

Starrcade 1995: They Don't Know What To Do With This Show



IMG Credit: WWE

Starrcade 1995

Date: December 27, 1995

Location: Nashville Municipal Auditorium, Nashville, Tennessee

Attendance: 8,200

Commentators: Bobby Heenan, Tony Schiavone, Dusty Rhodes

So again, we have a show without a ton of interesting matches on here. The World Cup was a pretty thrown together idea, but unfortunately it gives us the same problems that a lot of the late 80s/early 90s shows had: there's no reason for most of these matches to be taking place other than for bragging rights, which is really all that the World Cup is good for. It's been a problem before but hopefully things go a bit better this time. Let's get to it.

The opening video sums up everything I just said plus listing off the

seven matches in the World Cup.

The announcers welcome us to the show. The running gag of the show is that Heenan has been bought off by the Japanese boss but won't admit it because he's a weasel.

Jushin Thunder Liger vs. Chris Benoit

Chris Benoit is a name that a lot of non-wrestling fans are familiar with for some very terrible reasons. However, before all that happened, Benoit was a fantastic wrestler and one of the toughest and most intense guys you'll ever see. Right around this time he had been made a member of the newly reformed Four Horsemen, so apparently Ric Flair thought pretty highly of him. This should be an excellent match.

Benoit gets caught in some quick armdrags and a dropkick to send him to the floor. There's a baseball slide for good measure and a dive takes Benoit down again. Back in and Liger hits a quick rana and a fast Liger Kick (rolling front kick to the head) but Benoit comes right back with a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker. The fans of course are completely behind Benoit, despite him normally being a heel. Liger counters a powerbomb into an armdrag and snaps off an overhead belly to belly. Benoit is great but Liger is WAY faster than he is here.

After Benoit is sent to the floor for a bit, he comes back inside and hits a snap suplex to take over. Another suplex puts Liger down and now we're in Benoit's world. Benoit hooks an elevated Boston Crab which would eventually become known as a Liantamer. Back up and Benoit hits a quick German suplex for two as Tony is snapping off the names of moves. This is very odd as Tony Schiavone would become one of the laziest announcers ever in about a year, barely being able to call anything properly.

Liger hooks Benoit up in a hold called the Surfboard, meaning Benoit is on the mat facing away from Liger as Liger interlocks their legs, rocks Benoit back and bends him upwards with all of Benoit's limbs facing down. Basically he makes Benoit look like a four legged table with Benoit's chest as the table top. Since that's a very difficult hold to maintain, it's off to a camel clutch on Benoit which keeps the punishment on the back.

Benoit stands up and drops Liger on his back before hitting a nearly botched superplex to put both guys down. Chris eventually gets up for a two count, only to be sent into the corner for another Liger Kick followed by a Liger Bomb (sitout powerbomb) for a two count. A brainbuster, one of Liger's signature moves, gets another two, but Benoit pops up and hits a vicious clothesline to take over again.

Two rolling German suplex put Liger down and there's a hard powerbomb for good measure. Benoit's Swan Dive headbutt connects but here's one of Benoit's rivals Kevin Sullivan for a distraction. The distraction allows Liger to hit a standing hurricanrana for the pin out of nowhere and a 1-0 lead for New Japan.

Rating: B. Bad ending to a good match here as once Benoit got rolling he was going move for move with Liger. Jushin is one of the few foreign wrestlers that American fans almost always react to and this was no different. This was a solid match and probably the best opener Starrcade has ever had. Benoit would get MUCH better too.

New Japan – 1

WCW – 0

Eddie Guerrero is annoyed that Sullivan cost Benoit the match but he's ready to represent WCW against Ohtani tonight.

Koji Kanemoto vs. Alex Wright

Kanemoto is the reigning IWGP Junior Heavyweight Champion so Wright could be in a lot of trouble here. Also I should note that Sonny Onoo, the NJPW leader, is accompanying every one of the Japanese guys to the ring tonight. Kanemoto easily takes him to the mat with a leg trip and works on Wright's knee. A spinning leg lock has Wright down but he fights up with an enziguri to take over. Off to the arm now with Alex cranking on an armbar.

