

Wrestler of the Day – January 24: Mike Awesome

After a trip to England it's back to America with one of the hardest hitting guys you'll ever find in a wrestling ring: Hulk Hogan's cousin (by marriage I believe), Mike Awesome.

We'll start with one of ECW's most famous shows: The Night The Line Was Crossed. Awesome was a newcomer at this point and this was his highest profile match to date. From February of 1994.

JT Smith vs. Mike Awesome

This would be a squash in the regular ECW. Here it's going to be a squash but with a different ending. If you want to see an example of why Awesome is so beloved, watch this match as he's INSANE but great. He never lets up at all and hits a great over the top rope dive to nearly kill Smith. And then the hometown boy rolls him up for a pin in his only offense all night. Referee gets beaten up anyway. He goes for the splash and breaks the freaking ring ropes.

Rating: N/A. Total squash for Awesome and he lost anyway. He would go to Japan soon after and other than one other time in 94, wouldn't be seen in ECW until 97. He would wrestle five times there and then would go winless in 1998. FINALLY in 1999 Heyman realized he had something amazing and made him world champion.

Awesome would head to Japan for several years in a hardcore promotion that I don't consider wrestling, so we'll skip ahead to the late 1990s when Awesome returned to ECW after a year long knee injury. He reignited his feud with Masato Tanaka, who happened to have a title match at Anarchy Rulz 1999 when things changed a bit.

ECW World Title: Masato Tanaka vs. Taz

No intro or anything. Joey just says it's time for our world title match. The fans throw a TON of stuff into the ring because of Taz. He sold out apparently. No. Heyman screwed up the booking of him because no one cared about him as a face after he whined for a year and Shane Douglas wouldn't drop the title like he should have. I still say that had as much to do with killing ECW as anything did.

That and not putting the belt on RVD about 5 months before this. Mike Awesome is in the crowd and Taz says send him in there too. Heyman comes out and holds Awesome back. I love how the fans go from YOU SOLD OUT to yelling his catchphrase with him inside of a minute. Remember that officially Taz hasn't been announced as leaving yet but it's the worst kept secret in wrestling. Heyman makes it a threeway.

So yeah add Mike Awesome to the title because I'm lazy. Oh and Awesome is in wrestling gear in the crowd. I'm shocked too. They double team him and that doesn't work at all. Tanaka takes an Awesome Bomb. And then the Roaring Elbow and Awesome Splash puts Taz out in about two minutes. There you go then.

The locker room empties so that everyone can say goodbye to Taz. Yeah this was a total secret right? Awesome hits a sweet Tope (Taker Dive) to the floor to take Tanaka down. This is your standard solid match with these two. Naturally chairs and tables are brought into play but you have to expect that in ECW. Tanaka hits a Tornado DDT on a chair for two.

And Tanaka gets powerbombed over the top to the floor through a table. Top rope splash follows that for two. Ok then. Tanaka no sells three LOUD chair shots and this Diamond Dust which is an awesome move. It's table time again with Awesome in control again. Awesome hits a top rope powerbomb for the pin. Yeah that works but a chair shot to the head from the top doesn't? Taz hands him the belt after the match. The roster says

goodbye to Taz as no one cares about Axl Rotten. The fans loving Taz now is kind of stupid. Taz tells them to chant for Awesome. Nice touch there.

Rating: B. Usual good stuff here from these two, but at times the no selling gets annoying. Still though, this was a shock to some people and it was a nice touch throwing Awesome in there as people knew Taz was losing, so here we didn't know who was leaving with the belt. This was good.

Awesome and Tanaka would trade the title over Christmas of 1999 with Awesome coming out with the belt. He would defend that title against the giant killer Spike Dudley at Guilty As Charged 2000 in January.

ECW World Title: Mike Awesome vs. Spike Dudley

This should be going on in the spot of the TV Title match and the TV Title match should come on last. Spike has lost a lot of that ANGER from an hour and a half ago. He starts setting up tables before Mike is even here. Oh well we get to listen to some more AC/DC so I can't complain. He sets up FIVE tables including two on top of each other before getting into the ring with a microphone.

He talks about how he makes his living getting put through tables. Ok thanks for admitting you're a glorified jobber getting a title shot at a PPV. Why was Awesome managed by a "judge?" That never made much sense to me but whatever. Spike goes through a table less than 15 seconds in. Ok then let's go home now as this is rather pointless. There go two more.

We're MAYBE a minute and a half in and Spike has done nothing at all other than a few punches. Then calling the split screen replay Double Vision is funny. Spike is in the crowd and Awesome dives over the railing to knock him back down. Joey wants the match stopped but then cheers when he kicks out of a splash. Is this supposed to make sense? Oh that's right it's

Spike Dudley in the main event of a PPV.

