

On This Day: April 2, 1989 – Clash of the Champions #6: The Easiest Sixty Minute Match You'll Ever Sit Through

Clash of the Champions 6: Ragin Cajun

Date: April 2, 1989

Location: Louisiana Superdome, New Orleans, Louisiana

Attendance: 5,300

Commentators: Jim Ross, Michael Hayes

Where do I begin with this one? First and foremost, this is on the same night as Wrestlemania 5 in a final attempt to sabotage the WWF. The problem was that this ran against Savage vs. Hogan which if my memory is right was either the highest PPV buyrate ever or the second highest. The main event from WCW (NWA but we'll keep things simple here) is Steamboat vs. Flair II in a 2/3 falls match with Steamboat defending his newly won title. Let's get to it.

Also, 5,300 people in the Superdome? That place holds over 75,000 for football.

We see a lot of legends at a dinner or something last night. Big names like Muchnik, Thesz, O'Connor, Funk and Funk among others. Jim Herd talks about protecting the integrity of the NWA or some jazz like that. Turner had recently bought the company I think so the NWA's days were numbered.

Terry Funk will be replacing Hayes for commentary on the main event.

We run down the card through a long video package. Or maybe this is just an opening video in general. This goes on a bit too long.

National anthem.

Midnight Express vs. Samoan Swat Team

Dangerously manages the Samoans here. This is his second team to beat Cornette and run him out of the NWA after the Original Midnight Express lost a loser leaves town match at Chi-Town Rumble. This version of the Samoans would become the Headshrinkers and are Samu and Fatu (Rikishi). It's Samu vs. Lane to start us off and Samu misses a cross body. Lane's gets two.

Off to Eaton who hits a missile dropkick and it's back to Lane who controls. The Midnights are the faces here. Cornette pops Fatu with the tennis racket but doesn't get caught so we keep going. Fatu comes in for a few seconds and it's back to Samu again. We get heel miscommunication and the Samoans have a meeting on the floor. Hayes uses Monsoon's line of saying this is a main event in any arena in the country. Except this one.

Back to Eaton vs. Samu and Eaton out moves him quickly. Samu is like screw this wrestling stuff and starts using power to take over. The Midnights tag in and out quickly. I didn't even notice Eaton going out. The Midnights cheat but they're good guys so they can get away with it here. Back to Eaton and this has been all Midnights so far.

The heels finally start cheating like good evil Samoans and Eaton is in trouble in the corner. Off to a chinlock/nerve hold as Eaton is taking a good beating. Fatu hits the kick to the face but it's in the corner so it doesn't look as good. Eaton avoids a shot and it's hot tag to Lane. They double team the Samoans and ram their heads together which starts a fight between the Samoans.

Cornette hits a Samoan (you can't tell them apart from behind) with the racket and Dangerously pops Lane I believe with his phone, allowing the Samoans to take over on Lane for a bit. Back to the nerve hold which eats up awhile. This is a long

match as we're approaching twenty minutes. Another Fatu superkick gets two. Lane finally avoids a middle rope headbutt and it's a double tag to bring in Samu and Eaton.

Eaton hammers away but tries a double noggin knocker. Take a guess as to how that goes for him. Just guess. Lane gets back in and everything breaks down. Lane sends Fatu to the floor and the Rocket Launcher hits Samu. Cornette and Heyman get into it on the apron and the phone goes flying. Fatu clocks Eaton with it for the pin.

Rating: C+. This was ok but it wasn't a classic or anything. The Samoans weren't nearly as difficult to do anything as Rikishi would become but they were still something different than the Midnights were used to. Also with this being more about the managers than the teams, it became a bit harder to have heat out there. Still though, nothing bad.

Great Muta vs. Steve Casey

Casey is a jobber and Muta is one of the hottest acts in American wrestling at this point. Muta does a trance/meditation thing to start as Hayes makes fun of Oklahoma. Casey shows why he's a jobber by charging at Muta. You deserve that mist you get you schmuck. Handspring elbow (Muta invented it) hits Casey and we hit the chinlock. Casey goes for the arm for a short arm scissors but Muta gets bored so he kicks Casey in the face.

