

On This Day: August 28, 1986 – The Big Event: The Biggest Crowd Ever

The Big Event

Date: August 28, 1986

Location: Exhibition Stadium, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Attendance: 70,000

Commentators: Gorilla Monsoon, Jimmy Valiant, Ernie Ladd

You read the attendance right. This was by far and away the biggest crowd in North American history until about 8 months later when they got almost 20,000 more into the stands. This was about one match: Hulk Hogan vs. Paul Orndorff. This was actually a really big house show as it was before PPV really got going and therefore this was just what the title says: A Big Event.

As you know I know my old school but I can only think of one other match on the card: Roberts vs. Steamboat. This would have been Summerslam had Summerslam existed yet though as it was easily bigger than Mania 2 and wouldn't be trumped until next year in the biggest event of all time. So with all that being said, let's get to this.

The opening is Gene in a helicopter talking about how awesome Toronto is which is interspersed with clips of the show. The crowd is VERY loud. This show is outside in case I forgot to mention that. I've heard between 65 and 74 thousand for the card but 70,000 is what I hear most. To put that into perspective, that's more than Mania 6 or 17. This really does look freaking amazing.

Killer Bees vs. Hoss Funk/Jimmy Jack Funk

Hoss is more commonly known as Dory so we'll go with that.

Jimmy was a jobber and Dory was a former world champion. We get a wide shot and it just looks amazing. Dory and Brian Blair start us off. Jimmy does look a bit like Terry if nothing else. This has been all Bees so far.

Jimmy is wearing a mask for no apparent reason. Ernie Ladd never talks and it's kind of annoying. The heels finally take over as I guess Dory just got bored out there. Ernie throws out this gem: he slammed him to the mat there with a move called a slam. That sums things up pretty well I'd say. The Bees put the masks on and cheat to get the win. There's an echo on the mic which is cool for some reason.

Rating: C. This was fine for an opener. It wasn't a bad tag match at all and it got the crowd into things which is really all you can ask for in a match like this. It definitely could have used a minute or so off in the middle though.

King Tonga vs. Don Muraco

Both are heels here and Tonga is more commonly known as Haku/Meng. He looks weird in regular tights too. I think he's supposed to be a face but he's just not popular at all. He's also referred to as both King Tonga and Haku. He works on the arm, like a lot. I mean he works on that thing like there's no freaking tomorrow.

We're at about 5 minutes of just arm work. Valiant and Ladd are rather annoying men. And now we hit a two minute nerve hold. I have a bad feeling I know where this is going to go. Good grief this is just boring. Nothing of note happens for the better part of ever and then we have a time limit draw at about seventeen of the twenty minutes. This was a waste of time.

Rating: D+. I hate matches like these. Draws are fine, but dang man this was just freaking boring. Haku using a high cross body was cool though. Either way, this just wasn't interesting at all.

Ted Arcidi vs. Tony Garea

Garea is replacing Tony Atlas. I don't know much about Garea but I suddenly want to laugh quite a bit. Arcidi is a big power guy and Garea is just generic as possible. The ropes keep making this weird sound when they hit them. Arcidi legitimately held the world bench press record for years. There must be a fight or something going on as a ton of fans are all looking to see something as the ropes are really getting annoying. Garea taps to a bear hug soon after this.

Rating: N/A. This was a total squash and wasn't that interesting. He would be gone in a few months while Garea still works for the company behind the scenes today.

Jimmy Hart says he'll get JYD tonight.

Adrian Adonis vs. Junkyard Dog

It's so cool to see the thousands of people and have a row cut out in there for the guys to come through. It looks completely awesome. Hart has a freaking feather duster for some reason. Adonis is rather gay in case you weren't familiar with him. He's also about 400lbs here.

About two years before this he was a big deal actually as a biker character. I love that Dog's theme song is about grabbing a girl's hips. Adonis is bleeding pretty badly already. Ok apparently not as I refuse to listen to Ernie Ladd anymore.

Jimmy sprays perfume or cologne or whatever in Dog's face to break the momentum though and Adonis goes to work. Dog no sells two megaphone shots and they fight on the floor. The referee gets to about 8 and then we go into the ring and Adonis is thrown into Hart and falls BACK OUT OF THE RING after being completely in for the count out. I think they botched that one.

Rating: D+. This was a standard 80s match but I don't get the ending at all. It wasn't any good which I would blame on the wrestlers and JYD is an annoying waste of oxygen as it is so there we are. This was just filler.

Iron Mike Sharpe vs. Dick Slater

Oh yeah Slater is the rebel. No one cares. Sharpe is up there with Horowitz and Brawler in the jobbing hall of fame. Mike likes to talk a lot. The announcers talk about how great Sharpe is. Really? From what I've read he was completely OCD so having this many people in the audience must have driven him insane.

