

Wrestler of the Day – January 26: Legion of Doom

Today we've got a tag team for wrestler of the day. Actually scratch that. We have THE tag team for wrestler of the day: the Road Warriors.

And no, not Heidenreich. It's just Animal and Hawk.

The team got its start as part of a large stable called the Legion of Doom but soon became a stand alone tag team with the same name. Their first stomping grounds were in Georgia Championship Wrestling which is where they were based when this first match took place, though this is during a visit to Mid-South. Based on the commentary, this comes from some point between July 24, 1983 and October 12, 1983.

Legion of Doom vs. Rick Rood/Art Crews

I think you know the first jobber, but the second is a territory guy who was the winner of Shawn Michaels' first ever match. The Warriors charge the jobbers to start but Rick actually cranks away on the arm to take over early on. The jobbers take over on the arms until Hawk just DESTROYS Crews with hard forearms to the back. Animal comes in for a double clothesline that sends Art to the floor before a powerslam is enough to pin Crews. Not as squashy as I expected but the idea was clear.

The Road Warriors went north to the AWA and quickly won the Tag Titles there. Their squashes were awesome enough that they became faces through pure crowd reaction and they didn't look back for years. Here's one of their title defenses from SuperClash on April 20, 1985.

AWA Tag Titles: Freebirds vs. Road Warriors

The Warriors are defending. This is Hayes/Gordy and they have their faces painted with the Confederate Flag. The champs clear the ring before the bell and are mad over because this is in Chicago. Hawk and Gordy start as Hayes walks around the field with people yelling at him. Hawk pounds on Terry so

Terry heads off to bring in Hayes. Off to Animal as the Birds stall. Ok it's Animal vs. Gordy.

The squashing continues with the Warriors taking their shots at Gordy. Michael comes back in again and gets pounded so much he crawls back to Gordy for a tag. Terry is like uh...not right now. Gordy finally wakes up and goes after the eyes before dodging a charging Hawk to send his shoulder into the post. Hayes comes back in and hits a side suplex for two. Piledriver by Gordy mostly works but Hawk doesn't feel like selling that much.

Hayes goes up but Hawk slams him off the top but manages to tag before Hawk can. That's kind of impressive. Gordy and Hawk collide but there's the hot one to Animal. Hayes stays on the apron as Animal destroys Gordy, getting two off a powerslam. Everything breaks down and even Roberts and Ellering come in. Ellering gets dropped with a chair and Gordy accidentally pops Hayes. Powerslam to Hayes by Animal and a shoulder to Gordy looks to finish but Hayes comes off the middle rope with something around his hand to knock Animal out for the pin and the titles! The place is stunned.

Rating: D+. This one didn't quite work either. The whole match was a mess and the ending was hard to follow due to everything going all nuts. The Warriors were still in the period where they would do nothing but run people over, which ran for about the next six or eight years. Bad match for the most part, but you know what's coming.

Not that it matters though as Verne Gagne comes out and says hold on a minute. He reverses the decision and the Warriors get the titles back.

Soon after this it was off to the big time with the NWA where they entered and made it to the finals of the first ever Jim Crockett Senior Memorial Tag Team Tournament. Here's that final match against Magnum T.A./Ronnie Garvin.

Crockett Cup Finals: Road Warriors vs. Magnum TA/Ronnie Garvin

All faces here. The winners also get a million dollars. Animal and Magnum get things going. We get some surprisingly quick stuff until Magnum takes over with a dropkick. Animal takes him down with a top wristlock and they trade arm work on the mat. Off to Hawk who puts on a chinlock...and they clip this match too. ARE YOU SERIOUS???? The whole show is about one freaking tournament and you give us a total of ONE MATCH THAT ISN'T CLIPPED??? ARE YOU KIDDING ME???

A middle rope splash misses and Garvin gets a small package for two. Off to Magnum who doesn't have as much luck with Animal who stomps away on the US Champion. Off to Animal again and it's chinlock time. Powerslam gets two as Magnum is in trouble. Magnum grabs the belly to belly for two as Hawk saves. Hot tag to Garvin and down he goes almost immediately.

