

Wrestler of the Day – September 28: El Gigante

Today is a guy that could look down at Great Khali: El Gigante.

After being introduced to the crowd at Great American Bash 1990, Gigante would have his in ring debut at Great American Bash 1990.

Dudes With Attitude vs. Horsemen

It's Orndorff/JYD/El Gigante (making his debut) vs. Sid/Barry/Arn (TV Champion) and this is more of the Sting's guys vs. Horsemen war. Arn vs. Paul gets us going. Sid comes in instead so Paul hip tosses everyone. He can't backslide Sid though, or at least not until the JYD headbutts Sid down. Arn comes in to pound on Paul but he fights out of the corner. El Gigante comes in and everyone named after a Horse runs.

The Horsemen have a huddle but Orndorff pulls him back in for a beating from JYD. Gigante pulls back a fist and Anderson runs very fast as his eyes bug out. Windham comes in and JYD gets down on all fours to headbutt him a few times. Arn punches the Dog a few times and brings Barry back in. Windham DDTs Dog and hey he has a hard head. That's a new one from him.

A not hot tag brings Orndorff in and he cleans a few rooms. The Dudes were never in any real trouble so there's no heat on the tag. He loads up the piledriver on Anderson but Barry comes in off the top to break it up. The fans want Sid so he comes in for a chinlock. Everything breaks down and a lot of people are thrown over the top. The Horsemen run from Gigante and somewhere in there the Dudes win via DQ.

Rating: D. There was no point here other than to showcase Gigante. The problem with that is he's just there for his look rather than anything resembling skill. Very boring match here and the fans didn't care at all other than wanting the eternally popular Sid. This wouldn't end anytime soon that I remember.

Off to Japan for a bit at the 1991 WCW/NJPW Supershow.

Big Cat Hughes vs. El Gigante

This is out of order for some reason as this is supposed to be the Steiners tag match. Hughes is for once not the bodyguard character. Gigante is more commonly known as Giant Gonzalez and is about 3-4 inches taller than Khali. He also has about 1/3 of the talent. To give you an idea of his size, when he's on the floor his head is over the top rope. When he's in the ring his tights (half shorts) nearly go above the top rope. Where the top turnbuckle would be is the height of his crotch, as in about the chest/shoulders of a guy the height of Cena.

Fonzie of ECW fame is the referee. This is more or less a squash as Hughes is about 315lbs and Gigante slams him with one arm after holding him up for awhile. He sets for a suplex and literally, as in I timed it, holds him in a front facelock while playing to the crowd for 34 seconds before doing anything. Hughes couldn't step on his foot or something in 34 seconds? Really? A jumping boot sets up the Claw Hold to end it.

Well he's had two matches so here's a gimmick match at the first SuperBrawl.

El Gigante vs. Sid Vicious

This is a stretcher match, which means regular rules but the loser gets taken out on a stretcher. Sid was leaving after this to head to the WWF so the ending is about as much of a given as possible. Sid is of course from anywhere he darn well please which is always funny. Gigante was bigger than Khali but with less talent. He was just a freaking monster but he was incredibly over.

Later he would be known as Giant Gonzalez which he's a bit more known for. And it's a 2 minute match. GOOD FREAKING NIGHT WILL YOU CUT THIS OUT? One Man Gang waddles out and does

nothing but get his teeth kicked in, as does Kevin Sullivan. Thanks for that guys. Sid gets the goodbye song as Gigante rolls Gang out on the stretcher but hey, Sullivan has powder. Sid is gone by the way. That was completely pointless.

Gigante almost got thrown out of the company at Clash of the Champions XV.

Brian Pillman/El Gigante vs. Barry Windham/Arn Anderson

Whoever takes the fall leaves WCW. This is fallout from WarGames where the Horsemen injured Pillman and Gigante had to come out and submit for him. Pillman gets a quick backslide for two on Windham and Barry heads to the corner. Barry comes back in with some chops but walks into a spinwheel kick for two.

Barry gets a quick DDT for two of his own and it's off to Anderson. Arn goes up top for no apparent reason and gets dropkicked down, followed by a nice plancha from Brian. Gigante grabs Anderson by the throat before letting Brian get on his shoulders for a very high cross body on Windham. Everything breaks down and Barry shoves Pillman off the top before kicking him in the face for the pin out of nowhere.

Rating: C. That came out of nowhere. Pillman looked great out there and Gigante did as minimum as possible while still being alive. This was a strange period for Anderson as he really didn't do much other than wrestle in tag teams and dominate the TV Title, meaning I often forget he's on the card at all.