There really isn't much here as it's really a glorified squash for Slater who would never mean a thing in wrestling, at least not in this company. He was ok in other companies but he's at his best in ring stuff here, which isn't saying much at all.

Monsoon wants to know why Sharpe has had his arm in a cast kind of thing for over 8 years and Valiant just starts screaming at him that he should go out to dinner with Sharpe and ask him because Valiant doesn't know. That came out of nowhere. Anyway, Slater hits an elbow from the top and jackknifes (it's a kind of rollup, not the powerbomb) him for the win.

Rating: D. Did we really need six minutes of these two guys? I certainly wouldn't think so. This wasn't interesting or particularly good but a jobber got beat up so there we are.

I think we had an intermission here.

Heenan is with Gene and he's in a 6 man here. He says he'll unmask the Machines tonight. He gets in a great line with "We have 70,000 people here because Heenan is wrestling and wrestling is Heenan." He also manages to get the entire crowd chanting weasel.

Big Machine/Super Machine/Lou Albano vs. Big John Studd/King Kong Bundy/Bobby Heenan

Ah yes the Machines. Now this was the epitome of a comedy angle that took off for a little while. The idea was that Andre the Giant was suspended for (kayfabe) not showing up for a match. Soon thereafter two new masked guys from Japan appeared: Super Machine (Ax from Demolition) and Giant Machine (duh).

Over the Summer they feuded with Heenan, Studd and Bundy with guest appearances by Piper Machine, Animal Machine and Hulk Machine. It was total tongue in cheek, kind of like Mr. America with Hogan. They were eventually joined by Big Machine who was Blackjack Mulligan when Andre could barely move.

Andre was kind of the manager and only wrestled occasionally. The angle ended about two months after this to set up Mania 3. Anyway let's get to this. We get a shot from the broadcast booth and the ring is TINY. Studd and Super Machine start us out. The Machines' strength is freaking impressive.

Ax is by far and away the smallest one. What does that tell you? Gorilla says he's been over 500 pounds before but at Mania 4 said the biggest he ever wrestled at was 440. I don't want to live in a world where I can't trust Gorilla Monsoon! Ok I'm back now I think.

With Big Machine down Heenan comes in and goes for the mask. Super Machine is like screw that and drills him. Bundy was just a big fat waste of oxygen. You can tell he was just thrown into Mania. Look where he was just 4 months later. Heenan comes in again and Albano comes in also.

Super Mario kicks his head in for a bit but a thumb in the eye and the heels beat up Albano. Andre has had enough and just comes in there and starts cleaning house which causes the DQ. He was just freaking terrifying when he got mad. Ax being the smallest guy by far is a freaky sight.

Rating: C-. It was a comedy match so that's fine. The Machines were just a fun team so this worked fine. Andre was very fun when he could move and this was no exception. It was nothing serious and it wasn't supposed to be.

Jake Roberts vs. Ricky Steamboat

This is a Snakepit Match meaning anything goes. Roberts had DDTed Steamboat on the floor at a SNME and nearly killed him to ignite this feud which was the second biggest of the summer. Dragon had busted out a Komodo Dragon to counter Damien but neither are here tonight due to customs issues. The two commentators that talk say that the Canadian flag has an oak leaf on it.

Dragon dominates until we hit the floor where Jake takes over after a low blow. Steamboat gets a few chair shots in and that just was weird to type. Dragon just beats the tar out of him for awhile but gets reversed and goes over the top to the floor. Valiant thinks Roberts is a champion for some reason. Roberts is one of those guys that was supposed to be a heel but more or less became a face through just pure fan support.

Dragon starts bleeding after going into the post but fights out of the DDT. Jake is dominating now and getting face pops for it. And then he sits on Dragon's chest and holds his arm up and you know the rest. They would have another match in a few weeks on SNME with the animals that I reviewed last night to close out the feud.

Rating: B. This was a very intense match. Street fights and the like simply didn't happen in this era so this was insane at the time. Both guys were great workers so this worked out very well. Steamboat was about to have his throat messed up by Savage and you know the aftermath of that.

Billy Jack Haynes vs. Hercules

As you may know this one happened at Mania 3 as well. Gorilla

is on his own for this one which is likely the best case scenario. Hercules has the insane hair here, looking like Mike Knox but not as tall and we're told that since this has happened Slick has taken over for Blassie's contracts.

What that has to do with this match is beyond me as neither guy ever managed either of them that I remember. Heenan had Hercules by Mania. What a nice break it is to just have Monsoon talking as he is just so easy to listen to. Apparently Hercules is managed by Slick.