Garvin tries an abdominal stretch on Hawk but punches Hawk instead. The problem with this is he punches Hawk so hard that he breaks his hand. I'm not sure if this is kayfabe or real but it doesn't really matter either way as Animal hits a pretty weak clothesline on Garvin and gets a quick pin for the tournament win and the million bucks.

Rating: D+. Apparently Garvin's hand was broken coming in. Imagine that: Ronnie Garvin does something stupid like HIT A GUY IN THE HEAD WHILE HE HAS A BROKEN HAND. Garvin's team deserves to lose after that. This match was pretty boring and the ending didn't help things at all. Nothing to see here other than the end of a long and boring show.

There's another match that has to be mentioned just due to how famous it is around the time. It's from Starrcade 1986 and it's a scaffold match.

Midnight Express vs. Road Warriors

This is the scaffold match, meaning there's a scaffold about fifteen feet above the ring and you have to knock your opponents off to win. The Express is Bobby Eaton and Dennis Condrey and they have Cornette and Bubba with them. On the other hand we have Hawk and Animal, the Road Warriors. These two were BEASTS who were basically indestructable and insanelly popular.

Condrey thinks about going up to face the Warriors but climbs back down because he's not that crazy. Cornette, who is legitimately terrified of heights, goes on a rant about how this isn't civilized. Dennis and Bobby finally get up top and the punishment begins. The scaffold is maybe three feet wide and there are no railings on it at all so they can barely move up there. There are some railings at either end so at least there's some safety up there.

The Express throws powder in the Warriors' eyes to blind them which is pretty terrifying this high up. Hawk's legs go over the edge but he crawls back up. Animal is laying down with one leg dangling over and Bobby winds up hanging from said leg. He manages to swing back over to the structure and climb back up as this continues. Condrey is cut open and tries to climb down the ladder but he gets rammed into the scaffold for his efforts by Hawk.

Condrey and Hawk get under the scaffold and kick at each other with Condrey trying to monkey bar away. Animal and Bobby join them and a few moments later the Express get kicked down, giving the Road Warriors the win. As someone who is scared of heights, my stomach can now calm down.

Rating: D+. This is a hard one to grade as it's hard to criticize them for moving around so slowly given the fear of potential death involved. There's only so much you can do that high in the air with no safety rails and they did as much as they could have. The Road Warriors would move on to feuding with the Horsemen soon after this.

Post match we get the famous part of the match as Cornette goes up top and runs into Animal. Cornette tries to climb down and winds up hanging from the bottom of the scaffold. He drops down...and Bubba isn't there to catch him. Jim lands on his legs and basically destroys both of them, causing him problems for the rest of his life. Cornette tries to shout to Bubba to carry him to the back because his legs don't work but his legs are so destroyed that he can't get his point across. Animal later said in interviews that it was the funniest thing he's ever seen.

Soon after this the Road Warriors moved onto the highest profile feud of their careers: teaming with Magnum TA and Dusty Rhodes to fight the Horsemen. One of the biggest matches of that feud would be for the World Tag Team Titles against Arn Adnerson and Tully Blanchard in the Warriors' hometown of Chicago at Starrcade 1987.

Tag Titles: Arn Anderson/Tully Blanchard vs. Road Warriors

The Warriors are challenging in their hometown of Chicago. Arn and Hawk start things off with Hawk taking him down via a top wristlock. Anderson is sent to the floor for a staredown with the Warriors' manager Paul Ellering. Off to Tully who is almost immediately sent to the floor. Animal will have none of this stalling though and sends him right back inside. Hawk pounds away even more and hits a dropkick for a quick near fall.

Off to Animal who catches Blanchard coming in off the top in a powerslam

for another two count. Arn comes back in and manages to avoid a charge in the corner, only to have his head taken off by a clothesline from Animal. Blanchard tries to come in but gets punched right in the jaw as well. Both Horsemen try to go after Hawk, only to get clotheslined down for a near fall on Blanchard. Total dominance by the Warriors so far.