From one of the worst PPVs ever, Great American Bash 1991.

El Gigante vs. One Man Gang

Gang is in a freaky monster look here with insane hair for no apparent reason. His manager Kevin Sullivan talks forever on the way to the ring about a death wagon. Gigante has four midgets with him for no apparent reason. Sullivan and Gang cut Gigante's hair prior to this. The small guys get on Gang's nerves until Sullivan hits one and we're ready to go. Gang runs to the ramp but is quickly thrown back in.

Gang rams into Gigante and that goes nowhere. Gigante hiptosses him and hits the worst shoulders in the corner you'll ever see. Gang avoids a corner charge and hits a middle rope clothesline to put Gigante on the ropes. Gang finds a wrench from somewhere and beats on Gigante with it which goes nowhere either. He rams the wrench into Gigante over and over but the giant won't go down.

FINALLY some knee shots put him down and Gang works on that a bit. A splash gets two and Gigante throws Gang to the apron on the kickout. Gang gets slammed off the top, suplexed, rammed into Sullivan, has powder kicked into his face and gets clotheslined in the back of his head for the pin.

Rating: F. You know, I used to love El Gigante as a kid, but he makes Great Khali look like Daniel Bryan. I know that sounds like it's way over the top, but I kid you not he was that bad. This was a terrible match as Gigante can't sell anything, he has a bad arsenal, and even he couldn't get the fans to wake up. Remembering that he was probably the second biggest face in the company at this point, that says a lot.

Take a giant, put him in a battle royal. From Clash of the Champions XVI.

Battle Royal

Z-Man, Thomas Rich, Bobby Eaton, Ranger Ross, Tracy Smothers, Oz, P.N. News, Sgt. Buddy Lee Parker, Steve Austin, Dustin Rhodes, Terrance Taylor, Big Josh, Barry Windham, One Man Gang, El Gigante

This is called the Georgia Brawl. Rich has recently joined the York Foundation, Austin is now the TV Champion and Rhodes, Josh and Z-Man are now the Six Man Tag Team Champions. It's almost impossible to call a match like this in the early going as there's just too much going on. We're about three minutes in already with no eliminations so far. Oz and Gigante choke at each other against the ropes while the smaller guys double team all of the giants and monsters.

Austin and Eaton fight to the apron but get back in as there are still no eliminations. Josh is sent over the top but skins the cat and pulls Taylor and Ross out with him but gets eliminated in the process. Rich and

Parker are thrown out off camera as a bunch of people splash Gang in the corner. Z-Man is tossed as Oz chokes News into the corner. Austin backdrops Tracy to the floor and Gang THROWS Eaton onto the ramp for an elimination.

News seems to dive over the corner to eliminate himself. Austin and Windham go out at the same time, getting us down to Oz, Gang, Rhodes and Gigante. Gang crushes Dustin in the corner as Gigante is blinded next to the ropes. He manages to get his Claw hold on Oz but Gang makes the save. Oz and Gang eliminate Dustin but Gigante clotheslines them both out at the same time for the win.

Rating: D. Battle royals are always hard to grade but this was just bad. There was no story to it at all and the eliminations came so fast that none of them had any kind of impact at all. The lack of drama hurt too as Gigante was a fairly clear winner once it got down towards the end. It also shows how extensive yet shallow the midcard was. Most of these guys, while different, didn't really offer anything special at this point.

Another big gimmick match Halloween Havoc 1991.

Cactus Jack/Abdullah The Butcher/Diamond Studd/Big Van Vader vs. Steiner Brothers/El Gignate/Sting

Oh boy it's the Chamber of Horrors. Now if you've never heard of this, clear some room off your list of absurd gimmicks. This is inside a cage similar to the Cell, although there's no top on it and the holes in the cage are bigger. Inside are coffins, skeletons and a few weapons. The idea of the match is that everyone is fighting at once and at some point during the match, an electric chair will lower from the ceiling. Someone must be placed in the chair, strapped down and someone from the other team has to throw a switch, "electrocuting" them. And somehow, it'll be even dumber than it sounds.

Oh and Gigante is replacing the injured Windham and Cactus is replacing Oz, although Oz will be in a match later and apparently Oz replaced Jack in that match. No idea why they made the switch. Jack comes out with a chainsaw minus the chain. Sting is US Champion here and yes, this is really what they're using him for. Cactus jumps Sting on the ramp and

Abdullah helps, but Rick comes out for the save. This is before we're even in the cage. Well Rick was but he left because it's just a cage so why should it be hard to stay inside?

