

On This Day: April 17, 1994 – Spring Stampede 1994: The Forgotten Flair vs. Steamboat Match

Spring Stampede 1994

Date: April 17, 1994

Location: Rosemont Horizon, Rosemont, Illinois

Attendance: 12,200

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Bobby Heenan

Again, just trying to complete 1994. This is about one thing: Flair vs. Steamboat. One day I'll get to their epic three match series and explain why they're so freaking awesome. Anyway, Flair kept the belt at SuperBrawl and this is the match he gets as a result. Other than that it's exactly what you would expect from this era: bad feuds that no one cared at all about. Hogan would show up in three months and change everything. After that you would have old guys with less talent having bad feuds that no one cared about. Let's get to it.

The intro tries to make this into a Western theme and no one cares. Oh dang this is the street fight match that I completely forgot about. That match is greatness wrapped up in a nice bread with sweetness sauce on it. Now I'm excited.

Aaron Neville, an R&B singer does the National Anthem. I've at least heard of him.

Johnny B. Badd vs. Diamond Dallas Page

He's a sheriff in red tonight. Yep he looks like an idiot but he's opening ANOTHER PPV. Is this a sick joke or something? The line of HE'S SO BAD always makes me laugh as I guarantee

it's not meant to sound the way I'm thinking about it. Page is still completely worthless here but whatever. Kimberly always looked great though. Page has money now and is rich so he gives Heenan a thing with his initials in diamonds on it so now he's loved.

Page is in an armbar and needs to have his mouth washed out with soap apparently. Heenan and Tony get into a stupid argument about stomachs as you can tell they're not that interested in this either. These two would feud for what felt like ever and it just never would end. This hasn't been bad but it certainly hasn't been that good either. Badd more or less botches a headscissors and then dives over the top to make up for it. The top rope sunset flip ends this.

Rating: C+. Not bad but not great. The fans were into Badd so that's a fine choice for the opener. This was a pair that kept going at it for months and before Page finally lost the final match, Badd went to WWF and got laughed at on WCW TV.

Gene and Ventura talk about a few matches.

TV Title: Brian Pillman vs. Steven Regal

Pillman is a face now having split from Austin a little while ago. I can't get over that that is Bill Dundee with Regal. They emphasize that this is a 15 minute match just to emphasize that this will end up in a draw. Pillman starts off fast to try to make this better. This should actually be an interesting match to be fair. We're on the floor now and Pillman is freaking working the arm of Regal. It's been all Pillman at this point.

Heenan's mic messes up for a bit but is back now. Just as I'm about to say that Regal is in control again, Pillman gets a quick rollup for two. Regal is freaking SCARY good on the mat as we're at five minutes. Regal is just stretching Pillman a million ways from Sunday. Why is it always Sunday? I've never gotten that one. For once the shot at the crowd makes sense

here which is as rare as possible. Basically this is Regal just beating the living heck out of Pillman while Brian sells like a master.

We get down to five minutes to go and you can more or less call the rest of the match from that point on. Pillman busts out an enziguri of all things with about a minute to go. That came from nowhere. And the time runs out and the fans hate it. This was something they did a lot and the fans never liked it at all, much like I don't here.

Rating: B-. This was Regal just putting on a freaking show out there and Pillman being the challenger of the week. Even still this was pretty good and it worked for what it was supposed to be. Regal was freaking amazing before he got so screwed up.

Sting says he'll win.

Tag Titles: Nasty Boys vs. Cactus Jack/Maxx Payne

This is a street fight with falls counting anywhere so call it a hardcore match. This match is more or less epic as they more or less kill each other for about 9 minutes. I'm fired up for this. They don't even make it to the ring. Well at least Cactus and Brian don't. How weird is it that Cactus was probably the more normal of those two men? Cactus hits Knobs in the face with half of a pool cue which at least isn't metal so it's a bit more believable.

They have two referees here which is smart for a change. There's nothing here but violence and they're living it up out there with it. This is a freaking war with the cameras having issues keeping up with it. Now I know I have a reputation for hating these things, but a few things to keep in mind here. Number one, the stuff they're using isn't incredibly over the top. There are chairs, trash cans, a pool cue (a bit of a stretch but not really) and various things they find in the arena.

There aren't scissors or screwdrivers etc. Second, this is the culmination of a big feud between these guys. Payne and Knobbs are fighting in a souvenir stand in case you were wondering. But yeah, this isn't just a random brawl for the sake of having a random brawl. They had built this feud up for months but it kept ending in a DQ. The story makes sense to end like this.

Third, these guys can actually work decent matches without weapons. I've yet to see Sabu or New Jack do so. Finally, there aren't any ridiculous spots here to suck the life out of it. There's no scaffold or whatever. They're beating the tar out of each other and you get the feeling that they want to kill each other. HOKEY SMOKE!

