

Wrestler of the Day – July 16: Paul Heyman

Today we're starting a mini series in this series with Paul Heyman.

There are going to be some big jumps in this as Heyman has only had a handful of matches in his career.

We'll start with the feud that got Heyman on the map: Heyman/the Original Midnight Express vs. Jim Cornette/the Midnight Express. The short version of this is the team had changed members a few times and Heyman was bringing back two former members to fight the most famous version. This led to a six man tag at Chi-Town Rumble.

Midnight Express/Jim Cornette vs. Jack Victory/Randy Rose/Paul E. Dangerously

This was a pretty good angle with a pretty cool backstory. Ok so WAY back in the day, the original Midnight Express was Randy Rose and Dennis Condrey. They teamed for awhile (along with a third man named Norvell Austin) and were the original Midnight Express. They left Southeast Championship Wrestling where they got started and Condrey went to Mid-South Wrestling where he was put together with Condrey as the Midnight Express. This is the version that feuded with the Rock N Roll Express and is probably the most successful version.

Now here comes the interesting part. One day the Express was scheduled to go to California for a show. Condrey never showed up. No one is quite sure where he went but he wasn't seen for years. One day he popped up in the AWA with Randy Rose and said they were the Midnight Express. At the same time, Eaton teamed up with Stan Lane to become the latest form of the Midnight Express.

So then the Midnights (Lane and Eaton) got crushed by the Road Warriors for the world titles. On TV one night Cornette got a phone call by someone making fun of them. Then Dangerously, Rose and Condrey ran out and it was Midnight Express vs. Midnight Express. Then Condrey left again and that's why Jack Victory is here now. The feud never got as good as they were hoping but the Starrcade match was pretty great.

The person to take the fall here is gone and since Condrey is gone, is there any doubt as to who is taking the fall here? Lane vs. Rose starts us off and Rose goes sailing to the floor. Cornette comes in and drops an elbow so he can strut a bit. Off to Victory who doesn't do well either so let's try Rose again against Eaton. The good guys are dominating this. The heels mess up again and Dangerously clocks Rose by mistake. JR makes fun of it, saying it's not like it hurt or anything.

Lane vs. Rose at the moment but it's off to Eaton quickly. They go to the apron and Eaton goes crashing onto the railing to totally shift momentum. The railing is the old faithful way to change things. Dangerously comes in, pounds away a bit, ducks a right hand and runs away to bring Rose back in. Cornette wants Dangerously and the fans sound like they want to see it too.

Instead Rose gets his hands on Cornette and to his credit he takes a quick beating. Off to Dangerously now who is acting like a true heel manager, only coming in when his opponent is in trouble. Cornette gets in a single shot but Dangerously runs to Rose again. Jim finally gets in a tag to Lane who meets Jack Victory but Dangerously interferes to give the heels the advantage again.

The fans are all over Paulie here as Rose jumps to the floor to take Lane down again. Lane gets beaten on for a good while and is in a chinlock by Rose. There's the hot tag to Eaton after some kicks to the ribs by Lane (his specialty) and a

missile dropkick almost kills Victory. In a cool bit, Eaton walks Victory's half out cold body over to Dangerously and grabs Victory's hand to slap Paul.

Paul is dragged in to face Cornette and this is the part everyone has been waiting for. Cornette beats on him for a bit and it's off to Lane vs. Rose again. Rose misses a splash but Victory saves the pin. Everything breaks down and a double flapjack is enough for the pin on Rose. That's an old Midnight trademark so it's cool to see that instead of the Rocket Launcher or cheating.

Rating: C+. Pretty decent match here and it's always cool to hear that sweet Midnight Express theme song time and time again. The ending was never really in doubt and this eventually lead to Heyman becoming the top heel announcer a little bit after this. Still though it was a good match, although nowhere near the Starrcade one.

Here's the next part of the blowoff, from Great American Bash 1988.