In the ring Scott kills the Studd with a Tiger Driver while Gigante fights Vader. Sting gets a kendo stick to pound away on everyone he sees. Well everyone that isn't on his team that is. Or the referee either. Speaking of the referee, he has a camera on his head here which is really more annoying than anything else. That could be an interesting idea for an angle but it never went anywhere.

People in masks pop out of those caskets. They don't do anything but they pop out anyway. Sting clotheslines Vader to the floor and Gigante pulls Studd off of the cage wall. The Steiners hit their top rope DDT on Cactus as the chair is lowered. Vader knocks Rick into the chair but Rick clotheslines his way out of it. Sting throws a casket lid up in the air so it lands on Cactus' head.

Now we have ghouls coming out with a stretcher. Again they don't do anything but they're there. Scott shatters a kendo stick over Cactus' head, breaking him open. Cactus and Sting climb the cage and ram each other into it, which is one of the few actual clear brawls in the match. The rest of it is too hard to call because of the awful camera work. Sting has the stick now and stabs Hall with it.

It's pretty much impossible to call this match as everything is all over the place and it's just random brawling. Sting is busted open, as is Abdullah. Cactus goes for the switch as Rick is put in the chair, but the future Freakzilla makes the save. The heels get Rick into the chair for a second but he fights out of it pretty quickly. He gets put in there again and Cactus goes for the switch. Steiner suplexes Abdullah into the chair instead and after Cactus takes FOREVER to stand next to the switch, he throws the lever and Abdullah gets "electrocuted."

Rating: W. As in wow, what were they smoking, or why. You can pick whichever you like and I think it'll be fine. This was a huge mess but to me, this is pure nostalgia. I haven't seen this match in years but I still remember about 80% of the commentary word for word. The match is

terrible and incredibly stupid but it's a fond memory for me so I can't hate it.

A one off tag match at Starrcade 1991.

Dustin Rhodes/Richard Morton vs. Larry Zbyszko/El Gigante

Morton is part of the York Foundation, Zbyszko is part of the Dangerous Alliance and Gigante is 7'7. Larry has to climb the ropes to try to talk to Gigante, who is from Argentina and speaks limited English. Rhodes is half of the tag champions here and he starts with Larry. As is his custom, Larry stalls a lot before getting taken down by a headlock takeover. We get a crisscross with Dusty elbowing Larry down.

Off to Morton vs. Gigante but since Morton is nearly two feet shorter, he tags Dustin right back in. Dustin is much taller as he's only 13 inches shorter than Gigante. Rhodes can't do much here at all and is slammed down with ease. Off to Larry again for a front facelock and some other really basic offense. Dustin fights out of the corner with some elbows like his daddy (Dusty if that didn't click) but Larry counters the bulldog. Back to Gigante but Larry slaps him for not listening to his instructions. Gigante snaps and throws Larry into a double dropkick, allowing Rhodes to get the pin.

Rating: D. This was just dumb. The idea was that the Larry/Gigante team couldn't get along, and if you didn't get that by me telling you it's ok, because the match pounded it into our heads. Morton was in the match for all of eight seconds, meaning this was mainly Rhodes vs. Zbyszko. Nothing to see here but at least it was short.

Another battle of the giants back in Japan at WCW/NJPW Supershow 1992.

El Gigante vs. Big Van Vader

No mask for Vader here and he's a much bigger deal in Japan than he is in America at this point. There were two matches between the Rhodes' match and this: Tony Halme vs. Scott Norton and Shinya Hashimoto vs. Bill Kazmaier with the former winning both times. Halme is more famous as Ludvig Borga.

This is of course a clash of the titans match which is rather interesting. Ross points out that Vader could be a monster in America if he tried to be a dominant singles wrestler and he's absolutely right. If you don't believe me just ask Sting. Dang that was a great feud. Nothing but clubbing blows here and we get the Claw by the giant. It's weird seeing Vader as a face. He goes to the ramp and we get a double countout.

Rating: D. Bad match, but if you expected anything else other than a big brawl you're an idiot. Vader looked great here and Gigante was very popular in Japan so this worked rather well. Nothing good at all but a fun brawl so all is fine. Sometimes you just need to have big guys beat on each other for a few minutes.

