

Wrestler of the Day – January 22: Tully Blanchard

After a string of some less than stellar picks, it's time for the wrestler's wrestler and an original Horseman: Tully Blanchard.

Tully got his start in his father Joe's Southwest Championship Wrestling based out of San Antonio. It's one of those promotions where video is kind of scarce so here's Tully defending the SCW Title against Cowboy Scott Casey, who appeared at Survivor Series 1989 as a replacement for a replacement and is best known for training Booker T and Stevie Ray. This is from September 11, 1983.

SCW Title: Tully Blanchard vs. Scott Casey

Feeling out process to start until Casey grabs an armbar to take over. Tully counters into a chinlock and drops a few knees for two. Casey fights up into a belly to back suplex for a break before a neckbreaker gets two. Tully counters a piledriver by driving Casey into the corner and suplexes Scott down for two. Control shifts again off a release butterfly suplex from Casey and a backbreaker gets two on Tully.

The champion comes back with a knee lift and a swinging neckbreaker but walks into a powerslam for two. The fans chant for the sleeper (Casey's finisher) but instead get a collision to put both guys down. Blanchard avoids a dropkick and hits a shoulder block to send Casey into the referee. This brings out a guy named Ken Tims who goes up but hits Tully by mistake, giving Casey the pin to send the crowd through the roof.

Rating: C-. This is one of those matches where it would help to have seen more of the buildup to the title change. The announcer was talking about how this had been four years in the making which isn't something you can tell off of a nine minute match. It's not bad or anything but Casey was a

pretty generic guy who wasn't terrible in the ring. Not much to see here but I've seen far worse.

We'll move on 1984 when Tully had made it to the Mid-Atlantic Territory. He won the TV Title and defended it against Ricky Steamboat at Starrcade 1984 in the only good match on the show.

TV Title: Ricky Steamboat vs. Tully Blanchard

Steamboat comes out to Eye of the Tiger which is rather awesome. Blanchard is defending and both guys have put up \$10,000, meaning Blanchard is getting shafted here. Also if Tully runs or gets disqualified he loses the title. They lock up to start and Tully goes after Ricky's injured ribs. Steamboat fires back with chops and the champion heads to the floor. The crowd is HOT for this one. Back in and Steamboat suplexes Blanchard down and hooks a reverse chinlock.

Tully can't shake him off for a bit so Steamboat knees him in the chest to take Blanchard down again. Ricky's ribs are too banged up though and he can't stay on Tully. An elbow to the ribs has the champion in control and he follows up with some knees to said ribs. Steamboat kicks his way out of the corner and chops away before putting on a chinlock. Blanchard fights up and gets to the ropes before hammering on Ricky's ribs again.

Back up and they circle each other a bit with Tully backing away most of the time. Tully escapes a headlock and tries to bail, only to be rolled up for two. Steamboat pounds away in the corner and hits a kind of standing clothesline for two. In something you'll never see again, Ricky spits in Tully's face and chops away in the corner. A swinging neckbreaker gets two for Steamboat as does a great looking dropkick. I think the champion is bleeding as Steamboat pounds away.

Tully loads up a foreign object as Steamboat tries to suplex him in from the apron and knocks Steamboat out cold.....for two. That would be the ending of Tito Santana vs. Randy Savage a year and a half later. Tully's superplex is broken up and Steamboat hits a top rope splash for two. Steamboat tries a sunset flip but Tully, right in front of the referee, pulls out the foreign object and blasts Ricky in the head with it for the pin to retain the title.

Rating: B+. If this show doesn't get a failing grade, it's all because of this. This is one of those combinations that was going to be amazing no matter what they did due to pure talent alone. The story worked very well with the ribs being injured but Tully cheating every way he could to keep the belt. Very good match here which could have been amazing with more time.

