

Wrestler of the Day – March 31: Jimmy Snuka

Today it's Super Super Superfly Jimmy Snuka.

Snuka got started in 1969 but stuff from that era is very hard to find. Therefore we'll jump ahead ten years to the NWA in 1979 where Jimmy and Paul Orndorff are World Tag Team Champions.

Jimmy Snuka/Paul Orndorff vs. Frank Monte/Brute Bernard

Non-title as Jimmy starts with Monte. Jimmy runs him down and nips up after a hiptoss. A shoulder puts Monte down as well so it's off to the bigger Bernard. Orndorff comes in and the commentator has the most complete profile I've ever seen, including Orndorff's hometown, height, weight, astrological sign, favorite food, favorite sport other than wrestling (boxing), football career and hobbies. Jimmy comes back in and we hear an abbreviated profile as the non-champions take over. Snuka fights up and falls into the tag to Orndorff for some house cleaning. Back to Snuka for a slam and the Splash for the pin.

Rating: D+. Not much to see here but that announcer had done his research. I mean....ASTROLOGICAL SIGNS? Jim Ross would think this was going too in depth. It's so strange to see Snuka and Orndorff as young guys, even though Snuka was a seasoned veteran around this time.

It was soon off to the WWF where Snuka would become a big deal almost immediately. Here's Jimmy challenging for the Intercontinental Title in Philadelphia on May 22, 1982.

Intercontinental Title: Pedro Morales vs. Jimmy Snuka

Snuka has only been around for a few months at this point but

the fans are loving him, despite him being a heel. The announcers aren't sure what to do with him because they know he's popular but he's supposed to be the evil savage. He has a thing for flowers apparently. Snuka wrestles barefoot which is another thing that made him different. The fans here are split which is a weird sight.

They fight over a top wristlock to start and Snuka complains of a hair pull. Snuka takes it to the mat with arm control and Dick Worhle is the referee. He died a few days ago so that's kind of sad to see. Now Snuka pulls the hair to keep the advantage. See how easy a heel move that is? Such little things like that one are just lost in modern wrestling.

Snuka runs him over and headbutts Pedro down as the fans applaud. Now keep in mind: Pedro is a very popular guy. He held the IC Title forever and was a former world champion. However, Snuka was a totally different kind of guy and the fans, especially the Philly crazy people, took notice and loved him. Pedro is in trouble and gets knocked to the floor by a forearm. All Snuka so far.

Out to the floor and Pedro goes into the apron. Back in and Pedro is almost knocked right back out. Off to a chinlock for a few moments and Pedro FINALLY gets up. He hits his first decent offense of the match in the form of a backdrop but Snuka takes him right back down again. A middle rope headbutt half kills Pedro and you would think that Snuka was the top guy in the company based on the fans' reactions.

That only gets two though and Snuka has a headache from the headbutt. Pedro grabs the face and works it over (that's not something I'm used to typing) and starts his comeback. He hits his big left and Jimmy looks like he's dancing. Out to the floor and Snuka tastes the steel. A BIG left hand sends Snuka flying into the ropes. Snuka rakes the eyes which doesn't really do much good. Pedro hits a knee to the chin and then shoves the referee because of that firey Latin temper of him.

Now Pedro throws him to the floor and it's a LAME DQ.

Rating: C+. Well it wasn't a classic or anything as Pedro was way too fond of just throwing the left hand but the crowd was very energetic for this as they were both very popular guys. Notice that the match is very similar to the rest of them but the names are bigger. There wasn't much variety in this era and it shows badly at times.

Pedro throws the referee down again and again. Snuka nails Worhle and the brawl continues. Out to the floor and Snuka goes into the post. They KEEP FIGHTING and Snuka headbutts both Morales and the referee at the same time. Snuka finally leaves and the fans aren't pleased with Pedro. Cool brawl though. Morales is mad about the brawl and says bring Jimmy on again anytime.

Then there's this, from October 17, 1983 in MSG. You may have heard of it.