Gigante would head to the WWF as Giant Gonzalez, who started off in a feud with Undertaker. Before that though, we have a few squash matches to get through, starting on All American Wrestling on March 14, 1993.

Jim Powers vs. Giant Gonzalez

Powers' right hand to the ribs has the effect you would expect it to and a big headbutt drops him. Gonzalez nails a big boot and chokeslam for the pin. Total squash.

Next up is Superstars, April 3, 1993, the day before Wrestlemania.

Giant Gonzalez vs. Virgil

Virgil tries to hide but gets caught on the corner. He climbs to the bottom rope and is maybe three inches taller than the Giant. Gonzalez tries a test of strength and is in trouble even from the top rope. The normal sized man comes back down to the mat and is quickly chopped on the back. A dropkick is shrugged off and Gonzalez chokeslams him (with almost no height) for the pin.

Here's his most famous match from Wrestlemania IX.

Giant Gonzalez vs. Undertaker

Gonzalez is a legit 7'7 and is working for Harvey Wippleman for revenge on Undertaker after Undertaker got rid of Kamala. Taker comes out in a chariot and carrying a vulture. Undertaker literally only comes up to Gonzalez's chest. Some uppercuts stagger the Giant but he grabs Taker by the throat to stop him cold. Taker climbs to the second rope and grabs Gonzalez by the throat, only to get hit low to stop him again.

Old School staggers the Giant a bit but he comes back with a clothesline to take over. Taker is thrown across the ring and we get a standing chinlock by the monster. The famous one fights up but gets thrown to the outside with ease. Taker is sent into the steps and we head back inside. Gonzalez pounds away a bit more but Taker slugs away, knocking Gonzalez down to one knee. Wippleman throws in a rag, which apparently the announcers can smell a chemical on from twenty feet away in an outdoor arena with over 15,000 people in it. Apparently it's ether or something, earning Taker a DQ win.

Rating: D-. Gonzalez was AWFUL which really hurt things a lot. The main issue Undertaker had at this point was no one had any idea what to do with him. They just had him fight monsters for years on end which you can only watch for so long. This story would be reused about 12 years later with Undertaker playing Undertaker, Daivari playing Wippleman and Great Khali playing Gonzalez.

We'll go with a match I vaguely remember on Superstars, May 15, 1993.

King of the Ring Qualifying Match: Tatanka vs. Giant Gonzalez

Tatanka starts the warpath early on but Gonzalez chops him right down. Some clubbing forearms have Tatanka in trouble and a big boot drops him again. Tatanka fires off some kicks to the ribs and scores with a top rope chop, only to jump into a choke. Gonzalez fires the referee across the ring and that's a DQ.

We'll wrap it up with the blowoff match against Undertaker at Summerslam 1993.

Giant Gonzalez vs. Undertaker

This is a Rest in Peace match, which means No DQ and No Countout, or a street fight as we would call it. Gonzalez has been tormenting Undertaker all year and lost to him via DQ at Wrestlemania. Gonzalez is a legit 7'7 and his manager Harvey Whippelman has stolen the Urn. Paul Bearer is absent for reasons that aren't quite explained. The Giant pounds on Taker to start but Taker comes back with some clotheslines. A single elbow takes the Dead Man down and they head outside with the Giant in control.

Gonzalez hits some of the weakest chair shots you'll ever see before whipping Taker knees first into the steps. Back in and Undertaker hits some uppercuts but keeps reaching for the Urn. Taker is still down when the gong rings and Paul Bearer makes his return with a black wreath. Whippelman goes after him and gets decked, allowing Paul to get the Urn back. The Giant stares down at him, Undertaker sits up, hits five clotheslines and a sixth from the top for the pin. Seriously, that's it.

Rating: G. As in I long for Great Khali. You often hear bad wrestlers said to be as bad as Giant Gonzalez and there's a good reason for that: the guy is HORRIBLE. I understand the idea of the guy being huge and not needing to do much, but Gonzalez couldn't do even the most basic stuff without screwing it up. Having seen a good deal of both, I can safely say that Gonzalez makes Great Khali look like Bret Hart.

El Gigante is a good example of an attraction instead of a talent. There's something about a guy that big that makes you want to come and see him. His matches were disasters at best and the worst of all time at worst, but there's something about a true giant that plays into the carnival aspect of wrestling. I was a fan as a kid and I kind of miss those days of liking the character instead of thinking about his work.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of 1997 WCW Monday Nitro Reviews at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00NPPH0WI>

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>