

Wrestler of the Day – November 24: Ron Bass

Today we're looking at one of the most common wrestling characters of all time: the evil cowboy with Ron Bass.

Bass got his start in 1975 but we'll pick things up on June 16, 1979 (my mom's birthday actually) in Memphis.

Ron Bass vs. Pat Hutchenson

This seems to be Pat's debut. The much bigger Bass nails Pat in the face to start and plants him with a slam. Some forearms to the back set up a suplex and a running powerslam ends Pat. Total squash.

Same territory with a better opponent at some point in 1981.

Jerry Lawler vs. Ron Bass

There's a bit of clipping on this one but it doesn't seem too bad. Bass is Jimmy Hart's latest fighter in the war with Lawler. Ron takes him into the corner to start but Jerry comes back with a right hand to knock Bass to the floor. More punching ensues and Ron goes outside again. Back in and Jerry drops an elbow drop for two as Jimmy makes a save. Hart says this is No DQ which clears up the question I was about to ask.

Bass knocks Lawler to the floor and rams him face first into a chair. He does the same with the announcers' table before a chair to the back has Lawler in trouble. We're clipped a bit to Bass bringing in the chair for another big shot to the ribs. A swinging neckbreaker gets two and an atomic drop gets the same on Jerry. More clipping to Lawler getting all fired up and the strap comes down. A bunch of right hands drop Bass and the middle rope punch is good for the pin.

Rating: D. This was your standard "let's punch each other a lot" matches and there's a limit to how good those matches can be. That being said, this is Jerry Lawler in Memphis. He could sit in the ring eating a sandwich and the fans would cheer him until the end of time. That's quite

the compliment to him and this was his old standard, though the clipping made it hard to keep track of.

Some of Bass' biggest suggest was in Championship Wrestling From Florida. Here he is at some point in Winter of 1983.

Kevin Sullivan vs. Ron Bass

Bass is a face here and has a broken hand. He hammers on Sullivan with the cast to start and Sullivan bails to the floor. Back in and a kick to the jaw sends Kevin outside one more time before Ron cranks on an armbar. Sullivan fights back up and stomps away but dives into a right hand to the ribs. Bass sends him into the buckle a few times and nails the powerslam, only to have Angelo Mosca come in for the DQ.

Rating: D+. Another kick and punch match here but I liked the energy they had here. It wasn't a good match or anything like that, but just the way the crowd was going kept things moving. Bass isn't terrible as a face, which is really odd to see after all the years I've spent seeing him as the evil cowboy.

Off to Starrcade 1984 with Bass in the NWA.

Mid-Atlantic Title: Ron Bass vs. Dick Slater

This is the other fallout match from the attack on Steamboat as it was Bass helping and Slater who was tied up in the corner. Bass is defending and is also half of the Mid-Atlantic tag champions with Black Bart. Slater knocks Bass to the floor to start and it's time to stand around. Slater chases Dillon into the ring and out to the floor as we're still waiting on any significant contact.

Back in and Slater suckers Bass into the corner before putting on the move of the night with a headlock. Back up and we go right back into the headlock as we wouldn't want this to get too exciting. Bass bails tot he floor but gets pulled back inside very quickly. Back in and Bass rams Slater into the buckle and caught in the ropes where Bass punches him back and forth like....something that pops right back up when it goes down.

Slater comes back with some right hands and a boot over the face. After

Slater is sent to the floor, Bass pounds him down but Slater starts Hulking Up. It's short lived though as during the comeback, Slater hits the referee. Dillon comes in and gets beaten up as well but after a slam and legdrop to Bass we get the DQ.

Rating: D+. This wasn't as horrible as some of the other matches, but again this was nine minutes of punching and headlocks. That's one of the major problems with this show: everything is so basic and low level that it's almost impossible to get interested in anything. Also great job here of having Slater get revenge: by losing.

From the next year's Starrcade.

Ron Bass vs. Black Bart

This is a Texas Bullrope match and if Bass wins, he gets a five minute bullrope match with JJ Dillon, his former manager and Bart's current manager. You win by pinfall here. Bass immediately hits him in the head with the bell on the rope and Bart is in trouble. Bart is busted less than a minute into the match and Bass pounds him in the head with the bell over and over.