Jim Cornette vs. Paul E. Dangerously

This is a Tuxedo Match where you have to strip the opponent of the tux in order to win. It's a men's evening gown match in other words. This is a BIG feud as Dangerously had tried to copy Cornette's every trademark but kept losing. All of Dangerously's guys have been destroyed by Cornette's so we're left with this as the final blowoff.

Cornette throws a "punch" but gets powder thrown in his eyes. Paulie goes after the knee with his phone and both guys lose their jackets. Paul gets a punch to the...shoulder? More clothes come off as Jim makes his comeback. He can't walk though so that doesn't work that well. To the floor now and more knee shots from Paul. This is almost all Paul here.

Cornette freaking HULKS UP and Paul is in trouble. Caudle:

“Let’s see some clothes come off here!” There goes the shirt...and down they both go. Well I’m glad they kept the momentum for that long. Paul goes for more powder, it goes into his face, there go his pants, they’re blue if you’re wondering, and he runs away as Cornette celebrates.

Rating: C+. Just a comedy match and nothing serious at all but it was fun and the right guy won it. Also Heyman being humiliated is always fun to see.

Now we’ll jump ahead to Great American Bash 1991 as Paul E. has run his mouth too much and is going to get beaten up in a cage match at Madusa’s hands.

Paul E. Dangerously/Arn Anderson vs. Rick Steiner/Missy Hyatt

Yeah there’s still this to go. Why is it here? To send the fans home “happy”. JR admits there’s almost no time left. Missy looks better as a brunette. This was supposed to be a six man with Scott and Barry in there, but Scott got hurt by Dick Murdoch and Dick Slater. Speaking of them, they come out to kidnap Missy and make it a handicap match. You know, taking away THE ONLY REASON THIS MATCH EXISTS! This is nothing as they don’t care and there’s no time left. Steiner suplexes Arn down and Paul tags in for no apparent reason. Anderson goes down, Paul gets slammed and clotheslined for the pin. Nothing match.

A year and a half later, same idea, same people. From Clash of the Champions XXI.

Paul E. Dangerously vs. Madusa

This has a five minute time limit. Paul wears headgear on for the match. Madusa charges into the ring and gets blasted with Paul’s phone off camera, knocking her out cold. Dangerously says he wants what everyone else in the locker room has gotten: a kiss from Madusa. He bends down to her but Madusa’s hair falls off, revealing Mike Thor from earlier. Madusa

sneaks in behind him and kicks Paul in the back of the head.

A slam puts Paul down again and he tries to run. Madusa throws him back in but gets tripped up by Hayes. We're under two minutes to go and Paul poses over her. A top rope ax handle has no effect on Madusa and she dropkicks him down. Madusa rips his clothes off and Paul runs away as time expires.

Rating: D-. This was a bad execution of a decent idea. The Mike Thor stuff didn't really do anything other than eat up time and the match didn't make Madusa look tough as much as it made Paul look inept. I see no reason not to have Madusa get a pin here and the humiliation route didn't do much. This was also Paul's last appearance in WCW as a contract dispute sent him running off to Philadelphia and ECW.

Now we jump ahead ten years to Judgment Day 2002 as Heyman is an accessory to a murder.

Hardy Boys vs. Paul Heyman/Brock Lesnar

Brock had debuted the night after Mania and he needed a first feud I guess. He's been destroying people right and left so this is pretty much a given. Brock doesn't even have his signature music yet. The Hardys jump Lesnar to do what they can earlier to get at Heyman. That lasts about 4 seconds as Brock just goes off on Jeff to start us off. Ross HATES Heyman here and the commentary is funny stuff.

Brock beats up both guys with ease as neither Hardy can do a thing with him. The fans chant for Goldberg. Trust me, you don't want Lesnar vs. Goldberg. Heyman keeps orgasming over Brock every 2 seconds. Brock destroys Matt with ease as I guess we're waiting on Jeff to come in. Matt gets a tornado DDT to break the momentum and make Paul terrified. There's Jeff who hits the Whisper in the Wind and some double teaming puts Brock down for a bit.

Poetry in Motion hits Brock and Lesnar is sent to the floor.