Back to Animal for a bearhug plus a right hand from Hawk. Animal drops Tully down and Blanchard goes bailing to the corner. A dropkick to the ribs puts Blanchard down again so he tags in Anderson. Animal has to chase Arn on the floor before coming back inside to gorilla press him down. A press slam on Tully by Hawk is broken up by Arn hitting Hawk in the knee and the Horsemen FINALLY take over.

Tully adds in a chair shot to Hawk's knee on the floor and a DDT gets two for Arn back in the ring. Blanchard's figure four is countered into a small package so Tully pounds on the knee a bit more instead. Arn's spinning toehold is broken up but here's Tully again for the figure four. For some reason he tags in Anderson with Hawk still in the hold, and it's Anderson who gets crotched to allow the hot tag to Animal. Everything breaks down and Tully accidentally knocks the referee to the floor before Hawk throws Anderson the floor. Back in and there's the Doomsday Device on Arn for the pin and the titles.

Rating: C. This took awhile to get going but once the Road Warriors got rolling it got awesome in a hurry. They're such a physical and dominant team that it's almost impossible to not get fired up watching them. The leg work here by the Horsemen was much more interesting than say the arm work by Taylor, as they have the size and ability to make you believe the Warriors were in trouble.

Oh and scratch that title change because Anderson was thrown over the

top, meaning the Warriors are disqualified and the Horsemen keep the belts. Say it with me: Dusty Finish. The fans boo this out of the building and with good reason. Who does this help? The Warriors look inept because they didn't get the win, the Horsemen look like weak champions because they got pinned, and the fans are mad because at STARRCADE we can't change the belts. Just a dumb idea all around.

With nothing else to do and still no NWA World Tag Team Titles, the Warriors turned heel and received a title match against the Midnight Express on October 29, 1988.

Tag Titles: Midnight Express vs. Road Warriors

It's Bobby Eaton/Stan Lane here. The Warriors jump them to start and ram both champions face first into the post. We finally start with Lane firing off all his karate offense to slow down Animal as Hawk just beats the fire out of Eaton on the floor. Lane does everything he can in the ring and we finally get down to Animal starting for the challengers.

Cornette cheats for the champions to give Lane a breather but the Road Warriors easily pound him down to take over. A Hart Attack puts Stan down and Hawk adds a powerslam as Eaton can't even get to his feet. Animal drops a series of elbows as Eaton falls off the apron in agony. A big shoulder block sends Lane flying to the corner and Bobby tags himself in and unloads on Animal in the corner. Animal totally no sells it and clotheslines Eaton's head off for the pin and the titles in less than five minutes.

Rating: C-. If there's a bigger squash than this it must be growing in a field somewhere. This was pure dominance with the Midnights having one quick flurry and nothing more in the entire match. This was about giving the Warriors the titles they had never been able to get before in as easy of a fashion as possible. Total destruction of the Midnights here.

Again the heel turn didn't last long as the Warriors were so dominant that the fans loved their violence. Most of 1989 was spent beating up the Samoan Swat Team and the Skyscrapers so it was off to the WWF in 1990. Their first feud was against Demolition but the closest thing we ever got to a big showdown was in the opening match of the 1990 Survivor Series.

The Warriors vs. The Perfect Team

Ultimate Warrior, Texas Tornado, Legion of Doom

Mr. Perfect, Demolition

I guess this team isn't as Ultimate as last year. This is the three man version of Demolition. Perfect is feuding with Tornado (Kerry Von Erich, the IC Champion) and the LOD is feuding with Demolition after the LOD cost them the titles. Warrior, the world champion, is there because he has nothing else to do. His team is in the back before the match and says they'll win. Actually the name Warriors is appropriate as you have the Ultimate Warrior, the Modern Day Warrior (Von Erich's nickname in WCCW) and the Road Warriors (the LOD's NWA name).

