

Wrestler of the Day – February 11: Ken Shamrock

We'll shift over towards MMA today with Ken Shamrock.

Shamrock of course made his name in the world of mixed martial arts before joining the WWF in 1997. He had wrestled in some small indies in the early 90s but it's not the kind of stuff that you can easily find video from. After refereeing the submission match at Wrestlemania 13, Shamrock had his first major match against Vader at In Your House 15.

Vader vs. Ken Shamrock

This is submission or knockout only. Feeling out process to start until Shamrock starts firing off some kicks to the legs. A kimura (standing armbar) sends Vader running to the ropes. More kicks to the legs have Vader in trouble and an attempted suplex sends him out to the floor. Back in and Vader stops trying to be smart and just pounds away at the ribs, only to have Shamrock easily German suplex him down. Some headbutts get Vader nowhere as Shamrock tries an ankle lock, his signature move in the UFC.

More kicks tot he legs and a spinning kick to the face have Vader staggered as this is getting repetitive. Vader throws Shamrock around and hits a HARD clothesline to take over. The big man lays on Shamrock's arm but it doesn't work that well since he's probably never used a submission hold other than a bearhug. Shamrock counters into a kind of triangle choke but Vader lifts him up and drops him down to escape. Vader lifts him up and just casually drops him over the top, sending Shamrock down in a great looking crash.

Ken is sent face first into the steps and Vader's nose is bleeding. Back

in and Vader pounds away in the corner as this needs to wrap up soon. Vader lays on Shamrock's legs and pulls on the ankle a bit until the fans finally start caring about the match. Shamrock is sent into the corner for a big beatdown and gets the same treatment in another corner. Vader's moonsault mostly hits even though it wasn't supposed to due to Shamrock not rolling away fast enough. Now it's Shamrock pounding away in the corner but another HARD right hand puts him down. Not that it matters though as Ken trips Vader and wins with a quick ankle lock.

Rating: D. This is a hard one to grade because the match itself was horrible but they were trying something very different out there. Shamrock would get WAY better with more ring time but his early days weren't pretty at all. Granted having Vader in there wasn't the best idea in the world given how much of a hothead he could be.

Shamrock continued climbing the ranks and getting ring time, soon earning a WWF Title shot on PPV at In Your House #19.

WWF World Title: Shawn Michaels vs. Ken Shamrock

Shawn is WWF and European Champion here just because he wanted to be, though that would change soon on Raw. Shawn throws some right hands to start but gets his head kicked off, sending Michaels out to the floor. Back in and Shawn stalls a lot before being launched hard into the corner. A backdrop puts Shawn down and another whip sends him out to the floor. Chyna tries to distract Ken but he catches Shawn sneaking in with a right hand, sending Shawn's water flying out of his mouth.

Shawn gets him into the corner and pounds away but Shamrock will have none of it and sends Shawn to the floor again. This match still hasn't had a chance to get going and it's getting a bit annoying. Shawn rakes Shamrock's eyes and pounds away, only to have his sunset flip blocked. The challenger sends him into the corner to crotch Shawn on the top rope.

Shawn escapes the belly to belly suplex and sends Shamrock to the floor for some punishment from HHH.

A plancha from the ring takes Shamrock down again but a baseball slide misses, allowing Shamrock to pound away with lefts and rights. HHH takes a shot as well but Chyna sends Ken into the post to put him down. Shawn distracts the referee so DX can pound away even more before sending Shamrock back inside. Michaels goes after Ken's back with a series of elbows, including one from the middle rope. A dropkick gets two and Shawn chokes away in the corner. The admonishment allows HHH to get in even more cheap shots.

Shamrock rolls through a Shawn cross body for two and Michaels is scared. A rake to the eyes puts Shamrock down again and we hit the chinlock. It's off to a sleeper instead as Shawn calls some very loud spots. The hold stays on for a good while until Shamrock powers his way back up. Ken pounds away and scores with a powerslam, putting Michaels in big trouble. A standing hurricanrana allows Shamrock to pound away even more before countering a sunset flip into a rollup for two.

Shawn comes back with a quick hot shot to slow Ken down but his hurricanrana is countered into a powerbomb for a very close two. HHH and Chyna pull Shamrock to the floor again and beat him down (the referee didn't think anything of Shamrock being down when Shawn never touched him), setting up Shawn's top rope elbow for no cover. Sweet Chin Music is countered into the belly to belly suplex but DX comes in for the disqualification before the ankle lock can go on.