Soon thereafter, Tully would move on to his greatest feud. Around July, he and his valet Baby Doll stole the US Title from Magnum TA. This kicked off a huge feud between the two with both guys sneak attacking each other. The result was an I Quit match inside a steel cage for Tully's title. Think of the idea here: a traditionalist who could wrestle with anyone facing a redneck from the south in an I Quit match. This match might actually be better than Bret vs. Austin in 1997.

US Title: Magnum TA vs. Tully Blanchard

This is definitely the biggest match of the Greensboro card and has a huge feud behind it. As mentioned, Tully stole the US Title from Magnum over the summer, setting off a war between the two based off the culture clash between the two. You had Tully Blanchard who was the wrestler's wrestler. He was as technically sound as you could ask a wrestler to be, drank champagne and rode around in limousines. On the other hand you have Magnum who rode Harley-Davidson's and drank beer. As mentioned, this

storyline and characters would be copied almost identically for Bret Hart vs. Steve Austin in 1997.

This is inside a cage and is an I Quit match, which means anything goes and you lose when you make your opponent say I quit. Blanchard is defending if that wasn't clear. Tully takes it into the corner to start but Magnum throws that great right hand of his to knock him down. The champ keeps taking it to the mat but Magnum turns it into a brawl. Back up and Tully starts pounding away on the ribs but Magnum comes back with some HARD punches to the face.

Magnum gets him between the ropes and the cage and rakes Tully's face against the cage. Tully comes back with an elbow off the ropes to gain control before sending Magnum into the cage. Off to a reverse chinlock but Magnum fights out, only to be kneed in the back. Back up and Magnum pelts him with more right hands. The sounds as they hit make you cringe every time. Blanchard sends him into the cage and rakes at Magnum's face as the brawling continues.

Now TA (short for Terry Allen, Magnum's real name) sends Tully face first into the cage a few times and it's off to an armbar. Tully is busted BAD already as Magnum keeps pounding away. Baby Doll screams for Tully to fight back so Blanchard gets in a right hand of his own, busting Magnum open as well. Tully gets the corded microphone and we get an iconic scene with Tully shouting at Magnum to SAY IT, Magnum shouting NO and Tully hitting him in the head with the microphone.

A top rope fist puts Magnum down but he still won't say it. They get to their feet and Magnum slugs him back down before pounding him with the mic. Blanchard rips at Magnum's eyes and POUNDS him with right hands. Magnum punches him down and tries to get Tully to quit but Blanchard

kicks him down. TA punches him in the corner but Tully comes out with an atomic drop. Both guys look like they've been through a war.

Tully drops some elbows and throws the referee away. He brings in a wooden chair and immediately breaks it against the mat to get a nice jagged piece. Tully tries to drive it into Magnum's already cut forehead but Magnum knocks it away and gets the wood himself with a crazed look in his eye. He knocks Tully down again and DRIVES THE SHARP EDGE INTO TULLY'S EYE, making Tully scream that he quits and giving Magnum the title. Magnums is fired up from winning the title but looks down at Tully holding his bloody eye and becomes very stoic, realizing what he did to win the title and beat Blanchard.

Rating: A+. Not only is this the best match of the night, not only is this the best match in the history of Starrcade, but it's in the running for greatest match of all time. This was an absolute war and it felt like these two wanted to kill each other. If you've never gotten to see this, go check it out right now as it's absolutely required viewing for wrestling fans. If you want to see a fight instead of a wrestling match, check this out.

Next up for Tully was the Horsemen, which he founded along with Ole and Arn Anderson and Rick Flair. While Tully and Arn dominated the tag title scene for a long time, we'll take a look at the Horsemen as a unit inside the greatest gimmick match of all time: WarGames. In short, the two teams HATE each other and this is the bloodbath to end all bloodbaths.

Dusty Rhodes/Road Warriors/Nikita Koloff/Paul Ellering vs. Four Horsemen/JJ Dillon

The Horsemen in this case are Flair, Anderson, Blanchard, Luger and JJ Dillon. Flair's music is epic as they crank the music WAY up. This is the Atlanta main event and it's the debut of WarGames. For those of you uninitiated, WarGames is

the mother of all gimmick matches. You have two teams of five and each team sends in a member. Those two fight for five minutes and there's a coin toss.