I'll never get why the LOD and Demolition never had a big proper match. They fought on house shows but that's about it. Perfect immediately goes to the apron and lets part of Demolition start. It's Animal vs. Smash first and they fight immediately with Animal taking him to the mat. Animal throws him into Hawk for a right hand and the other Warriors get in a shot as well.

Smash comes back with a powerslam for two and it's off to Perfect. That doesn't last long so here's Smash again, and he walks right into a powerslam. Everything breaks down and the Warriors clear the ring. Tornado comes in to face Smash who is taking a beating in this so far. Off to Ax who has much better luck for about ten seconds. There's the Claw <http://purchasepropecia.net> from Tornado but for some reason Warrior gets the tag and hits a series of awkward looking shoulder blocks before finishing Ax with the splash.

Crush immediately comes in to jump Warrior and take over. Smash comes in to slam Warrior and Crush drops a top rope knee for two. Perfect is freaking out in his trademark over the top style. Warrior gets up a boot in the corner and clotheslines Crush down. Off to Hawk who always looks like he could murder someone in the ring. Perfect tries him out and is immediately slammed down.

Hawk counters a reversal to send Perfect into the corner but Bird Man's

shoulder goes into the post HARD to give the evil ones the advantage. Demolition pounds away on him but Hawk punches right back. A big flying shoulder puts Smash down and Hawk doesn't tag when he has the chance. The top rope clothesline kills Smash and everything breaks down. Hawk kicks the referee and somehow this disqualifies Hawk, Animal, Smash and Crush. We're down to Perfect vs. Warrior/Tornado.

It's going to be Warrior starting the handicap match but Perfect wants Tornado instead. Perfect immediately jumps him and is clotheslined out almost immediately after the jumping. Warrior bangs Perfect's head into Heenan's and sends Bobby into the front row. Tornado charges at Perfect and slams into the post to give Perfect the advantage for a bit. A buckle gets exposed somewhere in there and after Tornado's face goes into it, the Perfectplex makes it one on one.

Perfect tries the Plex again on Warrior which doesn't work at all. Instead he hammers Warrior down and hits a great looking dropkick for two. Having Perfect run things out there for as long as possible is the best idea they've got. Warrior starts grabbing the ropes and shrugging off all the offense from Perfect. A shoulder block and the splash get the final pin.

Rating: D. This was probably the worst Survivor Series match so far in the four years they've been running this show. Not only was the match lopsided from the start, but half of the people in it were gone seven minutes in. Perfect never had a chance and Warrior had no reason to be in this match at all.

The next step for the Warriors was obvious: the Tag Titles with their shot coming against the Nasty Boys at Summerslam 1991.

Tag Titles: Nasty Boys vs. Legion of Doom

The Nasties are defending and this is No Countout/No DQ, making it a street fight in modern terms. The champions are sent to the floor and the fight is on early. Back in the ring Animal hits a quick powerbomb on Knobbs for two followed by Hawk enziguring Sags down. We get down to the stupid tagging part of the street fight with Sags sending Hawk to the floor and hitting him with a bucket of water.

Back in and Knobbs works over Hawk in the corner before Sags sends him into the steps. A back elbow gets two for Knobbs and a top rope version gets the same for Sags. Brian goes up top again but jumps into Hawk's boot, finally allowing for the hot tag off to Animal. Everything breaks down and Sags hits Animal in the back with Jimmy's helmet for two. Hawk steals the helmet and lays out both Nasties, setting up the Doomsday Device on Sags for the pin and the titles.

Rating: D. This SUCKED as the street fight rule was barely used at all. It was little more than a few shots with the helmet when the referee wasn't looking anyway. Hawk and Animal barely broke a sweat out there as they were already talking about the Natural Disasters earlier tonight instead of worrying about winning the belts. This win was a long time coming though.

The reign wouldn't last long as they would drop the titles in an untaped match at a house show in February of 1992. It was clear that Hawk was about to go nuts due to personal issues and Vince wanted to get the belts off of them as fast as they could. After about six months away they would return in the fall, only to be gone again immediately after Summerslam when Hawk walked out.