Bart tries to punch his way out of the corner and gets choked with the rope for his efforts. Bass pounds in more shots to the head as we have a recurring theme to this match. Bart finally gets in a bell shot of his own to bust Ron open, but after a few more he misses a charge and goes flying to the floor. Bass keeps pounding away with the bell on the floor, including with a shot off the apron. Back inside and you can insert your own NEEDS MORE COWBELL joke here.

Bass wraps the rope around Bart's neck and pounds away as the match somehow gets even more repetitive. Both guys fall down as JJ, clad in a tuxedo t-shirt, screams at Bart to get up. Another bell shot sets up a crotching from Bass with the rope. A HARD bell shot to the head has Bart down yet again. Ron pounds on him on the mat but has to stop to yell at JJ, allowing Bart to get back up. The Black one misses a charge in the corner though and a middle rope bell shot from Bass is enough for the pin.

Rating: D+. I wasn't wild on this one. The big problem here is that it's the same stuff over and over and over again, meaning it gets really dull after the first few minutes. Some of the bell shots looked great but when you have like thirty of them in an eight minute match, they kind of lose their effectiveness. Not terrible but it's the epitome of a one idea match.

As a result of that win by Bass, we get this.

Ron Bass vs. JJ Dillon

This is a five minute bullrope match and JJ jumps Bass as the bell rings. JJ chokes away with his boot and hits Bass in the head with the bell. Then he hits Bass again with the bell. Now JJ mixes things up by hitting Bass in the head with the bell. They FINALLY do something else as JJ chokes him down with the rope, only for Bass to make a comeback and slug JJ down with the bell for a bit. A big shot to the head has Dillon down but the referee gets bumped. Bart comes back in and piledrives Bass, giving JJ the cheap pin.

Rating: F. What was the point of this again? To give Bass revenge? I guess so, but I don't call a few shots to the head with a bell and then getting beaten up by the guy he just beat getting revenge. I'm assuming JJ dumped Bass recently for Bart, but that's one of those things that the announcers didn't feel was important enough to explain to us.

Bass would head to the WWF as a much more standard evil cowboy. We'll start on Superstars, January 24, 1987.

Gladiator/Jimmy Jack Funk/Ron Bass vs. Dan Spivey/Mike Rotundo/Blackjack Mulligan

Well that's a team for you. On an interesting note, Mulligan is the father of the man that Spivey replaced in the US Express: Barry Windham. Not sure if there's a point to this or not but whatever. Jesse says his report on Andre and Hogan is coming next week on Piper's Pit. You have no idea how awesome this sounds to me. Ron Bass doesn't like Mulligan. Yeah this went nowhere thank goodness. This is mainly about Vince

arguing with Ventura so it's more or less awesome. I have no idea who the Gladiator is but Mulligan pins him.

From October 28, 1987.

Ron Bass vs. Ricky Steamboat

This is a Wrestling Challenge match here, which is the equivalent of Superstars today. I don't recognize that commentator. One of them is Mike McGuirk (female announcer), one is Nick Bockwinkel and I don't recognize the third. I think it's current TNA boss Bruce Pritchard. We'll go with that. Bass is a cowboy and gets caught with a top rope chop to send him to the floor.

Bockwinkel talks about whether or not top rope moves should be banned. Give me a break. McGuirk is talking about how handsome/good looking Steamboat is. Ok then. Bass takes over and hits a chop for two. Powerslam gets the same. Swinging neckbreaker gets countered and both guys are down. Steamboat counters a suplex into one of his own. They slug it out from their knees and then ram heads. Sleeper is countered by Bass and they go to the floor. They brawl to a double countout.

Rating: F. Horribly dull match here as both guys were in about -5th gear the whole time. Steamboat was coming back from the time off where his wife had a baby (and he lost the IC Title as a result) so maybe it was rust. This was awful though and probably the worst Steamboat match I've ever seen.

Bass was in the opening match at the first ever Survivor Series in 1987.