Intercontinental Title: Don Muraco vs. Jimmy Snuka

This is in a cage. Sound familiar? You can only win by escape, making this a REAL cage match. A quick slugout is won by Snuka but Muraco pops back up. Snuka chops away as the beating begins. Don tries for the door but Snuka will have none of that. Muraco manages to slingshot him into the cage and Jimmy is busted early. Snuka gets a knee up and climbs the cage, only to come back down and pound away on Muraco some more.

Don manages a slam and goes for the door but Jimmy makes a save, only to take a low blow. Snuka pops up and chops Don's head open, followed by a middle rope headbutt. He stands Muraco up, and in a semi-famous ending, hits a flying headbutt which knocks Muraco into the door, knocking it open so that the unconscious Muraco can fall out to keep the title.

Rating: D+. The match was intense while it lasted, but the whole thing only runs about seven minutes. There's nothing of

note here at all other than the ending which is pretty creative. I don't remember a shorter cage match off the top of my head, which is something I think a lot of people forget. I think people think this was a big and epic brawl but it's really Snuka killing him and then the ending with a run time of 6:46. That's not much.

Post match Jimmy snaps and throws Muraco back inside. He suplexes Muraco down and goes to the corner. He climbs to the top rope but then goes a step further to the top of the cage, and in the most famous scene in wrestling until Hogan vs. Andre, jumps off the top of the cage with the Superfly Splash, completely crushing Muraco. That still looks great today, and some credit needs to go to Muraco. He was starting to sit up when Jimmy hits him, but after the Splash Muraco is DEAD.

Mick Foley, Sandman, Tommy Dreamer and Bubba Ray Dudley were in attendance that night and all have said this was what made them want to be a wrestler. I can easily see how that would be the case, as there was nothing like this beforehand. Snuka was flying through the air and crushed Muraco, which still looks incredible today. It's stuff like that which you can only see in wrestling, which is what makes it great.

For some reason on the replays they keep stopping it right before the splash hits.

One of Snuka's best known moments is being Hulk Hogan/Mr. T.'s second in the main event of the first Wrestlemania. That show was the followup to War to Settle the Score, so here's Jimmy's match from that show.

Jimmy Snuka vs. Bob Orton

This is a precursor to Heroes of Wrestling. Snuka is roided out of his mind here. This is an offshoot of Piper vs. Snuka. BIG pop for Snuka. Snuka sends him in and almost puts Orton to the floor with the force of it. Amazing how much more into this the crowd is with someone they actually, you know, CARE

ABOUT.

We get a headlock from Jimmy as they're feeling each other out here. Snuka does the double leap frog that he was kind of famous for as the speed is way up here. Back to the headlock but this time on the mat. We get one of my favorite stupid lines ever from Gorilla: "This is a main event in any arena in the world." You know, except for here where it isn't the main event.

Orton hits the floor for a bit of air. I guess there wasn't enough air elsewhere in the ring. Atomic drop takes Jimmy down as I guess his head wasn't as hard as his balls. Wait scratch those balls and replace it with a head and put balls where head was. Yeah that should do it. Orton misses a top rope splash which he landed on his feet in anyway. Jimmy unleashes the martial arts of grunting and Orton is reeling.

It's one sided now with Jimmy fully in control as he hits a backbreaker and heads to the corner. A headbutt (no splash???) misses and Orton gets out of the way. Orton charges at Snuka in the corner and hits his arm on the post, hurting his...HOLY GOODNESS IT'S THE ARM INJURY!!! This is easily the most famous injury in wrestling history, not healing for over two years. According to Orton it was legit hurt for that long and they just made it a gimmick, but I'm not sure I buy that. A sunset flip ends Orton just a few seconds later.

Rating: C+. Much better than anything we've seen so far tonight but still nothing classic. Great bit of history here though with that injury which I never realized happened here. These two were joined at the hip forever and luckily the matches were at least pretty good more often than not. Decent match and a breath of air for the most part.