Foley was covering Jerry and Knobbs came from nowhere with a shovel (Jack's trademark at the time so it makes sense) and just blasts the heck out of him with it. Sags takes the shovel and with Cactus on the ground, Sags crushes Cactus' head with it kind of like a conchairto. Payne goes through a real table after it anyway, before it was a clichéd spot.

Rating: A-. This was freaking AWESOME. Like I said though, there were a lot of differences here that made the thing far better than your typical brawl. The main thing was the amount of brutal spots and the total lack of stopping. Watch this match as it's just freaking awesome. This was brutal now but back then this was EPIC.

US Title: Great Muta vs. Steve Austin

Now here's something you won't see every day. It's post 1989 so Muta is likely going to suck here. Austin is wearing black now and eve has a black vest on. He's been talking more and even cursed a bit around this time. Keep in mind: HE WAS FIRED FOR HAVING NO POTENTIAL. We get the inevitable comparison of Sting and Muta which really was true. Also for you indy fans that think Danielson is so innovative: Muta was using the

Cattle Mutilation when Danielson was about 7 years old.

Muta hooks an abdominal stretch which was one of his big moves actually. Austin was a rising star at this point and a win over Muta would be HUGE for him. It amazes me that Austin so much of a technical guy back in the day and how much of a different style he had in just three years. We get like our 5th mention of Aaron Neville. We get it the guy can sing.

Muta goes insane and scares Austin to death which is saying a lot. I'm in awe here as Austin is chain wrestling Muta to perfection. Make that 6 Neville references. DUDE, no one cares! Parker goes after Muta. That's just freaking stupid. Muta is being dominated here which is awesome as it's letting Austin look great.

After about five minutes of getting beaten down, he realizes he's the Great Muta and this is 1994 and he's wrestling Steve Austin so here's the comeback...which lasts 8 seconds as Austin is dominating again. The crowd is ALL behind Muta mind you. Austin uses some messed up leg lock called the Hollywood and Vine. Oh dear. Muta wakes up and just goes insane to fire the crowd up.

The fans know their old school guys...and then they screw it all up by having Muta get disqualified for back dropping Austin over the ropes. I FREAKING HATE THAT RULE!!! The fans rightfully boo that out of the arena.

Rating: B. I freaking loved this thing. Muta made Austin look great here and for once was working himself to death out there at the end with the fans eating it up. Then WCW managed to screw up the entire match with that LAME ending. I hate WCW at times, I truly do.

Dustin says Texas > Tennessee.

WCW International Title: Sting vs. Rick Rude

Oh dear the International Title. This is the last remnant of the NWA. More or less the WCW Title and the NWA Title were the same thing as they were unified. Then in September of 1993 WCW left the NWA but due to a ridiculous legal battle, Ric Flair owned the big gold belt that the NWA had been using for about 7 years. Once they left, the NWA Title and the WCW Title were separate because the NWA sucked.

In other words, there were two titles. When the NWA was out of the picture, they just named it the WCW International Title. They unified them at a Clash of the Champions in like two months or so. Race comes down and says that Vader wants the winner of the match then tries to jump Sting which goes badly for him. This is one of Rude's last matches actually as he would get injured in the rematch of this in Japan and never wrestle again.

They're doing a mat based thing here which is odd but fine I guess. It's weird to think that Rude would be gone so quickly from the ring. Rude hits his traditional chinlock because he's required by law to do it or something like that. He gets a sleeper and has Sting more or less out and just lets go. Well no one ever said Rude was a genius or anything like that. Sting was so freaking over it's scary.

He's the Ultimate Warrior with talent and restraint. That's a scary thought. Yep the referee goes down just as Sting gets the Scorpion. Race runs down to interfere again as does Vader. Bockwinkle, the commissioner, is at ringside during this. Race misses a chair shot and hits Rude for both the title change and the roof being blown off of the place. Sting was as over as free beer in a frat house here.

Rating: C+. Not a great match but the fans ate this up with a spoon. The big gold belt looks great on Sting too. These two had some good matches just like Warrior had with Rude but a bit better.

Steamboat says he's ready.

Bunkhouse Buck vs. Dustin Rhodes

This is a bunkhouse match, meaning more or less it's another street fight but with a Southern name. You're supposed to wear street clothes to it or something. It was one of Dusty's ideas so go with that. This is a very slow match and compared to what you had earlier, this isn't nearly as impressive. There's a piece of wood that they keep using which is annoying for some reason.

This is a bloodier fight and in some ways it's better, but at the same time it's far too slow to really be considered better than the first one tonight. After getting beaten on for a long time, Dustin makes his comeback. He was finally getting the hang of things around this time but it didn't matter as Hogan came in and cleaned house.