Heyman runs as fast as he can but gets caught in the ring by Matt. Poetry in Motion takes him down but Brock ends Matt. Brock stands in front of the Swanton so Jeff dives on him. In the words of Tazz, here comes the pain. HUGE F5 puts Jeff down and Heyman gets the pin.

Rating: D+. Just a squash here as the Hardys best stuff got nothing in there on Brock. They were there to make Brock look good and that's what they did. Brock would be King of the Ring in the next month and therefore the #1 contender for the eventual Champion The Rock at Summerslam where he would become a star.

Heyman would help Brock defend the title at Rebellion 2002.

Smackdown World Title: Edge vs. Brock Lesnar/Paul Heyman

Edge can pin either guy to win the title. Lesnar won the title at Summerslam and is the most mind blowing guy anyone can remember in forever. Edge is the hottest thing in the world though and this is allegedly his first title shot. Heyman of course looks terrified. He would turn on Brock at Survivor Series. Brock doesn't want Edge to even look at the title.

Heyman channels his inner Cody Deaner and turns the hat around backwards. Brock basically tells Heyman to stay in the corner and let him handle this. This should be really good actually. Brock uses pure power to start but Edge out moves him. Brock is like screw this and charges, throwing Edge back into the corner.

Edge sends him to the floor and Brock chills for a bit. More or less Edge's only chance is to use speed moves. Edge makes fun of Brock's pose and Brock charges, flying over the top. He destroys some steps because he can. We hit the floor for a bit with Edge in control. Heyman grabs Edge's foot so Brock can take over. Heyman goes insane, skipping around ringside and celebrating his triumph.

Never mind as Edge drops him almost immediately. Edge wants the Edgecution but Brock is like boy I'm Brock and suplexes him. Back to the floor again and Edge is sent into the post. Back in and it's all Lesnar as he works on the back. Brock gets a freaky looking Boston Crab where instead of wrapping his arms around the legs he grabs them with his hands and pulls back. Never seen that before.

Off to a chinlock which doesn't last incredibly long. Brock grabs him around the waist in more or less a reverse bearhug on the mat. Edge finally fights him off and has Brock in some trouble. Baseball slide drills Heyman again but Edge walks into a spinebuster to take over again. Lesnar charges in the corner and his shoulder goes into the post to give Edge a chance.

Edge speeds things up and hits an Edge-0-Matic (it's that reverse X-Factor where he grabs the guy by the head and slams them into the mat back first) for two. Edge pulls Heyman in and apparently can pin him without him tagging in. Edge gets a dive off the top to the floor to take out Lesnar. Ok, why in the world would you do that when you could just roll up Heyman and get the title?

Back in the ring a missile dropkick takes down Lesnar for two. The fans are getting into this now. Cross body takes out the referee by mistake and the F5 is countered into the Edgecution (elevated DDT since no one but me uses these names anymore). Paul throws Brock a chair but Edge gets a spear out of nowhere for two. Edge comes off the top but jumps into a chair shot and the F5 ends this.

Rating: B-. The main issue here was that it ran long, going almost 20 minutes. Fun stuff for the most part but at the same time it needed to be a bit shorter to really make this work as well as possible. Edge looked good as did Lesnar. You have to keep in mind here that Edge wasn't a main event guy yet and Brock was brand new to it. This would be almost like Miz vs.

Kofi or something like that. Fun match though and it wasn't boring at all.

Heyman would screw Brock over at Survivor Series 2002, setting up this match on March 6, 2003 on Smackdown.

Paul Heyman vs. Brock Lesnar

Oh and it's in a cage to make it even better. Heyman has Team Angle with him and looks rightfully terrified. If Brock wins, he gets a World Title shot against Angle next week. Team Angle beats on Brock to start and sends him into the cage a few times. Brock fights back and sends both guys into the steel over and over. Haas and Benjamin are thrown to the floor as Angle guards Heyman. Lesnar goes after him and Kurt gets in a cheap shot, only to be sent into the cage.