You can't have Orton without Piper, so here's a match from MSG in August of 1984. This is fallout from the famous coconut smash.

Roddy Piper vs. Jimmy Snuka

August 25, 1984 in the Garden again. Snuka starts off with chops and a headbutt. Piper is begging off as is the custom to start a grudge match like this in the 80s. Piper tries a headbutt of his own and when that doesn't work he thumbs Snuka in the eyes. Jimmy grabs a sleeper and Piper is apparently trying to shimmy his way out of it. They go to the floor with the hold still on.

Piper, more in his element now, is able to break the hold on the floor. Jimmy sends him into the post and is busted open. Jimmy "goes bananas" according to Gorilla, which is a very poor choice of words given what started this feud. Snuka hammers away and hits the headbutt but the top rope cross body is countered into a hot shot and falls to the floor for a countout. Again, they keep the feud going with a non-conclusive ending. Old school booking 101.

Rating: B-. Solid brawl here as you could feel the hatred. This was a house show match though so the ending is understandable. The feud between these guys was great and I'm sure it would be blown off at another house show just like this one. I love old school booking. It's so much different than today's. Actually it's not so different but house shows were the life blood of the company back then.

Where would we be without some Hogan? From May 15, 1985 in Boston.

Hulk Hogan/Jimmy Snuka vs. Don Muraco/Bob Orton

In Boston which means a hot crowd. Hogan is champion (duh) and Jimmy is probably the second most popular guy in the company. More Mania fallout stuff here. Big brawl to start and the good guys clear the ring. Snuka and Orton officially start and Bob gets his cast beaten on. Well that's a very slow healing injury after all. They work on the arm for awhile with Hogan even coming in off the middle rope with a shot.

The arm hits the post and at this point it's still a fresh injury, only having been broken for a month or so. Back to Snuka and the beating continues. The Human Banana comes back in and Orton can't get anything going. Big atomic drop has Orton in trouble but he manages to trip Hogan to bring in Muraco. Gee Hogan went down quickly there. Clipped to Orton hitting a nice delayed vertical on Hogan.

Back to Muraco with some nice heel double teaming. They collide and there's the hot tag to Snuka. The camera cuts to a shot of the crowd and a kid pops up right in front of the camera like in a horror movie. Fuji gets up on the apron for a distraction and Orton hits Snuka with the cast. Hogan takes a shot too and Snuka is busted. OH MAN is he cut. Hogan goes into the post on the floor and we're clipped to more beating on Snuka. He gets a shot in though and it's off to Hogan finally. Orton pops him with the cast almost immediately and it gets thrown out.

Rating: C+. I liked this one a lot and I'd have loved to see the full version of it. That and a decisive ending instead of the DQ but whatever. This was Hogan 101 back in the day: find some guy to tag with, find a pair of heels, and watch the guy get bigger than he was going to be able to get on his own. They're trying that with Cena and Ryder at the moment, but it's not working so well because Ryder looks like a helpless chick (remember Cena holding him?) in the whole thing.

Snuka would leave the WWF in August of 1985 and show up in the AWA in 1986. Here's a tag match from later in that year against Snuka's biggest rival: Colonel DeBeers.

Doug Somers/Colonel DeBeers/Larry Zbyszko vs. Curt Hennig/Greg Gagne/Jimmy Snuka

Larry has blonde hair here and it looks weird as all goodness. This is back in Vegas for no apparent reason and is billed as the main event. Gange is the son of the owner and completely

and utterly crap. He was given a title made for him and he was literally one of only two people to hold it until the company folded. The heels have Sherri Martel with them here and she's listed as Women's Champion so this is after June 28.

DeBeers says something stunning as he says he won't wrestle Snuka as he's not 100% white. Holy goodness indeed. He's apparently replacing some rookie named Scott Hall. I love seeing random names like that pop up. And before any moron says something, yes I know Hall wrestled for a long time in the AWA. Larry Hennig, Curt's dad, is on commentary with the other two. Larry (Zbyszko is the only one I'll refer to for the rest of this match) stalls like he always does and the announcers make fun of him for it. Yeah it's the same show as earlier as the same seats are still empty.