Team Honky Tonk Man vs. Team Randy Savage

Honky Tonk Man, Harley Race, Ron Bass, Danny Davis, Hercules

Randy Savage, Jim Duggan, Ricky Steamboat, Jake Roberts, Brutus Beefcake

Honky doesn't have Cool Cocky bad as his theme music yet which is a shame. It's amazing how great the music got in the late 80s. After the heel entrances, Team Savage says they're here to settle scores. This was a different time as almost all of the faces were friends by default as

were the heels just because they were faces and heels. The feuds going into this are Honky vs. Savage and Race vs. Duggan. Other than that the guys are just random midcarders who are faces or heels on a team, which is a pretty cool idea.

The place erupts for Savage's entrance. Even Jesse couldn't deny how great Randy was and was a huge fan in his own right. It was clear they had to do something with him soon, and they certainly did soon enough. In the answer to a trivia question, it's Beefcake vs. Hercules starting the first Survivor Series match ever. Beefcake struts a bit and not much goes on for the first 20 seconds or so.

Hercules (guess what he's known for) runs Beefcake over but walks into Barber's sleeper but he falls into his corner to tag in Davis, one of the lowest lever guys you'll ever find who somehow wasn't a jobber. He's a wrestling referee. Seriously, that's the extent of his gimmick. He's a referee who cheated a lot and got fired. Savage and Steamboat (who are apparently fine after wanting to kill each other about eight months ago) take turns on Davis but Steamboat misses a charge and it's off to Race, the current King of the WWF.

Steamboat chops Race in the head and man alive how amazing would those two be able to be in a long old school program? Steamboat skins the cat (I've asked this many times, but is that really the best name they could come up with for that? I mean, skinning a cat?) and sends Race to the floor before bringing in Duggan to pound away on Race, knocking him to the floor. Hacksaw heads out with him and they brawl to a double countout, making it 4-4.

Bass (a standard old school cowboy) comes in to face Roberts but it's quickly off to Savage. A knee sends Bass into the corner and Savage is starting to roll very fast. Savage immediately goes after Honky due to the really bad blood between the two of them and it's lets Bass get in a shot. Off to the IC Champion (Honky) who gets in some cheap shots but like any good heel, he tags out when Savage starts coming back.

Bass comes in again but a blind tag brings in Barber (Beefcake for you younguns) who hits a high knee for the elimination. Hercules comes in and

the bad guys start working over Beefcake's arm. Off to Honky with an armbar and then right back to Herc. Wisely they're keeping that schmuck Danny Davis out of there. I guess he's there because he works for Jimmy Hart but other than that there's no logical reason for him to be there.

Beefcake tries to punch his way out of trouble but Honky stays on the arm. To say Honky wasn't much on offense is an understatement as he barely looks to be cranking on the hold at all. Beefcake fights out of the hold but won't tag because he's kind of dumb. Davis adds the only thing he's going to add the whole match and knees Beefcake in the back so that Honky can hit the Shake Rattle and Roll (swinging neckbreaker) for the pin on Beefcake to tie us up at three.

Off to Savage vs. Hercules with the power guy taking over. Davis comes in and things suddenly go downhill for Honky's team. Yeah, a referee beating on Randy Savage doesn't work. Who would have guessed? Honky comes in and gets elbowed in the head which lets Savage tag in Jake to pound away. The comeback doesn't last long though as Jake charges into a boot in the corner and it's off to Herc. That goes nowhere so here's Davis and since his offense sucks (BECAUSE HE'S A REFEREE) Jake shrugs it all off and DDTs him to death, making it 3-2 (Savage/Steamboat/Roberts vs. Hercules/Honky).

Herc comes in and takes Jake down and Savage tries to come in for a save, which just allows the heels to double team Jake. Savage isn't thinking here because of his anger, almost like....a savage. Oh you're very clever WWF. Honky hooks a chinlock and Hercules comes in to do the same. Jake hits a jawbreaker to escape and there's the hot tag to Steamboat who cleans house with chops.

A top rope chop has Herc reeling and it's off to Savage for the elbow. It's just Honky left and Savage explodes on him, only to miss another charge (third one for Savage's team) and let Honky get in some offense. That lasts all of six seconds as the beating continues. Jake comes in and pounds away on him, followed by Savage dropping a double ax. An atomic drop sends Honky to the floor and he's like screw this and takes the countout. Can you blame him?