Of course it's not supposed to make sense. Awesome Bomb is blocked and Spike jumps at Awesome and hits something close to an Acid Drop on the guard rail. Spike might have hurt his leg. Wow I wonder how he could have done that. Spike hits a hurricanrana which Awesome (rightfully) no sells and then kills Spike with a clothesline for two.

Spike hits the one move that I've never been able to understand how it can be done safely: a double stomp from the top rope. In an INSANE spot, Spike gets on the top rope and hits a springboard clothesline from the ring to the front row. That was impressive and Joey/Cyrus make fun of Hogan for doing such limited stuff. That's rather amusing as Awesome is actually Hogan's nephew or something close to that.

Spike hits an Acid Drop from the apron to the floor through a table and chokes Awesome out with a cord to take over. Joey shouting AWESOME IS DEAD over and over after a big chair shot is rather creepy. Spike is thrown through a table and is more or less out cold. Spike then further proves his idiocy by going up when Awesome is on the top rope in front of a table. Of course he goes through it for the pin. He deserved that for general stupidity.

Rating: D-. The problem here is simple: the credibility just wasn't there at all. Spike is still his size and Awesome is his size. That's why this didn't work very well. We get it: Spike can do moves to big guys, but chair shots and a Diamond Cutter from the ropes isn't enough to make this believable. They tried...kind of, but this just didn't work that well at all.

Awesome would keep the title for a few more months before showing up on Nitro. This wasn't out of the ordinary for the time, but it was out of the ordinary when the person was still under contract with ECW, still ECW Champion and had the ECW Title with him. This led to a big lawsuit with

ECW making money, WWF wrestler Taz winning the ECW Title at an ECW show from a WCW wrestler, and Awesome joining WCW full time. His first good match was at Slamboree 2000 against Canyon.

Mike Awesome vs. Canyon

This is serious Awesome and not the 70s Guy yet. Awesome put Canyon through a table to set this up. The fans are all distracted by something else to start so Awesome hits a HUGE dive to the floor, drawing an ECW chant. Canyon sends him into the post as there's more energy in this match than the rest of the show combined up to this point. Canyon hits a running front flip dive off the apron to put Awesome down.

Back in and Awesome hits a top rope clothesline for two. Back to the floor and Mike fires off some chair shots to put Chris down. Yes I'm on first name basis with the two dead guys. They fight into the crowd and Awesome keeps the advantage. Back in and we debate the best powerbomb in wrestling with Nash being declared the best. Back to the floor again for about the fourth time and Canyon gets hit with a chair again. They were using "relaxed rules" at this point which meant they were trying to rip off ECW and the WWF formula in every match instead of just the main events like WWF did.

Canyon crotches Mike on the top and hits a reverse neckbreaker for two. Another neckbreaker gets two. The fans are getting into this quickly. Samoan Drop into a front face drop gets two. Canyon tries a powerbomb but gets caught in an Alabama Slam for no cover. There's the regular powerbomb and Canyon lands on his head. FREAKING OW MAN.

Awesome, probably trying to let Canyon figure out if he's alive or not, goes outside and pulls the pads back. Canyon is like screw it and fights back but gets caught by a slingshot shoulder block by Awesome. He loads up the over the top powerbomb but Canyon escapes, only to allow the American to hit a German to the American (Canyon) and outside we go again.

Awesome sets for something and here's Nash for the run-in. The rest of the New Blood and Millionaire's Club come in also and it's thrown out.

Rating: B-. I was liking it but the constant going outside and the stupid ending hurt it a lot. This felt like the main event of Nitro rather than a definitive PPV match. These two had some chemistry together and it was a good match as a result. Keep these two in mind as they'll be back later on to totally ruin the show in the end.

Mike would eventually become That 70s Guy (just go with it) and the Fat Chick Thriller (again just go with it) before earning a US Title shot at New Blood Rising under Canadian Rules. This one still makes my head hurt.

US Title: Mike Awesome vs. Lance Storm

Let's see here. This is in Canada so Storm is the hero. He's the US, Hardcore and Cruiserweight Champion at this point but would give away two of them soon. Now the cool entrance is about the end of the cool aspects of this match. The US Title is the Canadian Title, the Hardcore Title is the Saskatchewan Hardcore International Title (Get it?) and the 100kg and Under Title.

Storm cuts a short promo and might as well be the second coming. Both of these guys left ECW earlier this year. Storm got this, Awesome got the gimmick of That 70s Guy and the Fat Chick Thriller and never won a title in WCW. Storm was just absolutely awesome at this point and this is his big reward for it.

Part of the gimmick Storm had his own rule book and had his own rules. He invokes one of them and says there's going to be a special referee. We immediately eliminate the chance of it being Bret Hart since a HUGE Bret chant breaks out. It's Jacques Rougeau, as in The Mountie. We get the Canadian

National Anthem and Storm could more or less murder a thousand babies and still get cheered at this point.