A headscissors takes Koji down and a cross body puts both guys on the floor. Wright slides back in and hits a quick plancha onto Kanemoto before putting on a chinlock back inside. Kanemoto fights up and drills

Alex with chops to take over. A spinwheel kick puts Wright back down so Koji puts him on the top rope to pound on his ribs a bit. Koji dropkicks him out to the floor and hits his own plancha to make up for the one he took earlier.

Wright fights back with a few uppercuts and Koji has to go to Sonny for some consultation. Back in and a Tiger suplex (double arm trap) suplex gets two but Koji pulls up after hitting a moonsault with no count. A German suplex, Wright's finisher, gets two as does a slingshot splash. Kanemoto hits another kick to the face and both guys are down again.

A cross body out of the corner gets two for Wright but he walks into yet another kick to the face to put him down. Koji hits a spinning splash off the top rope for another near fall, but the next time he comes off the top, Wright catches him with a dropkick. A missile dropkick takes Kanemoto down and a superplex gets two. Koji shrugs it off and drops Alex face first onto the top rope before rolling Wright up for the pin.

Rating: D+. Koji never looked to be in any real danger here as he basically shrugged off all of Alex's offense and took every big move that Wright could throw at him. To be fair though, Kanemoto is much more talented than Wright with far more experience. Wright would only get somewhat better than he was here, meaning this was never going to be an interesting match.

New Japan – 2

WCW – 0

Sonny has given Heenan a present with two flags in it.

In the back, Onoo says he wants to buy WCW.

Masahiro Chono vs. Lex Luger

You might remember Chono as the former NWA World Champion, meaning he's one of the biggest stars New Japan has to offer. Jimmy Hart is with Luger and sings part of the Star Spangled Banner. That's not the worst thing in the world as Jimmy was a singer in a real band called the Gents who toured with the Beach Boys back in the 1970s. Luger powers Chono down but gets

caught by a forearm and the Mafia Kick (boot to the face) to send him out to the floor.

Luger chills on the floor for a bit as the stalling is on early. Back in and Luger sends him from corner to corner and adds a clothesline, only to have Chono catch him in a suplex. We hit a chinlock by Chono as this match continues to run slowly. Off to Chono's STF submission hold, causing Heenan to be unsure of what to say.

Luger fights out of it with pure power, only to get caught in the face by another Mafia kick. Dusty, never one to phone in a commentary performance, goes on a huge rant about how it's a kick to the face that has nothing to do with the mafia. Chono goes up top but jumps into an elbow to the face, allowing Luger to hook the Torture Rack for the win.

Rating: D. This was the first short match of the night and it didn't do much of note. This match was mainly slow paced with neither guy looking particularly interested in being out there. To be fair though, you could make a case that Luger didn't want to waste his energy because he had a shot at the world title later in the show.

New Japan – 2

WCW – 1

Sting isn't pleased that Kensuke Sasaki beat him for the US Title in Japan a few months back. Tonight Sting gets to face him again but it's just for bragging rights and pride. And that whole World Cup deal but why bring that up?

Johnny B. Badd vs. Masa Saito

This is just like Kanemoto vs. Wright minus Kanemoto's speed and talent. Badd is TV Champion here with a woman called the Diamond Doll with him. Saito is a huge man that we've seen before and likes to hurt people. Before the match, Sonny goes on a big rant about the Doll being here so she calls him Hop-Sing (from Bonanza) and says women belong here. Saito easily takes him down with a heel trip and locks on a cobra clutch (modified chinlock).

Back up and they slug it out with Saito's chops sounding much louder than anything Badd hits. Saito blocks a right hand before hitting him in the throat to take over again. Johnny is choked down on the ropes again as Johnny looks to be in completely over his head. Sonny gets in some choking and Saito hits a hard clothesline for two.

A side Russian legsweep gets the same but Badd comes back with a kneelift and a top rope sunset flip for two. Badd pounds away to almost no effect as Saito doesn't seem to be all that interested in selling. Sonny gets on the apron and Badd goes after him, causing Saito to dump him over the top for a DQ.

Rating: D. As mentioned, Badd was in way over his head here but Saito wasn't going to let anyone look good out there. He's basically just a big guy who looks tough and won't sell anything. The match was slow and boring too, as Badd pounded away but wasn't getting anywhere, all leading to a lame ending. Nothing to see here.