Rating: B. This was a really fun match with a good story to it. The fans HATED Honky and the idea of getting him caught at the end with no one to defend him had the fans going nuts. Honky vs. Savage was a great feud but it never had a blowoff due to a bunch of backstage stuff. Honky would somehow hold the title nine more months before perhaps the greatest end to a title run ever at Summerslam. This was a great choice for a first match ever for the concept too as it showed how the idea worked and gave the fans something to cheer about too. Really good stuff.

Here's a match at a house show in Houston on December 10, 1987.

Ron Bass vs. Ricky Steamboat

Bass holds him off with a whip so the Dragon goes out and grabs a chair. Naturally Steamboat speeds things up and gets a quick sunset flip for two. The cat is skinned and Steamboat gets what we would call a rana for two. For some reason the cameraman wearing a Hulkamania shirt makes me chuckle. Bass takes over and gets a clothesline but walks into something like an enziguri (granted it hit the back but no one knew what it was supposed to be at this point anyway) to send Bass to the floor.

Back in and Steamboat grabs the arm to take the bigger man down. I know it's basic but it's about the smartest thing you can do so there's a reason it's that common. McGuirk is like Booker T as all she really says is an occasional move in the ring. Steamboat tries to speed this up again but walks into a hot shot to finally shift control to Bass. Piledriver gets two.

Bass hammers away with a knee drop (called Knee-monia by Doherty and making me want to take a knee to the head so I hopefully forget that joke) to the head and various other basic offense for two on a few occasions. Pretty weak swinging neckbreaker gets two. Off to the chinlock now and Steamboat's face is all crushed up, making it look hilarious.

Here's the comeback and Steamboat goes up for the top rope

chop. Steamboat can't keep anything going here as a clothesline takes him down again. Out of absolutely nowhere, Steamboat gets a cross body not off the ropes to end this. Surprising endings like those are always fun, especially for the live crowd.

Rating: C-. Never been a fan of Bass but it's hard to argue against Steamboat in the late 80s. Not bad here but really just a way to kill about ten minutes. Steamboat would be gone in about five months and would head back to the NWA where he would win the world title in February of 89.

Bass also opened the show at Survivor Series 1988.

Team Ultimate Warrior vs. Team Honky Tonk Man

Ultimate Warrior, Brutus Beefcake, Sam Houston, Jim Brunzell, Blue Blazer
Honky Tonk Man, Bad News Brown, Danny Davis, Ron Bass, Greg Valentine

This is fallout from Warrior winning the title at Summerslam. Brunzell is subbing for Don Muraco who has left the company at this point. That'll be a recurring theme tonight. Valentine and Beefcake starts us off, making it the second year in a row that Beefcake has opened for his team. It's quickly off to Davis and the sleeper puts him out in less than a minute and a half. Well to be fair there's no reason for him to be around anyway. Valentine charges right back in to continue the war of the original Dream Team, which I doubt most people would remember at this point.

Greg goes after the legs as is his custom, but since we're only about three minutes into the match, the Figure Four is broken up. Well to be fair everyone says that Valentine doesn't get warmed up for about ten or fifteen minutes so he's still looking for his keys at this point. Off to the Blazer (played by then mostly unknown Owen Hart) who drops an ax handle onto Valentine, giving us the trademark slow fall.

Valentine goes for the arm (not a hammer lock which takes away the irony of it) but Blazer easily takes him down with a headscissors and brings in

Brunzell. The Killer Bees were gone at this point so he's just a guy in trunks. He's a guy in trunks with a good leapfrog though as he clears Valentine with a lot of room to spare, only to get slammed down. Brunzell pops up and hits the dropkick but it's off to Bad News. Sweet goodness was this guy born in the wrong generation. Imagine him after the rise of MMA, remembering that he's a legitimate Olympic bronze medalist in judo.

Brown comes in like the headhunter he's known as and kills Brunzell with a clothesline. Brunzell tries some basic stuff so Brown kicks him in the chest and beats on him in the corner. Brunzell misses a charge in the corner and the Ghetto Blaster (enziguri) gets the easy pin to tie things up. Brutus comes in and grabs Brown so Houston, one of the least intimidating guys ever, can come off the top with a double ax.

Houston misses a charge in the corner and Brown pounds on him like a stupid looking dancing white boy. A clothesline takes Houston's head off and here's Valentine. Make that Brown again and Valentine accidentally hits Brown. That ticks off Bad News and he walks off. That's not a face turn. He just didn't like anybody. Houston tries to steal a pin on Valentine but Greg is like boy please.