Rating: C+. The match got better once they got down to business but the ending hurt it a lot. Shamrock never even got to put on the ankle lock to give the fans a sweat which should have been the most obvious spot of the

match. This wasn't terrible, but it could have been better if they planned the match better.

Soon after it was time for a feud with Rock over the Intercontinental Title but Ken's temper got the better of him again as he won the title but had the win overturned due to not letting go of the ankle lock. The two would meet again though, in the finals of the 1998 King of the Ring.

King of the Ring Finals: Ken Shamrock vs. Rock

HHH is on commentary here and rants about how he hates Rock here as you likely guessed as it's sometime between the beginning of their careers and the present. Shamrock is in his zone as HHH is far less obnoxious than he is now. Lawler doesn't like Rock for some reason. Rock is still having the name Maivia thrown around. Oddly enough, Chyna does the Spanish commentary. That's rather cool.

HHH says this is a family show. What the heck isn't a family show then? Rock has the character and personality down but he doesn't have the in ring stuff down yet. HHH spits water in Rock's face to tick him off but Shamrock gets the advantage because of it. HHH threatens Rock for later. Two months from now, they certainly would in the awesome ladder match at Summerslam. Shamrock's leg is allegedly hurt but he's showing no signs of it.

HHH makes me stop the match by saying it doesn't matter who you suck up to but rather who can go in the ring. Note that he hadn't married Stephanie yet, but that's just absolutely hilarious. Rock gets the People's Elbow. I haven't talked about the match much, but HHH is far more interesting than the in ring stuff. It's not bad, but you can tell that things aren't really being focused on these matches as they're saving for the two main events.

That would likely be the best thing in the long run. Ross says that the handicap that Lawler refereed earlier in the night set the business back 20 years. That would work as Ross is 20

years behind us anyway. We get a double count as Ross suggests that would mean overtime, which would mean the count out means nothing at all since there has to be a winner. Rock counters a rana into a hot shot which was a cool looking spot. Just after that though Shamrock hooks the ankle for the tap out and the crown. We hear about how tough he is for the 100th time tonight.

Rating: B-. This wasn't that bad. HHH was hilarious as the incredibly tough sounding guy. They had a good match here but Shamrock should have won. Rock was already the IC Champion so that's fine. I don't think Rock has ever beaten Shamrock clean actually. This wasn't great or anything, but it did what it was supposed to do.

Now that he was the king, Shamrock entered into a feud with a former King of the Ring: Owen Hart. Owen was being trained by Shamrock's former UFC opponent Dan Severn. This led to a Dungeon Match in Owen Hart's father's basement at In Your House 23. Seriously.

Ken Shamrock vs. Owen Hart

There isn't much of a backstory here other than they've both won King of the Ring and Owen challenged Shamrock to a fight. This is a submission match in Stu Hart's basement, more commonly known as the Dungeon. Shamrock's entrance is through a door from what looks like the kitchen, giving this a very low rent feel but in a good way. Dan Severn, former UFC Champion and rival of Shamrock (though he doesn't like Owen either) is referee.

Owen takes him down to start but Shamrock reverses and pounds away with right hands. Shamrock throws him around and slams Owen against the wall, only to be kicked low and then in the face. Owen rams him head first into the wooden wall before suplexing him down. Ken reverses and slams Owen's head into the wall but Hart grabs a water pipe to pull himself up for a

hurricanrana. Owen swings a dumbbell at Ken's head but gets kicked back into the corner. Ken Irish whips him into the wall and tries the same hurricanrana using the water pipe but Owen powerbombs him down.

In a spot you don't see that often, Owen lifts him and rams Shamrock's head through the ceiling to set up the Sharpshooter. Ken rolls through but can't hook the ankle lock. Instead he fires off a kick which accidentally takes out Severn, allowing Owen to hit Shamrock with a dumbbell to knock him cold. Owen puts on a kind of armbar and slaps Shamrock's hand on the mat for a submission with Severn waking up in time to see it, giving Hart the win.

Rating: C+. This was different to put it best and in this case it worked. The match was kind of a hybrid between MMA and a stiff wrestling match and it came off pretty well. MMA hadn't hit the mainstream yet so this wasn't something most people had seen before. It was very clear that this was pre-taped and edited due to the people being in slightly different places after some camera cuts but that's not the worst thing in the world.