The winning team gets to send in the third man to have a 2-1 advantage. That lasts two minutes and then the team that lost the toss gets to send in its second man to tie it at 2-2. That lasts two minutes then the team that won the toss sends in its third man. You alternate like that every two minutes until it's 5-5 and then it's first submission. No pins allowed.

Arn and Dusty start us off and remember this can't end until all ten are in. There are two rings side by side with one huge cage over them if I didn't mention that. They feel each other out a lot as they're not entirely sure what to do here. Dusty walks on the second rope and then swings across the top of the cage to kick him in the ribs. Now they're going and Dusty pounds away including a low blow which is perfectly legal.

There's a DDT by Dusty and the crowd is red hot. Arn is cut open about two and a half minutes in so Dusty rakes it across the cage wall. Everyone hates everyone on the other team so this is a huge blood feud all around. Dusty sends him into the cage and has dominated the entire time. After a quick comeback by Arn Dusty gets his bad Figure Four on and then lets go of it because...well just because I guess.

The Horsemen win the toss (the faces literally never won the thing) and it's Tully in next. The Horsemen beat him down but Dusty is booking so he knocks them both down with elbows. And scratch that as Tully gets in a knee shot and the double teaming begins. Tully puts on a Figure Four as they work over the knee. The clock seems to skip ahead a bit (no sign of clipping though) and Animal comes in to tie it up.

He starts launching Horsemen everywhere and sets Tully up for a slingshot which he rams three straight times. Shoulder block takes Tully down and Dusty destroys Anderson. I think

Blanchard is busted and he gets double teamed a bit. Anderson looks dead. Animal is like screw that and rams him into the cage a few times. Flair is in to make it 3-2 and chops at Animal which doesn't work. The number catch up with him as Anderson is back up quickly.

Sorry for a lot of play by play here but it's the only thing you can do in matches like this one. Animal is busted. Dusty tries to fight back but he's almost on his own. The fans are so loud that you can't hear Tony and Jim. Dusty is bleeding and here comes Nikita. Flair grabs him as he comes in but the power of RUSSIA breaks up the Horsemen. The double ring thing here is very nice as they have room to move around. Animal sends Flair into the cage and he's bleeding now. Dusty is gushing blood.

Nikita and Dusty work on the knee of Anderson but Nikita goes to get Tully stuck between the two rings and hits him between the ropes in a slingshot thing. Flair begs off Nikita and that doesn't end well for the champ. A double dropkick puts Anderson down and here's Lex. This is literally non-stop. Powerslam plants Koloff and Lex is dominating. There's a spike piledriver to Nikita and then a second one just to kill him deader than dead. The Horsemen are in control but they're starting to fall from exhaustion and blood loss.

Here's Hawk and the fans erupt all over again. He destroys everything in sight and if you're not bleeding already you will be now. Nikita's neck is messed up and he can barely stand. JR is in Heaven with this much carnage. Flair gets a Figure Four on Dusty but it doesn't count yet. The Horsemen only have JJ Dillon left and he's a manger. He goes after Hawk and that's just dumb.

Flair saves JJ's life and they're getting tired. Flair is bleeding a ton as if you expected anything else. JJ is taking a beating but Animal is getting triple teamed. Here's Ellering to get us all tied up and now the match can end. Ellering has

an LOD spiked pad on his arm. Dillon is bleeding BAD so Ellering JAMS THE SPIKE INTO HIS EYE. The LOD circles in on Dillon as the rest of the team runs interference. The Warriors spear his head into the cage and load up the Doomsday Device. JJ lands on his shoulder, legitimately hurting it. With Animal running interference, Hawk beats him half to death until he gives up to finally end this.

