "Boy please."

The crowd is electric as they do a masterful job of letting the tension build. Hogan has finally waited long enough and drills into the heels and cleans house. He hammers away early as you can definitely see a faster pace here than they had last time. Granted that might be due to Hogan needing to do more here as Andre is getting very bad very fast.

ALL Hogan here but Hogan can't do much here other than strike. DiBiase is counting money so Hogan stomps on his hand for the fun of it. Big wind up punch and Andre WILL NOT GO DOWN. Hogan like an idiot tries to go up and gets the Flair treatment for his luck. Andre tries a diving headbutt and just misses completely. He chokes away and other than that and basic strikes he has nothing.

The idea here is that Andre's offense is very limited but his size and power plus great selling by Hogan makes him seem like a killer. Andre gets a big boot to Hogan's chest and falls down too. He chokes with the strap on his singlet and Hogan is in trouble. Hogan breaks a choke and it's on all over again. A middle rope clothesline finally drops the Giant.

Hogan gets the legdrop but Virgil grabs the referee. Andre gets up and drills some headbutts and hits a suplex kind of move which was his finisher. Hogan clearly gets his shoulder well off the mat at about one and a half and the referee keeps counting anyway, getting to three and declaring Andre as the winner. And let the controversy begin.

Rating: C-. The match itself was just ok but obviously the biggest angle of all time happening here is the real story. The 9 minute match was a backdrop for that as Andre couldn't do a thing but choke for the most part which is fine given his physical condition at the time. Not bad at all, all things considered.

The referee says it was three and Hogan says he got his shoulder up which is absolutely true. Hebner gets the belt and hands it to Andre. This is the end of Hogan's over four year title reign. Gene is at ringside and talks to Andre who calls it the world tag title for some reason and then surrenders it to DiBiase. The image of DiBiase with the belt around his waist is downright terrifying.

Hogan turns his attention to Hebner and here comes....Dave Hebner. There are TWO Dave Hebners as the fans are STUNNED. Hogan figures out what is going on as the guy that refereed the match was an impostor and we actually have an evil twin storyline. The evil one beats up the good one but Hogan gets his hands on him anyway to throw him to DiBiase and Andre.

We come back to the start of the tag title match but throw it to Hogan and Gene in the back and wonders how much the plastic surgery cost. He rants and raves about getting ripped off which for once is absolutely true. We see a replay of the count and Hogan's arm is clearly up before two.

We see literally 25 seconds of the tag title match and go off the air before it ends. It was Strike Force defending against the Hart Foundation. Strike Force got a pin to retain.

Overall Rating: A+. A show that draws over ten percent of the entire country can be described as nothing else but a massive success. The ending is iconic and one of the most brilliant ideas of all time. This show worked like a charm and set up the tournament at Mania.

DiBiase would appear at some house shows over the weekend as champion and would defend against Bigelow as well as having some tag matches with Andre against Hogan and Bigelow. Great match and the biggest ratings draw in American wrestling history. Just an insane rating and some incredibly dramatic television makes this an undeniable success.

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