Off to Bass in a match that I think happened before in the NWA. A rollup gets two for Houston but he charges into another boot in the corner. That's a popular move in this match. A middle rope cross body gets two for Sam and a forearm from Bass takes his head off for two. Houston's monkey flip is countered into a powerslam and he's gone, thank goodness. The guy is just not interesting or good at all.

Warrior comes in to fire the crowd up and attacks everyone left on the other team (Valentine, Bass and Honky vs. Warrior, Beefcake and Blazer at the moment). Honky comes in because he's not that bright and there he goes, flying through the air off a shoulder tackle. Off to Bass who gets slammed down and hit with a Rocket Launcher from Blazer. Honky comes in and is cross bodied down immediately. A monkey flip and dropkick have Honky in even more trouble so it's off to Valentine.

Owen gets crotched on the head of Valentine during a leapfrog but apparently Blazer has balls of steel because he suplexes Valentine down

and drops a knee for two. Blazer goes up but Honky shoves him off, sending Owen down onto his knee. The Figure Four means a quick elimination by Valentine and we're down to 3-2. Off to Beefcake vs. Valentine and Jesse mentions that these guys were not only a team but tag champions. Why is that such an afterthought?

Off to Bass who also has history with Beefcake but that isn't mentioned here, despite it happening like three months before this. A headbutt keeps Beefcake down and it's back to Elvis Man. His contribution is ramming Beefcake's head into Bass' boot and tagging in Valentine. Well no one ever accused him of being a ring general. After Warrior charges in like an idiot, it's back to Honky for Shake Rattle and Roll, but Brutus backdrops out of it to start his comeback.

Back to Bass who hits a top rope clothesline to keep the advantage and brings in Honky who goes up. Beefcake punches him in the ribs because Honky is about as fast as Arn Anderson at going to the top. Beefcake wins a slugout and we get the eternally funny selling of an atomic drop by Honky. There's the sleeper but Man dumps them to the floor and they fight to a countout.

This leaves us with Valentine and Bass vs. Ultimate Warrior. Gee I wonder what's going to happen. A double clothesline puts Warrior down but Valentine can only get two. More double teaming works for a bit but Warrior gets to the ropes and starts shaking. Another double clothesline doesn't work and an ax handle each gets the two pins to make Warrior the sole survivor.

Rating: C. Not the best match in the world but for a midcard match it was fine. Warrior was insanely over here (as well as insane in general but that's another talk for later on) and the fans erupted for his comeback at the end. The rest of it is just ok and there's nothing wrong with that. This was the right choice for an opener though.

Bass' last feud in the WWF was with Brutus Beefcake, capped off with this match at Saturday Night's Main Event XIX.

Brutus Beefcake vs. Ron Bass

This was a fairly brutal (for its time) feud as Brutus had cut up Bass' whip so Bass had used his boot spur on Brutus' head, cutting him badly. They put a big red X on the screen with the word censored over it, even though Brutus moved around and you could see the cut anyway. That cost Brutus the IC Title shot he had at Summerslam. This is hair vs. hair.

I don't think they've both been in the ring for more than 30 seconds yet. It's pretty much all Brutus at this point and you know what happened because I said that. Bass gets a nice piledriver. There's very little to this match at this point. Bass takes forever to go for the pin and after arguing with the referee he walks into a sleeper and of course he's out in about 4 seconds.

After the commercial he cuts the back of his hair as Bass is apparently out cold for about 5 minutes from a 4 second sleeper. Dang he actually did cut it. Always nice to see them actually do what they're supposed to do. Perfect timing that he wakes up just when the haircut is over isn't it?

Rating: D+. This was pretty weak but not awful I guess. This was your run of the mill thing but Bass was your standard heel and Beefcake was WAY over so it works out fine I guess. This was ok for an opener and it does give a blowoff to the feud so it served its purpose in that sense.

Like I said, Bass isn't exactly the most interesting character in the world but the mid 70s were a different time. He was good enough at what he did to stay employed and that's more than you can say for a lot of wrestlers back then. That armless Pedigree finisher of his wasn't half bad.

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