The strange gimmick matches between the two of them would continue at Summerslam 1998 in a Lion's Den match, which is similar to a UFC fight except with wrestling rules.

Owen Hart vs. Ken Shamrock

This is in a theater adjacent to MSG. You win by submission or knockout I believe but JR isn't really clear on it. It's a cool visual if nothing else. Shamrock rams him into the cage before taking him down to the mat where we start trading submissions. Ken pounds away at the head and suplexes Owen down before choking away. Owen hits a legal low blow to escape but Shamrock clotheslines him down with ease. I think that passes the point of logical no selling.

Shamrock chokes Owen with his shirt before taking him down with an easy

throw. Owen finally realizes he can't go toe to toe with Ken and rams him face first into the cage. Hart pounds away against the cage and lays Shamrock out with an enziguri. A hot shot into the cage sets up a backbreaker but Shamrock backdrops out of a piledriver. Another kick to Ken's head changes control again but Shamrock wins a quick slugout. He runs up the cage for a back elbow then kicks Owen in the face.

Hart comes right back with a powerslam and a belly to belly sets up the Sharpshooter. In an awesome counter, Shamrock crawls over to the cage and pulls himself up the wall to escape the hold. A tornado DDT off the wall puts Owen down and a spinwheel kick does the same. Owen sends him into the cage and tries a dragon sleeper but Shamrock walks up the cage to backflip out and the ankle lock gets the submission.

Rating: B. This was different than your usual wrestling match but more importantly it was fun. These two beat the tar out of each other and the whole thing worked very well. Notice the main difference here than what you would get today: you never heard the letters UFC here, meaning there's nothing to compare it to, making this match seem more impressive. Today you would hear UFC and Ultimate Fighting dropped every two seconds and it would just make you want to watch a UFC show.

Rock and Shamrock still weren't through as they would meet again at In Your House 24 in a triple threat cage match along with Mankind for the #1 contendership.

Mankind vs. The Rock vs. Ken Shamrock

You can win by pinfall, submission or escape. Rock gets a HUGE reaction when his music hits. Mankind sits in the corner while the old rivals slug it out, only to try to sneak out the door in a smart move. Rock makes the save but Mankind punches both guys down into corners. A clothesline from Rock puts Mankind down but Shamrock keeps him from escaping and takes over for the first time. He pounds Rock down with forearms before putting Mankind in an abdominal stretch, only to have Rock sneak up and put Shamrock in an abdominal stretch at the same time.

Shamrock flips Rock out of the hold but gets flipped down by Mankind to get us to a standoff. Rock suggests to team up with Mankind to take out Shamrock but jumps the gullible Mankind to take over. Shamrock and Rock get in a fight and Mankind tries to escape again, only to be pulled down and sent into the cage. Shamrock can't get out either despite trying twice in a row. Now it's Rock and Mankind stomping Ken down at the same time and choking him on the middle rope.

Ken is sent face first into the cage as the double beating continues. Mankind is very excited that the two of them work well together so Rock punches him in the face and stomps him down in the corner. Now it's Rock and Shamrock double teaming Mankind as JR says this is a preview of Undertaker and Kane double teaming Austin. Shamrock puts the ankle lock on Mankind, earning him a right hand to the back of the head. We get the only remaining combination for a mini alliance as Rock is double teamed, much to the annoyance of the crowd.

A double suplex and a double backdrop put Rock down but he sends Shamrock into the cage and clotheslines Mankind down. Rock DDTs Mankind and hits the floatover DDT to set up the People's Elbow on Shamrock, but plants Mankind next to him for a double People's Elbow. The place goes NUTS and starts a Rock chant, only to have Shamrock stop an escape attempt. Rock comes back with a low blow on Ken and the Rock Bottom to Mankind for two as Shamrock makes the save.

The fans are all over Ken now as Lawler calls Canada a strange place. Rock punches Shamrock down into the corner but walks into the belly to belly suplex which sets up the ankle lock. This time it's Mankind making a save and going up the cage, only to have Rock make the save. Mankind's body is out of the cage but Rock grabs him by the head to make a save.