Rating: A+. This runs 26 minutes and there is literally no stopping in the whole thing. There isn't some period where they chill because they've done enough. This is about brutality and violence and it works very well. There's a ton of blood and JJ looks like he fell out of a building (for some reason in wrestling attire) at the end of it. It's well worth seeing and still works today. Great match.

About a year later Arn and Tully would head to the WWF as the Brainbusters, managed by Bobby Heenan. They would squash jobbers for awhile before getting some traction as a top tag team. After a year of dominance, they would face Demolition for the Tag Titles on Saturday Night's Main Event #32 in a 2/3 falls match.

TagTitles: Brainbustersvs. Demolition

So last SNME there was a solid match where the Busters had Demolition in trouble but Demolition got disqualified, intentionally or not is up for debate. Demolition says they'll demolish them. They've held the belts since Mania 4 so it's been a LONG time, actually the longest reign with the belts ever. This is 2/3 falls mind you. Tully and Axe start us off. I never felt comfortable with the Horsemen in WWF. It just didn't feel right at all.

It's ALL Demolition to start which should tell you something. Smash grabs a boot coming down at him which is something

straight out of an 80s action movie. Smash apparently has an injured knee. Uh, sure. They just kind of said it was injured and then it isn't anymore. Ok then. Anderson hits the spinebuster which doesn't have a name yet. Smash gets a hot shot on Arn for a pin to get the first fall. That came a bit out of nowhere.

After a break it's time for the second fall. There was no rest though as the perk of SNME was that since it was taped there was no wrestling during the break. As in it would pick up right where it was left off. We get a lot of double teaming on both sides and it gives the heels the advantage. A horrible camel clutch does nothing of note. In the middle of the insanity, Andre comes down and does nothing and Demolition is disqualified for double teaming to tie us up. This is a mess to put it mildly.

Now if Demolition is DQ'ed or counted out here, the titles don't change hands. The heels do the old British Bulldogs move of ramming one guy's head into his own partners' which works well here. Axe takes over again but in a stupid looking moment he hits an atomic drop and rams his head into Arn's. Both get hot tags though and this needs to end. It's ANOTHER big mess but Andre throws in a chair for Tully which gets the pin and the titles to end the nearly year and a half reign with the titles for Demolition.

Rating: D. WOW this was a mess. It's not particularly bad, but we get it: THEY CAN BRAWL. There's far more brawling in this than wrestling which is rare for this era. The match could have worked as it's not like the Brainbusters couldn't wrestle or something like that. This was just a mess the whole time and it didn't do it for me.

Soon after this the Brainbusters would face the Hart Foundation at Summerslam 1989 in what can only be called an 80s dream match.

Hart Foundation vs. Brain Busters

The Brain Busters (Arn Anderson and Tully Blanchard) won the tag titles a few weeks before this show, but since the match was already signed this is non-title. Why it wasn't changed to a title match is beyond me but there's no way this won't be awesome. Heenan is with the Brain Busters here, making what Jesse said even more confusing. Bret and Tully get things going with Hart going straight for the arm. Arn comes in to take Bret to the mat with a headlock, only to have Bret crank on his arm as well.

A hammerlock slam puts Arn in a cute bit before it's off to Neidhart for some powerful cranking on the arm. The Harts change two more times and both guys get to crank on the arm before Bret puts on an armbar. Arn slips out and brings in Tully who has his own arm pulled on by Anvil. Blanchard pulls on the beard to escape but can't hiptoss the big man over. Back to Bret for more arm work before Anvil sneaks in without a tag. It's only cheating if you get caught remember.

Anvil completely no sells some chops to the chest and sends Tully into the buckle before bringing Bret back in. The fans are all over Heenan with a Weasel chant while Bret works on a hammerlock. Tully grabs a top wristlock but Bret bridges off the mat to escape and the Busters are sent to the outside. Back in and Bret wins a slugout with Tully but gets suckered into a chase with Blanchard making a blind tag to Arn who blasts Bret from behind.