OH YEAH I remember Heenan buying him now. Slick owned him for like a cup of coffee I guess. There's no heat at all for this match as the fans are just dead. To be fair though this is like the 8th match so far. Also based on what everyone has said it's really cold in the stadium. Haynes gets a backslide to get a quick pin.

Rating: C-. The lack of heat just killed this and I can't blame them. No one cared at all and it just wasn't that interesting. Both guys would mean very little until Hercules got a mini push in the following year or two. Boring match though.

Fabulous Rougeaus vs. Dream Team

The Dream Team is Valentine and Beefcake who Valiant usually manages. The Rougeaus are wearing red for some reason. Oh great and Valentine is too. We get an abdominal stretch and naturally Monsoon complains. The Rougeaus are one of those teams that just flows so well that it's amazing to say the least. They're also great high fliers that can just show off, kind of like the Hardys or something like that. Good night there are a lot of people there.

This is your standard 80s tag match which means that it's pretty good. Beefcake just sucked back I the day though and this is no exception. He would be replaced by Bravo at Mania 3. After a very long and drawn out match which thankfully got

enough time, we hit the brawl and Valentine has the figure four. In a SWEET ending, the illegal Rougeau gets a sunset flip on him as he bends over to put the hold back on for the pin. I love that.

Rating: B-. This was another fun and good match that did its job well. It's the second longest match of the night after the draw from earlier and it's one of the better ones on the card. It was solid but the really needed to get Bravo out there ASAP. Valiant is ticked off over that ending.

Harley Race vs. Pedro Morales

They're both old and they're both fat. They're also rather slow and it's not interesting at all anymore. The main event is next so this is likely Hogan's effort to make people forget the previous good match so that he looks good next. He did it to the whole company in about 8 years with WCW. The referees have more or less sucked all night as they never count fast enough. Race gets a double leg trip and uses the ropes for the easy pin.

Rating: N/A. This was just a filler to put some space between the two matches that were good and nothing more.

Hogan says he'll win.

WWF Title: Hulk Hogan vs. Paul Orndorff

This is the hottest feud in the world as Orndorff had turned face to help Hogan with Piper and Orton but Hogan had more or less been a jerk (I don't know about you but I'm STUNNED over that) to him and wouldn't answer the phone when he was working out. Heenan then poked Orndorff into believing that Hogan didn't ever care about him but that Heenan always would.

Orndorff, wanting to be accepted and not used, turned to the dark side and beat up Hogan at a big show to set up this which launched the hottest feud in perhaps ever at this point. This

was the only reason that this whole show happened on such a huge stage, much like Hogan vs. Andre. The only difference here is that there wasn't a Savage vs. Steamboat to balance it out. Also, Mania would have nearly 20,000 more people, or another Madison Square Garden on top of this. That's just completely ridiculous.

They start off with just a big freaking brawl and the fans are WAY into this. This is more or less all punching and chasing until Heenan makes the stop and the heel takes over. Orndorff was a different kind of heel as instead of this big fat slob, he was small and athletic which was something new for Hogan. Also there were a lot of people that were siding with Orndorff as Hogan had really just been a massive jerk to him.

Ladd really likes kissing up to Hogan. He's getting into Vince territory, but then again Hogan has muscles and Vince is way too obsessed with musclemen. GOOD NIGHT that referee is slow. Paul dominates until Hogan starts to Hulk Up. He uses a jumping knee to the back of Orndorff and the referee is crushed. Hogan imitates Orndorff with the arm in the air for the clothesline which is how Orndorff turned on him.

He goes for Orndorff's piledriver but Heenan runs in with a wooden stool to blast Hogan in the head. Why he had that is beyond me. For no apparent reason the referee wakes up and taps Orndorff to say that Hogan wins by DQ. Hogan wakes up and kicks his head in for no apparent reason other than being a jerk. We get a replay with no commentary for no apparent reason before posing and credits take us out.

Rating: B-. This was all about the atmosphere and not about the match itself. Even still this was fine as both guys were over in their respective roles and this was indeed a huge match. Hogan going over unclean was smart as it gave Orndorff a reason for a rematch which was required so all was fine here. I'm not sure I get why Paul was disqualified but it was Hogan's world so there we are.

Overall Rating: D+. It's definitely recommended though. This was a lot like Mania 3 where the main event was the only selling point to this but that's all it needed. 70,000 people was just completely unheard of back then so this was light years ahead of anything ever seen before and still ranks right up there for all time crowds.

The main event is awesome for feeling if nothing else and while the rest of the card sucks, the crowd gives it the atmosphere that makes it worth seeing. Think of this as a rehearsal for Wrestlemania before you watch it, which you should as it's a fun show if you're an old school fan.

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