Larry has mad heat on him and the crowd tells him that he sucks. The Colonel comes in and refuses to fight Snuka. He's from South Africa where apartheid was still going on. He actually has curled mustache and twirls it. I like this guy. The twirler is beating on Snuka while he's tied up as we return from a commercial. He's doing the traditional cowardly heel thing as he'll only fight when it's easy.

Hennig is the top face in the company only after Bockwinkel and would soon win the title from him, holding it for about a year. This is more or less completely lacking any kind of flow as it's a mess if I've ever seen one. Gagne is getting the heck beaten out of him and Hennig keeps getting tags that the referee doesn't see. Hennig comes in and cleans house. You might even say he's perfect at it. A missile dropkick on Somers gets the pin for the faces. DeBeers jumps Snuka and like an idiot goes for the head. If you're going to be a racist, know your stereotypes.

Rating: D+. Again just kind of a mess but I'm assuming there's a story here as there would be little reason to have this as the main event otherwise. Hennig was a god in the AWA at this

time and this was no exception at all. He looked dominant and that was why this match happened.

Snuka would head back to the WWF in the late 80s and appear at the 1990 Survivor Series.

The Vipers vs. The Visionaries

Jake Roberts, Rockers, Jimmy Snuka

Rick Martel, Warlord, Power and Glory

Power and Gloy are Hercules and Paul Roma. This is built around Martel vs. Roberts, which is based on Martel blinding Jake with cologne and Jake not having full vision yet. This was a BIG feud which they screwed up with a horrible match at Wrestlemania. It wasn't that the wrestling was bad, but that it was a blindfold match and they spent about 2 minutes in contact with each other.

Marty and Warlord start as Piper is singing I Am The Walrus. Warlord powers Marty around but misses a charge in the corner. For those of you unfamiliar with Warlord, imagine Chris Masters but paler, bald, and even dumber. Both Rockers try to outmaneuver him but it just results in bringing in Martel. Shawn handles him with ease and brings in Jake, causing Martel to scamper away.

It's Roma instead and Jake picks him apart like he's not even there. He works on Roma's arm and brings in Snuka to keep it up, but the afro apparently weighs down Snuka's brain to the point where he can't maintain a wristlock. Off to Hercules who gets chopped down so it's off to Warlord instead. Snuka tries his stuff but when that gets nowhere it's off to Marty. Jannetty tries his speed stuff but jumps into a great looking powerslam for the pin.

Off to Shawn whose leapfrog is caught but he rana Warlord down instead. Jake comes in and the fans wants a DDT. A bunch of clotheslines take Warlord down and it's back to Shawn. Roma

comes in with an elbow drop to the back of the head as Gorilla talks anatomy. Warlord comes in and backdrops Shawn before tagging out to Herc. Martel comes in just as fast and drops a knee for two. Roma sends Shawn into the corner and Shawn of course sells it like he's dead. Martel's shoulder hits the post and here's Snuka again.

A flying headbutt to the standing Martel gets two, but Rick grabs a small package for the pin out of nowhere. Jake comes in again and Martel immediately runs and brings in Hercules. Roberts is getting frustrated because he can't get his hands on Martel, but he still manages a knee lift and a failed DDT attempt. Jake starts pounding away on Herc and Martel clotheslines him down out of nowhere.

Roma comes in for some stomping but he misses a middle rope punch. There's the hot tag to Shawn who suplexes Roma down and hits a middle rope elbow for two. Shawn does what he can but Hercules comes in off a blind tag and pounds away even more. Power and Glory hook up the Powerplex (superplex from Herc immediately followed by a top rope splash from Roma) eliminates Shawn and it's 4-1. It's Hercules in first but Jake is in trouble. Warlord comes in with a bearhug but Jake escapes and DDTs him out of nowhere. Jake says screw it and gets the snake out. He chases Martel to the back for the countout loss.