Casey heads to the floor to clear his head but Gary Hart, Muta's manager, rolls him back in so that Muta can hit a hard dropkick off the top. JR compares Muta to Sting which would be the feud that made Sting into a great in ring guy to go with his charisma. Muta hooks some freaky leglock and then a nerve hold. Casey tries something else so Muta hits a spin kick to kick Casey's head off again.

Off to another nerve hold and this is starting to go too long. Casey gets what is probably the highlight of his match by

hitting a clothesline to take Muta down. He hits a dropkick but Muta swats the second one away. Casey grabs his foot so Muta hits another SWEET spin kick to send Casey to the floor. A pescado and the handspring elbow on the floor continues the dominance and the Muta Moonsault (a quick one that stays low) ends this slaughter.

Rating: C+. It's just a long squash but Muta was REALLY good back then. When he got to fight Sting for months on end, it was pure gold because Sting was actually able to keep up with Muta in the ring. As for this though, it was total dominance and Muta's calmness throughout the match is a really great addition to his character as he knew he was better and didn't sweat Casey at all, because he had no reason to.

Junkyard Dog vs. Butch Reed

This is an old Mid-South feud and New Orleans was a big Mid-South town so the fans are probably going to be way more into it than they should be. JYD has a band to bring him out. As in tubas and horns and such. It's a very New Orleans style intro. Reed was in a singles push at this point and was kind of almost maybe sort of considering being put in the Horsemen to the point where he even held up four fingers at one point. That wouldn't happen of course but he was probably the top candidate for it. He has Hiro Matsuda here though.

JYD takes over to start and Reed is on the floor quickly. Back in and Dog does his all fours headbutts to send Reed right back out. Dog hammers away some more until Reed pounds away to take over. This is almost all kicking and punches. Off to a chinlock by Reed and Dog makes his comeback. Both guys go down off a double clothesline. Reed goes up for his top rope shoulder but Dog gets his foot on the rope. Dog sends Reed into Matsuda and botches a rollup for the pin.

Rating: D. This was so boring that it almost put me to sleep. Ok not really on the sleep thing but it was very dull. It's

your standard 80s kick and punch match which means it wasn't interesting at all. Reed would go on to form Doom after this though while Dog would flounder for awhile before fading into obscurity.

Bob Orton vs. Dick Murdoch

Ross is way too excited for this match. They start on the mat with Orton firing off some fireman's carry slams. You might almost say he's adjusting Murdoch's attitude. Murdoch puts on an armbar and the old school nature is very clear very quickly. Orton kips up to get out of it. Can his son do that? Dory Funk Jr. and Pat O'Connor are watching from the crowd. Murdoch has a wristlock on again and by that I mean he has it on for awhile.

Now it's Orton with an armbar. Murdoch is the face here. I didn't really know that either until Ross mentioned that the fans loved him. We're still in the arm stuff here. Muchnick, Kiniski, Thesz and I believe Buddy Rogers are at ringside also. Five minutes in and the arm stuff is finally over. Orton pounds away but Murdoch is waking up in the corner. A dropkick puts Orton down and they brawl a bit more. Both try their finishers, but Murdoch has his foot tripped during the brainbuster and Gary Hart (Orton's manager) holds the foot for the pin. Think of Mania 5 and the finish might sound familiar.

Rating: D. This was boring. The match is just under ten minutes long. 5 were spent in arm holds, 3 were spent brawling and 2 were spent on the finish. That doesn't make for an interesting match at all. Murdoch and Orton were both old at this point and it was obvious that no one was interested in seeing this match other than maybe a bit for Murdoch.

World Tag Titles: Varsity Club vs. Road Warriors

It's Rotunda/Williams here and the Warriors have the belts. Hawk vs. Rotunda starts us off. Mike isn't in a good mood as he lost the TV Title to Sting the day before on TV. Off to

Animal who cleans house including a powerslam to Williams. Hawk comes in and doesn't do as well. I always thought Animal was the better of the two. To prove me right, Animal comes in and runs through both of them again.

The Varsity Club (Williams I think) pulls the top rope down and Animal tumbles to the floor. Off to a bearhug but Animal manages the tag. Teddy Long (referee) doesn't see it so Hawk has to go out. This is important because at the same time, Rotunda comes in with no tag and Long allows it. Remember that. Williams comes back in and takes the leg out from Animal as JR explains the football strategy at play there.