After a few years in Japan it was back to WCW, where they participated in a Chicago Street Fight at Uncensored 1996 in Tupelo, Mississippi for the Tag Team Titles against one half of the champions Sting and his partner Booker T. Somehow this was the second most confusing match of the show.

Chicago Street Fight; Road Warriors vs. Booker T/Sting

Now say it with me: a Chicago street fight is happening in MISSISSIPPI. The idea here is that if Booker and Sting win here, Harlem Heat gets a title shot. I think the belts are on the line here but it's never made clear, at least not so far. This is Booker's dry run for a singles push, which obviously went well as he won his first TV Title a year and a half later. Yeah the NWO REALLY threw a lot of stuff off.

Naturally it's a brawl to start and they're already on the floor. We go split screen here which is a good idea. Granted

then they have just two separate shots of the same thing and I continue to wonder how they stayed in business as long as they did. Tony must be drunk because he makes a good point, saying that these kinds of matches should have two referees. Aside from pointing out the stupidity of the higher ups with them allowing such an idiotic move, that's very accurate.

Sting and Animal trade low blows on the post because that's very normal. We switch back to the split screen, now complete with a graphic reminding us that this is the Chicago Street Fight. In yet another great moment from Bobby, he says that instead of covering someone that's down, you go through his pockets and look for cash, jewelry, watches, etc. I love Heenan.

The wrestlers can apparently get away with murder, but they can get disqualified. I love wrestling. It's Booker and Animal in the ring and Sting and Hawk, who is also an animal but whatever, with Sting in the aisle. Hawk can throw a freaking dropkick when he has to. That was impressive. Sting gets a chair and hits some absolutely laughably bad shots with it. However, they're divine ones compared to the ones that Animal hits the faces with.

How weird is it that the Road Warriors are the heels in a match? Those shots were just awful though. I think I've seen Rey throw harder ones. Hawk no sells a piledriver. Really? How do you not sell a freaking piledriver? You're dropped on your head for goodness' sake. The stupid stuff continues as we have a chinlock in a street fight. Oh yeah work that chin! Heenan says that Animal or Hawk need to get with their partner and say something to them.

The thing he says takes him 11 seconds to say. It's not really funny, but there's something that's just great about that. They hit the stands for about a second and we have the second instance tonight of the chairs being in big rows for no apparent reason. Why do they insist on using two camera for

the same shot? I love wrestling at times, but this makes my head hurt.

Apparently this is non title, so therefore Sting can't lose his title and can only get hurt, the Road Warriors have nothing to gain, and Booker can get a title shot. Why are the three not named Booker here? Sting and Hawk are in the ring and Booker and Animal are near the cage. They set for the Doomsday Device but Booker makes the save by crochting Animal (who usually doesn't go up top).

This prompts Dusty to say E.T. phone home. I gave up on trying to figure this out a long time ago. Sting hits the fifth low blow in 15 minutes. I wish they would make a reference to Sting and Dusty teaming up to fight the Road Warriors at Starrcade 87. Just as I say that, Bobby asks Dusty what he would do if he were Sting's partner in this case. I wish he would have said that he was and left it at that but no go.

The spinaroonie is known as the whirly bird here. I'd love to see Sting against RVD in a jumping contest. It would be a very interesting challenge. Apparently the fans are standing everywhere. They must be about an average of 4ft tall because they look like they're sitting to me, but then again I'm no professional announcer. Booker hits low blow #6.

Tony, continuing his brilliant career as an announcer, points out that they haven't done anything incredibly extreme and this has really just been as basic as possible. Thanks for pointing out that this isn't as great as it was built up to be and giving us no reason to believe the hype on future PPVs. I think I've finally started figuring out the problem that I have with this commentary team: I don't know what they're saying and it just passes through my head as being fine.

Bobby and Dusty are talking about glomming someone. What the heck does that mean? I guess it means double teaming, but it could mean sharing a turkey sandwich and a white wine for all

I know. I will give them this: they've managed to keep going with the singles and team fighting. That's hard to do but they're pulling it off here.