They're both sitting on top of the cage but Shamrock pulls the Rock back inside. Mankind is left alone up there but climbs to the top to try a flying elbow, only to have Rock move and send Mankind crashing down to the mat. Everyone is down with Shamrock crawling to the door but Mankind makes the save. Shamrock finds a chair while his arms are outside though and drags it inside. He misses Mankind though and gets caught in a double arm DDT for no cover. Mankind blasts Ken in the head with the chair before climbing the cage, but Rock crawls over and pins Shamrock to win the match and title shot.

Rating: B+. Really fun match here with the match having a little bit of everything to go around. Mankind diving off the cage was expected but still looked great. That double People's Elbow was awesome and the fans are clearly loving Rock right now. It was entertaining and violent while still being fun. What more can you ask for?

It was finally time for some gold for Shamrock as he entered a one night tournament for the Intercontinental Title, vacated due to a HHH knee injury. Here's the final against X-Pac.

Intercontinental Title: Ken Shamrock vs. X-Pac

HHH is on commentary. Pac can barely move but keeps fighting as much as he can. Shamrock stays on the neck including a dragon sleeper while Shamrock is on the floor and Pac is on mat. X-Pac comes back with a pair of spin kicks but he can't follow up on the cover. There's the Bronco Buster but again he can't follow up. There's the ankle lock but we get a rope break. The hold goes on again and this time it's over, giving the title to Shamrock.

Rating: D. The problem again here, and this isn't their fault, is that having about four minutes just isn't enough. The idea here was that with Pac being so hurt the match wasn't entirely fair, but Shamrock will take it because he's becoming evil. For his three matches, Shamrock only wrestled less than fifteen minutes. That's not a bad night's work.

After this Shamrock joined the Corporation and was thrown back and forth in all the twists and turns that resulted from that far too complicated story. We'll continue the strange gimmicks with Shamrock vs. another martial arts guy in the form of Steve Blackman from Fully Loaded 1999.

Ken Shamrock vs. Steve Blackman

Of course it's not traditional. We're in the parking lot and they're in a ring of cars. Various people are sitting on the hoods and smacking them in rhythm and I'm getting images of Freaks. Maybe 5 people will get that. They get their own entrance music for this. Think of Cena vs. Eddie from Smackdown one night. Again, it's unsanctioned but they use WWF music and a WWF referee.

Should be noted that the newest of these cars might be ten years old. And they're already outside the circle. I feel like I'm in kindergarten or something. Yep it's boring already. Blackman gets a chain from nowhere. Mabel and Slaughter are there in case you're wondering for some odd reason. STOP THE FREAKING HONKING! Garbage can is brought in. Shamrock wraps the chain around his fist and a punch or 8 ends this. Oh ok the choke with the chain ends it.

Rating: N/A. Not a match or anything like that. Very short though so nothing unbearable or anything like that.

That would be about it for Shamrock in the WWF as he would head back to the UFC soon after. A few years after leaving, Shamrock joined up with the newly formed TNA and won its world title at their first show. He defended it against the man he defeated for the title, Malice, at their third PPV.

NWA World Title: Ken Shamrock vs. Malice

Malice is more famous as The Wall in WCW. I probably should have mentioned that earlier. Shamrock is all banged up but he comes in anyway, only to get beaten down almost immediately. Shamrock gets knocked down to the floor and Malice stomps him against the railing. Back in and Shamrock gets draped over the top rope and Malice hammers away. Ken grabs the arm

into a quick armbar but Malice powers him right back down.

Malice sends him to the floor and puts on a dragon sleeper which is quickly broken. As they're coming back in Shamrock grabs a bad ankle lock but Malice makes the rope. A pair of release belly to back suplexes put Shamrock down but a regular suplex is blocked. Shamrock snaps off a suplex of his own and the belly to belly out of nowhere retains the title.

Rating: D. Malice looked good here but the ending sucked. It basically cut the legs out from under Malice because all of that offense he put in couldn't slow the champ down and then a pair of suplexes are enough for a pin? I didn't like this for the most part and it didn't do anyone any favors at all. This would be the end of Malice's time around the title.

Somehow this is as good as it gets for Shamrock in TNA.

Ken Shamrock was very successful given that he only had about two and a half years of full time competition in top level pro wrestling. He eventually reached his peak as the MMA cyborg that was sent out to hurt people for whoever he was working for at the time. That's not a bad peak to reach and he had a nice career as a result.

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