Rating: D+. There wasn't much to see here but other than Jake vs. Martel, there was nothing here at all. To the best of my knowledge, Warlord and Snuka never interacted at all before or after this so they were just tacked on. The Rockers and Power and Glory had fought at Summerslam but that's about it. The Visionaries are the first ever team to survive intact.

Now out of big time wrestling, Snuka would hit the indies, including a startup company called Eastern Championship Wrestling. However, he would also perform once for WCW as an ECW representative/legend at Slamboree 1993.

Dick Murdoch/Don Muraco/Jimmy Snuka vs. Wahoo
McDaniel/Blackjack Mulligan/Jim Brunzell

Snuka in WCW is just weird. There are only three Legends matches and they're all in a row. See, the problem with shows like these is that they have to actually wrestle. The Jims star us off here. Brunzell controls and takes over to start before bringing in Mulligan (Barry Windham's dad). Mulligan vs. Murdoch now and they look their age. Murdoch gets taken down and goes into the wrong corner which ends badly for him.

Larry actually gets on Schiavone for knowing too much history. Dang Bischoff messed with that guy's head and style like nothing I've ever seen. Murdoch (former big shot in the KKK apparently) runs from Wahoo and it's off to Muraco. Wahoo slams him a few times and Muraco runs off. It's weird to see Snuka on the seemingly heel team.

Muraco chops McDaniel a lot as Wahoo is face in peril I guess. Ok never mind as it's off to Brunzell again who hits that dropkick of his. MURDOCH HITS A FREAKING FLYING HEADSCISSORS!!! I need a minute here. The announcers pop big for that. Not very horrible either if you can believe that (playa). Sleeper doesn't work that well for Brunzell as Muraco breaks it up and hits a powerslam for no cover.

Wahoo gets a tag but the referee misses it so we're still not ready to bring someone new in. Heel miscommunication puts Snuka down. Murdoch goes up top and puts his knee in Brunzell's back to drive him down for two. Back to Muraco who gets caught in a cross body for two. Snuka finally comes in and gets in an argument with Snuka. Everything breaks down into a big brawl and the match gets thrown out.

Rating: C. It's hard to come down on these matches as they're not supposed to be good or anything. None of the guys have been active for years other than maybe some work on the indy circuits (Muraco was in ECW sometime around this, as was

Snuka) so it's not like they've been in the spotlight recently. The idea is to let them get one last hurrah and that's fine. Hard to complain if the match is even remotely passable.

Snuka was ECW's biggest name star and would appear at The Night The Line Was Crossed, against an up and coming rookie.

Tommy Dreamer vs. Jimmy Snuka

Snuka is EVIL here and Dreamer is a pure rookie. I've seen this before somewhere. Dreamer is from Dreamland USA. Wow indeed. He's the pretty boy in bright blue tights here and no one cares about him. Snuka is by far the biggest star in the company at this point. Joey promises a classic. That's never a good sign. Dreamer is 22, my age, here. That's hard to imagine as he's always been old.

Lots of stalling to start as we just had to stretch this show out further didn't we? Dreamer puts on the hat of a kid for no apparent reason. After about three minutes of stalling we lock up and go to a headlock. And now we stall some more. I thought WE WRESTLE IN THE NWA! The fans chant for Piper although I'm not sure why. Would it kill you guys to do something?

Snuka pops him with a pretty weak chair shot on the floor in by far the most interesting move of the match so far. Dreamer kicks out of the Superfly Splash and Joey apparently thinks he can walk on water too. Snuka hits two more of them and Dreamer is more or less dead. He's bleeding from the mouth and Snuka finally pins him. He beats up some referees and other people afterwards and hits a fourth splash on Dreamer. Gordon comes out and gets beaten up too.