He would be gone in about a year and be in WWF where he had by far the best run of his career. After the Colonel interferes, a shot with brass knuckles ends this with Buck getting the win. This was fun if nothing else.

Rating: B-. This was a fight but it was a different kind of fight. There was a lot of blood and by the end of it you could see that Dustin was very tired which was fine. If this was about 4 minutes shorter it was a lot better though.

The Boss vs. Vader

Rude is ticked that Vader and Race cost him the title. This was supposed to be Starrcade I think but obviously that never happened. Guess who the Boss is. Almost right off the bat, Vader takes a HARD whip into the railing. Like I've said before, Boss was perfect for this feud as he had the size and power to stand up to Vader but wasn't big enough that Vader's offense would make no sense against him. This is a freaking fight. All night long has been physical but it's been reigned

in which is a huge help to it and it's making the thing work a lot better. Vader is bleeding from the eye. That can't be a good thing at all.

They're just punching the tar out of each other here and it's AWESOME stuff. Boss throws a freaking DDT off the middle rope. I'm into this also if you can't tell. There's not a lot to say here as it's just them beating the crap out of each other with STIFF shots. The Vader Bomb gets two but the Vadersault ends this.

I don't think Boss ever pinned Vader even though they feuded all summer. Post match Boss goes nuts on Vader and Race with the nightstick. In the back Bockwinkle takes the stick and the cuffs away from him, leading to him becoming the Guardian Angel.

Rating: B. Again, this was far more of a fight than a match but it worked VERY well. The matches would get progressively worse, but the first ones were straight up fights. This worked fine although it could have been better. Just awesome fighting here which never gets old.

WCW World Title: Ric Flair vs. Ricky Steamboat

Oh like this needs an introduction. They fight over a bunch of wrestling holds which gets us nowhere. This is one of those matches that it's hard to talk about because these two really do nothing but have classics. These are hard to make fun of or anything like that because they're just awesome. The story here like I've said is that Steamboat just asked for a title shot and got one.

Flair was booking and realized there was no great wrestling match on the card so they went with it. There was more or less no chance that Flair was losing here but the match was going to be great no matter what, which is what makes feuds a lot of the time. The technical stuff here never gets old. They started off a lot of their matches like that but as always it

was the ending and the middle that set the matches apart from each other.

Just keep in mind: this is the same Flair that was jobbing to Hogan time after time in just a few months. Why was he jobbing? Because Hogan can of course not wrestle for a year and a half and then come back and beat a guy like Flair that can do this and no one questions it. That makes sense right? They fight on the floor a bit and you can see Flair not being as facey as he had been in the recent months. Yes they were turning him heel AGAIN.

Anyway, we go back in the ring and Steamboat is in control. That lasts a few minutes and now Flair is in control. The great thing is that neither option really is better or worse than the other. That's a rare thing but when it works it works really well. Steamboat hooks the figure four but Flair gets to the ropes. Steamboat is one of the few people that can get away with doing something like that. Finally Flair goes for the knee, and you know what's coming.

The figure four goes on but Ricky manages to hold on. Keep that in mind as it comes into play later (yes, they use that thing known as psychology here. I know it's foreign to a lot of people today but nearly 16 years ago all the hall of famers were doing it). Steamboat hooks the top rope suplex and Flair bounces. Both guys are out but it only gets two. The fans are popping for the big spots but other than that they're quiet.

Not quiet in the when does this end so we can all go home way, but quiet in the this is great stuff way, which it is. Steamboat gets up and both guys look like they could go another 20 minutes or so. That's freaking impressive. We go back to the double chickenwing which is what Steamboat beat Flair with at the Chi-Town Rumble which was match number one in the epic series.

However, the knee gives out and Steamboat collapses kind of

into a Tiger suplex. Both guys' shoulders are down (the ending to the 2nd match in the series: Clash of the Champions 6, 2/3 falls in a 55 minute classic, which ended with this but Steamboat got his shoulder up then and doesn't now). Steamboat thinks he's won the title but instead it's a draw and Flair keeps the belt. The title was held up and a few days later they had a rematch on Saturday Night where Flair won clean.

Rating: A. In short, this is a match that simply can't be messed up. They could have a match today and it would be decent. Somehow, this is nothing compared to their three others in the late 80s. Those are coming.

Overall Rating: A-. YES. This is what I've been looking for here. Today I've watched Beach Blast 93 and December to Dismember. This makes up for those by a long shot. There's not really a bad match on here. All night long they were working hard and you can see that in the in ring work. This is a very good show and worth going out of your way to see, which isn't something that can be said that often. AWESOME show and easily the best for WCW for a very long time.

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