Heyman gets sent inside and the bell rings. A bloody Kurt climbs into the cage and chop blocks Brock before nailing him with an Angle Slam. Paul gets two off of it so Angle puts Brock in the ankle lock. Brock is still able to get his hands on Heyman and kicks Kurt away but has to go after Heyman in the corner. He loads Paul up, kicks Angle in the face, and hits the F5 for the pin and the title shot. There's not enough match to rate but it's an angle instead of a match. Brock looked like a beast though and that's the important thing.

We'll jump ahead to ECW on Sci-Fi, with Heyman in singles action on August 29, 2006.

Paul Heyman vs. Sabu

It's Extreme Rules. The security guards (the Bashams but I don't think that was ever revealed on TV) jump Sabu on the way to the ring of course. Since this is ECW though Sabu beats up both guards who are in riot gear, but Big Show makes save #2 for Heyman before Sabu can, you know, kill him. Show CRACKS Sabu's head with a chair as I'm sure you can get where this is going already. Sabu is busted already and the three guys not

named Heyman beat him down with Big Show holding him so Paul can get in a shot.

We get out first table of the night (that has to be a record for ECW as the show is almost over) as Heyman dances around the ring and calls himself the Messiah. Show lifts Sabu up into a gorilla press position to put him through the table on the floor, but of course he holds him just long enough for RVD to come out for the save. Van Daminator takes down Big Show and it's kicks for the Bashams.

Sabu finally gets his hands on Heyman and destroys him for a bit, even hitting the Arabian Facebuster. Sabu and Van Dam put Heyman on the table but Big Show pulls Sabu out of the air on the dive attempt. That's always cool to see. Cue run-in #5 (I've lost count) in the form of Hardcore Holly. He hits the Alabama Slam to Van Dam through the table as Show hits that walking legdrop thing, giving Heyman the pin.

Rating: C-. This is more ECW's style: a totally mindless and insane brawl with massive carnage. It was clear what they were going for as soon as they said Extreme Rules, but that's ok here. They had to do something to keep this from being Heyman getting killed for eight minutes, and having all these people come out allows for more stories to be advanced. Not a good match or anything but it was fun in an insane sort of way.

We'll jump ahead again to Night of Champions 2013 as CM Punk FINALLY gets his hands on former partner Paul Heyman.

Paul Heyman/Curtis Axel vs. CM Punk

No DQ and it's under elimination rules. Heyman of course hides on the floor as the other guys swing kendo sticks at each other. Axel gets in a shot but Punk comes back with a series of his own to take over. Curtis gets knocked down and Punk dives through the ropes to get at Heyman. Paul is taken into the ring and put in a chinlock before Punk picks up the stick. CM takes too long though and a low blow drops Punk. Curtis

pounds away and gets in some stick shots to the back.

The beating continues as Heyman does Brock's bounce on the floor. The fans still want tables but they get chops and forearms from Punk instead. Axel hits a clothesline to the back of the head for two and it's table time, making Curtis the most over guy in the arena for a split second. The table is set up in the corner but Punk blocks a suplex through the table, only to have Axel do the same. Axel takes Punk down again and we hit another chinlock.

Punk fights up and sends Curtis into a chair in the corner, knocking Axel to the floor. Back in and Punk hits his swinging neckbreaker and the knee into the corner. Axel rolls away before the Macho Elbow and gets in a chair shot for two. The lone boring chant is blocked out by a Punk chant as Axel gets two off a neckbreaker of his own. Heyman shouts that Axel is better than Punk as Curtis strolls around the ring. More kendo stick shots to Punk's back get two but Punk counters the neckbreaker into the cutter into the GTS. The Anaconda Vice gets the tap out at 10:40 to get us down to Punk vs. Heyman.

Punk wisely keeps the hold on to knock Axel out even more before going after Heyman. Heyman slowly walks around the ring before running up the ramp, only to go into the crowd and back to ringside. Punk catches him in the ring and pulls on Heyman's ears and nose. Punk gets the stick but Heyman hugs him. The smile on Punk's face is rather creepy as he canes Heyman down. Heyman: "OH THAT HURTS!" Punk pounds away before calling for the GTS. He's not ready yet though as he pulls out the handcuffs from his boot, just like Heyman used on him for the big beating a few weeks ago.