The beating goes on for awhile longer with Animal getting close but not being able to make the tag. You've seen the same thing a million times before. It's a good thing they're letting Animal stay in there this long as when Hawk gets tired, he gets bad in a hurry. There's the hot tag and Hawk cleans house. Everything breaks down and Animal accidentally tosses Long. Doomsday Device hits and Teddy won't count. Williams comes in and rolls up Hawk and Teddy dives in for the absolute fastest three count you'll ever see for the title change. His hand didn't go above his shoulder on any of the counts.

Rating: D+. Pretty dull match here but the ending got Teddy out of being a referee and turned him into a manager. I think he took over the Skyscrapers just after this. The Road Warriors wouldn't get close to the titles anymore after this and would leave for the WWF about a year later. The Freebirds would get the belts in a little over a month before a team called the Steiner Brothers took them in November.

The Warriors and their manager rant about the cheating.

Ranger Ross vs. Iron Sheik

Ross is a military themed guy and he repels from the ceiling. Sheik does the national anthem bit before the match and then

jumps Ross before the bell. Ross gets beaten down and both guys get abdominal stretches. Ross gets a standing Mafia Kick but Rip Morgan, Sheik's flag bearer, comes in for the DQ. JYD makes the save. This was nothing and I don't think it led anywhere.

Flair says he's ready and he's awesome and all that jazz.

US Tag Titles: Rick Steiner/Eddie Gilbert vs. Kevin Sullivan/Dan Spivey

Steiner and Gilbert are champs here. Sullivan and Spivey are Varsity Club. That would break up later in the year. This is a rematch from yesterday on TV where the Varsity Club won. Oh and Missy Hyatt is with the champions. The challengers jump them to start and Spivey lets Gilbert up at two which even Hayes criticizes. The big beatdown is on and it's all Varsity Club here.

They're out on the floor now and Spivey rams Gilbert's back into the post. Off to Sullivan now which only lasts a bit. A flying clothesline gets two for Spivey. Tree of Woe (not named that) to Gilbert but Sullivan tries it again with the second time failing. Here's Steiner who beats up Spivey and hooks a belly to belly for two. Everything breaks down and Gilbert pops Sullivan with Missy's loaded purse for the pin.

Rating: C. It's really short because we have an hour long main event. This went nowhere because the time killed it but it wasn't anything all that bad while they were in there. For no given reason (literally) the titles were vacated soon and weren't won by anyone until a tournament in February, about 9 months later. This was fine.

NWA World Title: Ricky Steamboat vs. Ric Flair

This is 2/3 falls with a 60 minute time limit. As usual, Flair comes out with women while Steamboat has his son and wife. The son is in a dragon costume. The belt looks good on Ricky. Then

again that belt looks good on almost anyone. Except Ronnie Garvin but that goes without saying. Flair has the always awesome black robe here. I miss that thing. Terry Funk is on commentary instead of Hayes which is the very beginning of the next world title feud once this ends.

They hit the mat quickly and MAN are they fast down there. Steamboat gets a very hard chop and the fans are buzzing over it. Flair works the arm as they're going slow to start. The difference between this and Orton vs. Murdoch: this is going to go somewhere else. I have a feeling the other one wouldn't have if they had 40 minutes to work with. Flair hits the floor and says come out here.

Steamboat grabs a headlock and they chop it out. By that I mean they hit each other so hard you can hear the skin slap every time. Steamboat speeds things up and it's back to the mat with the headlock. Dropkick gets two for Steamboat. We're ten minutes in now. The US and TV title matches might be on but we're not sure. For some reason they were scheduled later. Neither will wind up airing but they're nothing of note anyway. Sting and Luger both retain over Rip Morgan and Jack Victory respectively.

Back to the mat now and Steamboat controls with a front facelock. Flair tries to fight back but gets chopped down for two. They have a ton of time here so they're definitely in slow mode. Flair heads to the floor and there's the Flair Flop outside. We get an explanation of how the other title matches will air on Saturday's TV show if necessary. I like that and the reason being is they wanted to make sure this gets the full time limit if they need it.