Rating: F+. This was about 80% stalling and then a bunch of splashes. It was like a weird kind of squash and by that I mean it wasn't any good. The stalling is what hurts this as it's nearly 8 minutes long and WAY too much of it was just them standing around and yelling at the crowd. Snuka wouldn't

mean anything in the long run anyway as he was only around for a few months after this while Dreamer became one of the biggest stars in the company.

Snuka would come back to the WWE on occasion as a legend, including being picked as Eugene's partner at Taboo Tuesday 2005.

Rob Conway/Tyson Tomko vs. Eugene/Jimmy Snuka

Conway was a cocky guy with a legend hating gimmick which was dumb since Orton had just gotten done doing that. So is the mentally slow guy supposed to carry this team? Snuka looks out of shape here, nearly three and a half years before he was at Mania last year. Eugene and Tomko start us off and we're already into the comedy portion as Eugene does the one hand up one hand down routine for the Test of Strength.

Conway wears his sunglasses during the match. Ok then. Eugene and Conway were more or less the most dominant tag team in the history of OVW, winning like 9 tag titles. Jimmy is going to be on the outside for the most part here due to a high level of old. There's the hot tag to him anyway and Snuka just looks confused. Then again he looked that way in his prime.

The faces play ping pong with Conway using headbutts. Eugene hits a Rock Bottom and the splash ends it after about 15 seconds of setting up. Tomko gets back from writing his novel or whatever he spent the last few minutes doing and Kamala and Duggan make the save. At least they kept it short.

Rating: D. This was a bad match but what did you expect? We knew Snuka would win with the splash but seriously, was Tomko the best they had available as a partner? He had nothing to do with this feud or angle or anything like that. This was a glorified handicap match that just wasn't interesting at all. Like I said though, at least it was short.

Same concept, two years later at Vengenace 2007.

Smackdown Tag Titles: Deuce N Domino vs. ???/???

It's an open challenge here so the challengers are unknown. Deuce says this place is full of old people. Domino doesn't like them either. This team was either great or completely idiotic. In short, they're Fonzie from Happy Days. Cherry, their manager, in short is hot. Deuce is more commonly known as Sim Snuka or the guy that kept Taker from breaking his neck at Mania 25. The challengers are Sgt. Slaughter and Jimmy Snuka. Allow me to quote the 25th letter of the alphabet: WHY????????????/

Smackdown Tag Titles: Deuce N Domino vs. Sgt. Slaughter/Jimmy Snuka

Remember that Snuka is Deuce's father. JBL says if the champions lose then he's calling Ron Simmons up and reforming the APA. JBL suggests their name could be the Coffin Dodgers. Oh that's funny. Sarge looks good here and we get a jab at the Ultimate Warrior. They beat the tar out of Domino here as you would expect them to. Again though, this is on PPV in 2007. There's the Cobra Clutch which is his signature finisher, which always amused me.

The one time he used a different finisher, he won the WWF Title. So naturally he used the old one and never did anything again. This has been dominance so far. Deuce finally comes in and this is dragging badly. Snuka beating up his son is just kind of surreal. I don't know if I'd want to be in that position or not. Snuka hits a top rope cross body but Deuce rolls through for the pin. How annoying do you think he's going to be with that at Thanksgiving? He pinned his HOF dad on PPV. How cool would it be to be able to say that? Post match there's a beatdown and Martel and Garea jump the railing for the save.

Rating: D-. The match was horrible obviously, but the point here was to have the legends get a chance out there again.

That doesn't make up for it though. This is just not something I want to see on a PPV show. On TV is one thing I guess, but no way this should be on PPV. Age has caught up with the Superfly and it was sad to see.

Despite being around for such a long time, Snuka wasn't the kind of guy that won titles. That being said, he's a great example of a guy getting over and staying over because of a style and one big move. The Superfly Splash is just cool all around and the image of him diving onto Muraco doesn't stop being cool no matter what. Snuka is an innovative guy and one of the most entertaining guys of his era.

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