Heyman tries to tap out but the fans think this is awesome. Heyman begs for mercy, making it even better. Punk hits him very slowly with the stick and says to remember that it was him doing this to Paul. Heyman tries to tap with his foot so Punk promises to break Paul's face. Cue Ryback to drive Punk

through the table, slicing Punk's back open in a scary looking visual. Heyman is placed on top for the pin at 1 5:56.

Rating: B-. This was exactly what it was supposed to be: Punk getting some revenge, only to have Heyman debut his new guy to give Punk a real challenge next month at Battleground. At the end of the day, Axel just isn't competition for CM Punk and everyone knew it. Ryback isn't a huge star, but he's a much bigger deal than Axel and gives Punk a much better challenge. Good choice here and the perfect booking.

The feud with Punk continued at Hell in a Cell 2013, but first up is a warmup match on Smackdown, October 25, 2013.

Ryback/Paul Heyman vs. CM Skunk

You read the name right. This is No DQ as a preview for Sunday. Heyman says this will be a demonstration of the teamwork you'll see inside the Cell on Sunday. Skunk comes out to Punk's music and in a black hoodie but the fans quickly catch on to the joke. He has a skunk stripe painted into his hair. Ryback destroys him with the ease you would expect and hits two powerbombs in a row. Heyman pulls a kendo stick out from under the ring and hits about twenty shots to Skunk's back. Shell Shock ends Skunk with Heyman getting the pin at 2:42.

Another chance for Punk at Hell in a Cell 2013. Yes this is a stretch.

CM Punk vs. Ryback/Paul Heyman

And there's no Heyman. Ryback gets in the Cell before pointing towards the entrance where Heyman rides out on a cart. It's actually a lift which takes Paul up to the top of the Cell with Heyman talking about how he's risen from the depths and ascended to the top of the world. The fans are all over Paul as Punk pounds away on Ryback and knocks him out to the floor. Now the fans chant for CM after he hits a suicide dive to send

Ryback into the Cell wall. It's kendo stick time but Ryback drives Punk's spine into the steel to stop him.

Ryback blasts Punk with the stick and takes him back inside to beat Punk down even more. Punk's back is targeted with a reverse waistlock before Punk fights free and low bridges Ryback out to the floor. A forearm off the top puts Ryback down again and it's table time. Punk can't get it set up though and Ryback suplexes him back first into the Cell wall. Back in and a belly to back suplex gets two more as we hit the reverse waistlock again. Punk fights out again and hits a spinning cross body for two followed by the running knee in the corner.

Some kendo stick shots drop the big man and there's the Macho Elbow for two. More stick shots keep Ryback down and now the table is set up in the ring. It falls onto its side though, allowing Ryback to crotch Punk on the side. The Meat Hook is good for two but Punk hits him low to block the Shell Shock. Ryback lays on the table for no apparent reason, allowing Punk to drop another Macho Elbow for no cover. Instead a cane to Ryback's head sets up the GTS for the pin at 13:55.

Rating: C-. If this had been a regular match it would have been fine, but it was inside the Cell which means it has a higher standard. Putting Heyman out of the match was probably the best idea, but there really wasn't much to this that made me care. Punk beating Ryback in a hardcore match is nothing special, but it certainly wasn't a terrible match. The Cell was a prop here though, which is what I hate about this show.

Post match Punk climbs up after Heyman while carrying the kendo stick. The beating begins and Punk wears him out before hitting the GTS to end the feud. Not exactly a huge spot but it's as good as we're going to get I guess.

Paul Heyman is a manager instead of a wrestler, but at the same time he's a guy that is going to be able to talk a lot,

get his client in trouble, then often take part of the beating to end the feud. That's Bobby Heenan 101 and it's never going to fail. He's become one of the best managers of all time and the guy is just great.

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