Post match Saito goes after the Doll but Badd makes the save with a dropkick. He sends Saito to the floor and dives onto him, completely missing Saito who has to fall with no one touching him.

New Japan – 2

WCW – 2

Tony and Dusty yell at Heenan a bit more.

Luger poses a lot while Jimmy Hart yells at the Horsemen on Kevin Sullivan's behalf. Lex is looking forward to the triangle match because he knows he can beat Savage. Also, he wants to go to the ring without Hart because this is a big one.

Otani vs. Eddie Guerrero

Eddie is still pretty new to WCW here but he's been wrestling around the world for years. Otani is a very smug guy who gives a look that says "yeah, I'm better than you." Eddie is ready to go but Otani stalls a lot before we get going. They hit the mat with Otani grabbing a quick armbars while pulling the hair a bit. Eddie rolls out and we hit another standoff

as Guerrero can actually hang with Otani out there.

They both trip the other guy until Otani takes Eddie's leg on the mat. Guerrero spins around and hooks a quick chinlock but Otani gets up and flips Guerrero down. Eddie comes back with a hurricanrana and Otani is sent to the floor. Back in and Eddie slams him down before hitting a quick slingshot hilo (headbutt to the ribs) for no cover. Off to a half crab by Guerrero but Otani crawls to the ropes. Eddie immediately picks him up and PLANTS him with a powerbomb for two.

A brainbuster gets two more for Eddie, but he stops to yell at Sonny, allowing Otani to hit a springboard missile dropkick. Guerrero is knocked to the floor so Otani hits a gorgeous springboard dive to take Eddie out again. Back in and Otani chokes away before hooking a chinlock. A wicked German suplex gets two on Eddie so Otani goes up, only to get caught in a big hurricanrana for two. Now Eddie hits another powerbomb for another near fall as the fans are starting to get into this.

Otani rolls through into an ankle lock but Eddie crawls over to the ropes for the break. Eddie sends him to the floor and then into the barricade as Guerrero is getting fired up. A BIG spinning springboard cross body takes Otani down but a suplex does the same to Guerrero. Another springboard missile dropkick puts Eddie down and Otani has a busted lip. He snaps off a rana on Guerrero for two but Eddie rolls through into a pinning combination of his own for a near fall, but Otani reverses the reversal into a sunset flip for the pin.

Rating: B+. Pretty awesome match here with the idea of two guys hitting everything they could think of on each other before a cradle was the solution to the win. They did a good job here of keeping both guys looking very strong as it wasn't a big move that put Eddie down but rather a leverage move which came off a counter to another leverage move. They made both guys seem equal here which made for a very entertaining match.

Otani's smug grin after the match is awesome.

WCW – 2

World Champion Randy Savage is ready for Tenzan and doesn't care about the triangle match right now.

Tenzan vs. Randy Savage

Tenzan is primarily a tag team specialist but has a very fine singles career as well. Savage has a bad left arm coming in. They lock up to start with Savage taking it to the corner, only to be broken up by the referee. Tenzan chops him down and pounds him in the back before hooking a quick front facelock. Off to a nerve hold on the world champion followed by a jumping back elbow to send Savage to the apron. A big chop sends Savage to the outside as this has been all Tenzan so far.

Tenzan drops Savage throat first on the barricade before heading back inside for some forearms to the back. A Samoan Drop puts Savage down as we see legend Pedro Morales on Spanish commentary. Tenzan goes up top but misses a moonsault, allowing Savage to hit a clothesline to the back of the head. Savage drops him ribs first on the top rope before dropping his top rope elbow for the pin, tying the series.

Rating: D+. This is the normal formula for Savage at this point: get destroyed for the majority of the match, hit about two moves, then win with the flying elbow. Why they decided that was all the world champion should be able to do is beyond me, but that's almost all Savage was allowed to do for months on end.

New Japan – 3

WCW – 3

Heenan is panicking.

Flair says the World Cup is cool but tonight is about him winning the world title.