Everything breaks down again with the Brain Busters being knocked out to the floor once again. Back in and Bret sends Tully's face into Anvil's boot before bringing Neidhart again. Things break down again but Bret accidentally whips Jim into the buckle to give the Busters control. Arn drives a middle rope elbow into Neidhart's back before it's back to Tully for a reverse chinlock. Neidhart picks him up but Tully makes another blind tag off to Anderson to block a tag.

Arn punches him down but Anvil LAUNCHES Anderson off at two. Back up and both guys collide before Bret gets in a knee to Arn's back to give Neidhart a breather. The hot tag brings in Hart vs. Blanchard with Bret dropping the middle rope elbow for no cover. Everything breaks down for the third or fourth time tonight with Bret being whipped into Tully to put both guys down.

Arn and Jim go to the floor but Bret slingshots Jim over the top into a shoulder block to Tully. Anvil powerslams Bret onto Blanchard but Anderson hits an ax handle to Bret's head for the pin (while covering his head so the referee doesn't see it's Arn in the ring because Arn Anderson is more awesome than you).

Rating: B. I could watch Arn Anderson matches all day because of stuff like that at the end. I mean, who would think of such a little thing like that at the end of a match? This was a very solid opener but again I have no idea why the titles weren't on the line here, especially if the Busters were going to go over by pin. The Harts wouldn't even be a factor in the title scene for another year and even then they were big underdogs.

The Busters would lose the titles back to Demolition a few months later. Soon thereafter, Tully would fail a drug test and leave the WWF as a result. It would also virtually blackball him from wrestling as he couldn't get nearly the same amount of money that he was paid before, leading to him getting out of the business for the most part. Save for a few appearances in ECW, Tully would only be seen at one more major show: Slamboree 1994, which was billed as a legends reunion. Tully would face Terry Funk in the best match on the show.

Tully Blanchard vs. Terry Funk

Blanchard comes out to what would become Jericho's face music. There's something wrong with the sound as you literally cannot hear the announcer. And Funk, who has been missing all night, comes out to something sounding like a screwed up Magnificent

Seven theme. Now keep in mind this is in the...GORDON SOLIE IS ANNOUNCING!!! Anyway, they decide to have Funk in ECW's town. Guess who the INSANELY over face is in this match.

Funk stands in front of Hat Guy. And of course we start on the floor. See, now unlike Heroes of Wrestling, Blanchard is in solid shape here. Also he's not completely obsolete anymore. They haven't been in the ring yet. Solie just throws out that he was in Miami back in 75 when Funk won the belt. Can you imagine how awesome it would be to crack open a beer with him and listen to him tell stories?

I think this is no rules which would make more sense here. Funk piledrives Blanchard through a piece of wood, which you can read as Terry's back goes through it and Blanchard's head comes nowhere near it. The fans chant WE WANT BLOOD. This is an intense match which is impressive as the old guys are having a more interesting match than the others were. There goes the referee of course and it's chair time.

Blanchard is bleeding. Funk tries to piledrive Tully from the middle rope onto the chair but he winds up just landing on the chair so it looked like a really screwedup powerbomb which is likely best in the end. Tully hits the referee for the DQ but I think it's just a double DQ. The fans audibly chant bull. Funk takes Hat Guy's hat to end it.

Rating: B+. Fun. That's the only way to describe this match. These two went out there and had fun and that's all you can ask for. Yes that rating is likely high but this match was a blast. I can't ask for more than that from a match with no point other than having two legends. The wrestling was quite good here too.

Other than a few appearances at some spot shows such as WrestleReunion and Heroes of Wrestling, that's it for Tully. He mostly retired to become a minister and never looked back. Tully Blanchard is as good of an in ring worker as you'll ever find. That slingshot suplex of his is a great

example of taking a regular move and making it a big finisher by having it get pins. The match and feud with Magnum is possibly the best blood feud in wrestling history and that's not an exaggeration. On top of that he was an excellent tag wrestler to make Tully a very well rounded talent. Check him out if you want to see WCW's version of Bret Hart with better talking skills.

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