We're 15 minutes in and they chop away hard. Steamboat puts Flair down with a double shot for two. Flair blocks a splash with knees and goes to work on the ribs. Butterfly suplex gets two. Steamboat keeps kicking out as Flair has a test of strength grip while Steamboat is on the mat. They chop it out

but Steamboat misses a dropkick in a nice bit of psychology. Steamboat counters a Figure Four attempt into a small package but Flair reverses into one of his own for the first fall at just shy of twenty minutes.

Back with the second fall after a brief rest period. Steamboat takes over quickly and hits a top rope chop to the head for two. Funk says this is like his brother vs. Brisco. Now that is a compliment. Flair misses his knee drop and Steamboat goes after the other leg. He drops SIXTEEN elbows on it and slaps on the Figure Four (ON THE CORRECT LEG!!!). Flair finally grabs the ropes but he's in trouble.

Flair avoids another Figure Four but gets caught in a Boston Crab at what sounded like the 25 minute mark. He gets to the rope again but he's still in big trouble. Flair fires a few shots off but we go down into the backslide reversal spot which I'm sure you all are familiar with. They hit the floor and Steamboat goes into the railing. We're at thirty minutes now and Flair suplexes Steamboat over the top for two.

Abdominal stretch time by Flair and he even rolls Steamboat up for two while still holding onto it. Steamboat gets beaten on a bit more until Flair goes up top, only to get crotched and superplexed for two. Out of nowhere Steamboat grabs a double chickenwing hold (think the position for the Glam Slam but he holds Flair in place) for a submission to tie us up at a fall apiece.

After a quick break Flair is spent but Steamboat gets poked in the eye so he can't follow up at the thirty five minute mark. There's the second Flair Flop in about a minute. They chop it out but Flair grabs...something that we can't see since the camera angle was really bad for a bit. It was a leg move whatever it was. The Figure Four goes on quickly but Steamboat grabs the ropes even faster.

Steamboat fires back even more chops and Flair gets taken down

as he tries to do the Flair Flip in the corner and run up the other corner spot. Flair rolls Steamboat up and puts his feet on the ropes for two. We have twenty minutes left in the time limit. Flair works on the knee even more and there's the Figure Four. Steamboat taps like crazy but that doesn't mean anything for a few years.

The hold is finally broken and Flair goes up top again for a cross body for two. Steamboat tries to slam him but can't hold him due to the leg work. We have 15 minutes left. Steamboat's cross body gets two as does a sunset flip for the champion. Flair throws on a sleeper which is the logical idea here, although I don't ever recall it winning a match in this situation.

Steamboat manages to send Flair into the corner and out of the ring to get a break. We hit the 50 minute point as JR makes fun of the WWF by saying they're not coming out to music and posing. Flair goes after the knee again but Steamboat chops away. Just because irony is fun, Steamboat poses after coming out to music. The NWA doesn't do that right? The champ lowers his head and Flair pops him in the back and hooks a suplex for no cover.

We have six minutes left and Flair goes up for no apparent reason. After the legally required slam, it's time for the screwy (but legal) finish. Steamboat goes back to the double chickenwing but his leg gives out. It's almost like a tiger suplex at this point and Steamboat pops his shoulder up at the last minute to have Flair pinned.

Rating: A. Hard to argue with this one as it wasn't an iron man match so the time limit was just there to give it a cap on the ending. Everything makes sense and the psychology flows very nicely with both guys having the injuries from earlier in the match come into play later on, especially in the ending. This was great stuff and while you could probably cut out some of it, it's still good stuff.

HOWEVER, we have an issue. Flair's foot was in the ropes during the pinfall, meaning we have an unclear finish. Steamboat is in the back and sees it and exactly as you would expect from him, he's totally calm about it and says Flair has a legit complaint and needs to talk to someone about it. This set up match #3 at Wrestle War which is allegedly the best of the trilogy, although I've always liked Chi-Town Rumble best.

Overall Rating: B. When you have a three hour show and one hour of it is spent in a very good match, it's hard to say this isn't a good show. The question then is how good is it. The middle of the show isn't that great but it's not the worst show you'll see. Steamboat vs. Flair is always worth seeing, but I think this might be the least interesting of their series, which might be because the title didn't change. Still though, good old fashioned NWA stuff here before they got silly.

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