There's a Juggalo here for no apparent reason. Rougeau is the outside referee and there are two titles held up. Pay no attention to whatever the other one is as it's not mentioned. Awesome dominates early on, hitting a leg drop as a tribute to his far more famous uncle, Hulk Hogan (How many of you knew that one? Awesome's aunt is married to Hogan's brother so they're like step uncle and step nephew or whatever but screw all the technicalities).

We hit the floor and it's table time. Well they are from ECW to be fair. Madden: "This isn't wrestling!" Tony: "Of course it's not!" I still want to know how much annoyance there was in Tony's statement there. Awesome goes up top and just slips off. Well it happens to everyone I guess. Awesome hits a SWEET Liger Bomb to more or less end Storm.

Then I'm not sure what happens as there's a three count but Storm gets his arm up at more or less the exact same time. I'm legit not sure if Storm was supposed to kick out there and just didn't get up in time or if this was part of the upcoming angle. Given the idiocy of this show and the skill of Storm, we'll say it was intentional. Johnson raises Awesome's hand to have the crowd on the verge of rioting.

HOWEVER, according to Canadian Rules, you have to get a 5 count to win a title. Awesome gets an Alabama Slam for three and then hooks a Dragon Sleeper. Storm taps out to lose the title again. Oh you know what's coming. This time it's you can't win by submission. Storm gets two off a suplex as we start one more time. The crowd has gone from white hot to DEAD by the way as they've seen Storm get pinned and tap in like 6 minutes.

Awesome gets a five count off a Frog Splash and I can't believe what I'm watching. Storm has a ten count to get up

after the original five count. So the US Champion has now lost three times in about ten minutes perfectly clean and they've killed one of the hottest crowds I can remember in WCW's history. The table is in the ring and Awesome clearly slips on the same corner (maybe they should be cleaned guys?) and they both crash through a table.

Rougeau says first man up gets the title and he punches Awesome in the jaw to make sure Storm looks inept. The crowd pops fairly well and just to absolutely cap off the idiocy, BRET HART IS HERE. You know, the guy the crowd was BEGGING for? So let me get this straight.

WCW was too STUPID to get that in Canada, where Bret is pretty much the biggest athlete that isn't a hockey player in the history of the country (apparently there was a poll done in 2004 where the Greatest Canadians, as in any Canadian ever and not just athletes were ranked. Bret was #39) and where they had him under contract, that instead of using HIM, they paid the Mountie to come in and get the paycheck for the refereeing job while the fans chanted for BRET. This company deserved to go out of business. The Canadians all hug.

Rating: F-. Seriously, was this supposed to be good or something? Am I supposed to be entertained here? I know Russo doesn't like titles, but if you're going to kill them at least do it in America where you go more than once. This was just completely idiotic and one of the dumbest things I've ever seen.

Awesome would be one of the people brought over in the InVasion and would be the first WCW wrestler to win a match in Madison Square Garden when he interfered in a Hardcore Title match and pinned Rhyno to win the belt. For some reason (Awesome blames politics), he was barely a factor in the whole angle and would job on Jakked and Heat for most of his time in the WWF. After a long stint in All Japan, Awesome would make one final return to the WWE for One Night Stand in 2005 against his old rival Masato

Tanaka.

Mike Awesome vs. Masato Tanaka

Awesome is a guy that is HATED by Styles and ECW for jumping ship and trying to throw the belt in the trash on Nitro. Because you know, no one in ECW ever disrespected a belt or anything like that. Joey says that it's a shame Awesome didn't take his own life on a suicide dive. That's true Joey. He took his own life by hanging himself. As for the match, it's about as intense and stiff as you could ask for.

This was an epic rivalry that went around the world and had them trade the ECW Title. That's the issue here: Awesome is a traitor to ECW but this match is stealing the show. Let the LOUD chair shots begin. I never liked Tanaka's no selling of chair shots. Ok we get it: chair shots hurt a lot. Table time and JBL makes fun of it for which I can't blame him. The jokes about Awesome being wasted in WCW are ridiculously true.

The guy was freaking amazing so we make him the Fat Chick Thrillah and That 70s Guy. And you wonder why they went out of business. The crowd is WAY into this one. Oh look: tables. How original! We get a THIS MATCH RULES chant. And there goes Tanaka over the top rope through a table with a powerbomb. Add in an over the top rope dive onto the concrete and it's over. Very intense stuff.

Rating: B+. Yep, the show has been stolen. These two had some WARS back in the day and this one was no exception at all. Very intense fight rather than a match but whatever. Fun to say the least. There's something to be said about two guys just pounding on each other for ten minutes.

Unfortunately that was about it for Awesome as he would take his own life less than two years later. Awesome was another guy that could fly like he was about 100lbs lighter than he actually was and moves so fast in the

ring that he had to slow it down outside of ECW so people could keep up with him. He's a prime example of someone that WCW had and just didn't know what to do with so they screwed him up completely.

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