

WCCW TV – December 28, 1982: The Match That Launched A Promotion

WCCW Television

Date: December 28, 1982

Location: Reunion Arena, Dallas, Texas

Attendance: 18,000

Commentator: Bill Mercer

I think you might have heard of this one. This show was taped three days earlier on Christmas night 1982 at the annual Star Wars show with this match maineventing the card. Fritz Von Erich had this idea about Christmas: "Once you open the presents, what else is there to do all day?" It turns out he was absolutely right as he drew over ten thousand people there for years every Christmas. In this case, Ric Flair is in town to defend the NWA World Title against local superhero Kerry Von Erich inside a cage. Special referee: newcomer and Kerry's new best friend Michael Hayes. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the first Kerry vs. Ric match in Reunion Arena in 2/3 falls. They split the first two falls but Kerry got disqualified in the third fall. However, since there was so much controversy with three different referees involved, it was decided that something had to be done in the rematch.

Kerry says he's never been more excited or ready physically or mentally. You would never guess by his demeanor though.

Ric, with a deeper voice than usual, says the Von Erichs are in a do or die situation. Always remember: Diamonds are forever, and so is Ric Flair.

NWA World Title: Ric Flair vs. Kerry Von Erich

Flair is defending and this is inside a cage with Michael Hayes as the

outside referee. Von Erich is mobbed on the way to the ring as fans are pulling him down to hug him. You can tell this is back in the day as Flair is still billed from Minneapolis. Before we get going, Hayes introduces fellow Freebird Terry Gordy as the keeper of the door. It's a very short cage too with the top standing maybe seven feet off the mat. Hayes is in the cage during the match despite being billed as the second referee.

Kerry grabs a leg to start and they hit the mat with the champion in early trouble. Ric can't hold a wristlock as Kerry comes back with a great looking dropkick to send him into the corner. As usual, Ric loses the strike off and some Texas sized right hands give us a Flair Flop. Back up and Ric slugs away against the ropes, only to have Hayes shove him away. They've made a big deal out of this being No DQ though so Hayes really didn't have a right to do that.

Von Erich reverses a suplex into the sleeper (sleep hold here) but Ric counters with a belly to back. Kerry will have none of this being in trouble thing and hammers away before trying an early Claw. Ric goes after the hand to get a breather and Hayes yells at him for no apparent reason. Back up and Ric sends him into the corner before getting in another argument with Hayes. Michael is really just being a jerk here with no justification.

Flair gets caught in an abdominal stretch before Kerry sends him face first into the cage twice in a row. We get the rub the head across the steel spot and the champion is busted. Kerry is smart enough to stay on it and you can see the blood all over Ric's hands. Ric finally gets smart and goes after the knee. Some shots in the corner look to set up the Figure Four but Kerry kicks him away with ease.

Kerry is smart enough to hammer on the cut even more but he misses the knee drop, damaging the knee even more. Now the Figure Four goes on in the middle(ish) of the ring and Kerry is at his best calling on the fans for support. Kerry finally turns it over and the hold is broken up. With a noticeable lack of selling, Kerry is right back up and working on Ric's knee by wrapping it around the ropes.

Ric tries to climb out and almost loses his trunks. Hayes goes after the regular referee for breaking it up and tells the guys to go at it. The Claw goes on and Flair is in big trouble but gets his foot on the rope with Hayes actually calling for a break. Again, these people have a weird definition of NO DISQUALIFICATION.

Hayes has to physically break the hold and Gordy opens the door for no apparent reason. Ric chokes Kerry in the corner so Hayes pulls him off, only to get shoved away. Hayes lays Flair out with a right hand and even tries to throw Kerry on top for the title. Kerry won't have it that way though (stupid Texas pride) and Michael is ticked. He goes to leave with Gordy as Kerry tries to reason with him.

Using the distraction, Flair knees Kerry in the back, sending him into Hayes and knocking Michael out of the cage. Gordy thinks Kerry shoved him and slams the cage door on Kerry's head, setting off one of the hottest feuds in wrestling history and making World Class THE place to be for the next three years.

In a weird moment, Flair covers Kerry with Hayes counting to two before Kerry kicks out and rolls onto his stomach, only to have Hayes count the three as Flair is sitting up against the ropes. The regular referee waves it off as the Freebirds leave and Flair pounds away at Kerry's head. Kerry can barely stand so Flair keeps hammering away. The tornado punch drops Flair but Kerry is so out of it that he crawls the wrong way, forcing the referee to stop the match and retain Flair's title.

Rating: B-. The interesting thing is the match is only a bit above ok while the angle is one of the best of all time. This is more proof that the simpler an idea gets, oftentimes the better it becomes. Here you had two people who both wanted the same thing but saw different ways to get there with one of them being unacceptable. One of them didn't like it and that meant it was time to fight. World Class got YEARS out of that one idea and everyone made a lot of money as a result. The match is completely secondary here but it was still good.

The Von Erichs run out and swear vengeance on the Freebirds to a BIG reaction. Oh yeah you knew it was going to be big. They help Kerry out of

the ring and nearly bang their heads on the bar at the top of the head.

A lot of replays take us out.

Overall Rating: A-. This was about one thing and they accomplished that goal. I find it even more interesting that people seem to forget how the match ended as most people remember the cage door slamming and the match ending as a result. That goes to show you how important the angle is compared to the match as you really could swap almost anyone in for Flair and have the same match. I could have gone for a quicker ending as the last few minutes kind of drag things down but this was everything it needed to be and gave the fans and company the biggest Christmas gift imaginable.

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