Off a top rope powerslam, Bobby says Sting landed on his shoulder like Apollo 13. THAT DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE!!! What in the world is that supposed to mean? It's like just random gibberish that sounds good. What the heck does Apollo freaking 13 have to do with this match and how in the world does it relate to a guy landing on his shoulder? Animal follows it up with even more weak chair shots. Uh oh, a weak clothesline hits the post.

The weapons shots here just flat out suck. Hawk just somehow managed to hit Sting with the side of the chair facing Hawk when he swung it. That's hard to do. Sting then leaves his partner alone to go get some plunder (which I figured out means weapons). He comes back with....brooms. Yep, he's got brooms. Even Tony sounds annoyed with this match as we're well past 20 minutes here which is mainly just stupid stuff where they look tired.

Now instead of hitting Hawk with the wooden handle of the broom, he hits him with the straw. Yep, that's what he did. Animal apparently noggared Booker. There's a new language being formed here. Bobby makes a vacuum reference for no apparent reason. They trash Luger some more as it occurs to me that Dusty has fought him at Starrcade as well. Hey WCW: GET NEW TALENT!

Booker apparently walks out with Animal following him so we hit the split screen again. Animal and Booker fight in the back even more with Luger there. Animal accidentally hits Luger and knocks him into some trash, which ticks him off of course. With a Viking like yell he runs at Animal and takes him out. Stevie Ray, Booker's partner, shows up and along with Jimmy Hart they beat the tar out of Animal and tie him to a post.

In the ring, Hawk is beating the crap out of Sting which is odd to see indeed. Sting goes into his insane offense that works better than anything else. Booker is back now as it's all faces here. Stevie runs out to hit another crap chair shot to end this. Right after the pin we cut to Animal who is screaming about nothing in particular other than having his face kicked in, being taped to a pole and being handcuffed. I love wrestling!

Rating: D+. This is just hard to grade. The main problem is simple: this went thirty minutes. You could cut at least 15 of that out and this is a B- or so. There's just way too many dead spots though where it's just random punches and kicking that get very boring. The street fight aspect of this was awful with only a few chair shots and the broom being in there to do anything at all. Also, it's not even for the titles. Put Booker in there as a substitute partner. That would have at least given us something close to a reason to care. The brawling was ok, but that's overshadowed by the pure dullness of about 15 minutes of this.

The Road Warriors would make it back to the WWF for one last run in 1997, staying for about a year and winning the Tag Titles one more time. The magic was gone though and they were more or less living off nostalgia so I'll skip over this period. There would however be one final appearance for the team on the big stage as a total surprise. From the May 12, 2003 episode of Monday Night Raw.

Raw Tag Titles: Kane/Rob Van Dam vs. Legion of Doom

Animal and RVD get things going with Animal stomping away in the corner, only to be kicked in the face to put him down. Off to Hawk who gets kicked as well before hitting his neckbreaker, only to get kicked in the face again. Kane gets the tag and speeds things up with clotheslines to both Doomers. The top rope clothesline drops Hawk but they break up a double chokeslam, only to have RVD kick Animal down and hit Rolling Thunder for two. Animal comes back with a powerbomb to Van Dam but he ducks the clothesline on the Doomsday Device. The chokeslam and Five Star

are enough to pin Hawk and retain the titles.

Rating: D+. The match was little more than a squash for the champions but it was nice to see Hawk out there one last time as his old self instead of the shell of a shell that he would become. It's still not a good match or anything but it wasn't supposed to be anything close to one.

Hawk would pass away about six months after this but from every report I've seen, he was a changed man when it happened.

The idea I was trying to present here was dominance. In their prime, the Road Warriors simply were not going to lose a fair fight. The NWA and AWA Tag Title reigns came to an end due to cheating and the first WWF reign was never allowed to see the light of day. They're a great example of what can happen when a team is protected. They weren't a great in ring team but they didn't need to do anything other than run people over and destroy them with power moves. It worked for the better part of 20 years in every promotion they worked in so there must have been something to it.

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