Sting vs. Kensuke Sasaki

So yeah, the whole competition comes down to the US Champion defending

the title he won from the American hero against said American hero who just happens to be the most popular guy in the company, winner take all. You could say this is cliched, but it's you can't say it isn't the right way to get to the finals. To really hammer it home, Sting comes out carrying an American flag.

Sasaki attacks early and gets some quick control, only to have Sting fight back and hit a quick Stinger Splash. For some reason Sting tries another one but gets caught in a bulldog to put him right back down. Sasaki gloats a bit too much, allowing Sting to clothesline him out to the floor. Back in and Sting gets caught in a powerslam as the quick momentum changes continue. Sasaki knocks him down again and we stop to look at the Cup they're fighting for.

The fans chant USA as Sasaki puts on an armbar before stomping away. Tony suggests that this is going to be a nationwide celebration when WCW wins. Sasaki puts Sting in a Scorpion Deathlock to embarrass him, only to have Sting power out of the hold. Sting comes back with a kick to the head to give himself a breather before escaping a powerslam. A clothesline sets up the Scorpion Deathlock and Sting wins the World Cup for WCW.

Rating: D+. This wasn't terrible but again the idea of having someone get beaten down until they win with one Hail Mary move is pretty stupid. On the other hand though, there was no other way they could go than to have Sting beat Sasaki for the final victory in the series so it's hard to complain there. The match wasn't horrible by any means but it's certainly nothing worth seeing.

New Japan – 3

WCW – 4

The WCW team comes in for a celebration followed by the trophy presentation. Heenan: "I have to give the Lexus back."

We recap the triangle match. Macho Man won the title by winning World War 3, despite there being an alleged controversy which gave Hogan a potential claim to the title. This just has to be mentioned here because he's Hogan and this is WCW. Luger returned to the company in September

and demanded a title shot, Sting is Luger's friend and has loyalties to both Hogan and Luger and Flair gets a shot just because he's Flair.

Sting vs. Lex Luger vs. Ric Flair

This is a different kind of three way match as only two men are in at once and you have to tag in and out. It's also one fall to a finish. Flair is the only fresh guy coming in. Sting and Flair start due to a pre match coin toss. Much like an old car, they stall to start with Flair being very tentative to get going. Flair hits a single chop and is taken down by a gorilla press and a clothesline for two. An early Scorpion Deathlock is escaped by Flair making the rope and it's time for Flair to bail.

Back in and Flair grabs a hammerlock as Heenan implies Dusty is an uneducated country bumpkin. Sting is taken down and punched in the face before Flair starts pounding away in the corner. Off to the hammerlock on the mat again before Flair tries more chops, having no effect at all. Sting slams him down and pounds away in the corner as well, sending Flair to the outside.

They go inside again and Flair begs off and avoids a dropkick to put Sting down. Flair pounds Sting down again as this is going very slowly. That doesn't mean it's boring mind you, but rather very methodical. There's a big difference between those two things. The referee is with Luger for some reason, allowing Flair to throw Sting over the top and out to the floor. Flair drops a knee on Sting's head for five straight two counts before Sting no sells a suplex and pounds on Flair in the corner. Sting catches in a gorilla press and follows up with a superplex for a near fall of his own.

Luger comes in sans tag but Sting stares him back into the other corner. Sting turns his back on Luger so Lex tags in himself after ten minutes of Sting vs. Flair. Flair tries to bail but Luger pulls him back and shows him all the muscles. Ric charges into Luger and bounces off of his shoulder so Luger poses some more. There's a gorilla press by Luger as Flair is being thrown all over the place by these power guys. Lex pounds away in the corner and we get the Flair Flop.

Flair comes right back with a thumb to the eye and it's time to go after the knee. Ric goes after the knee as is his custom before alternating between chops and kicks to the knee. There's the Figure Four on Luger but Flair, ever the overconfident schnook, slaps Luger in the face, angering Luger enough to turn the hold over. Flair bails to the apron but gets suplexed back inside for two. A slam off the top gets two for Luger and Flair's chops have no effect. In a smart move, Flair tags in Sting to give us the battle of the best friends.

Luger and Sting shake hands to a lot of booing but Sting is ready to fight. Tony says these two last fought in Milwaukee at SuperBrawl II, prompting Heenan to say an historic line to Tony: "Is there anything you don't know?" This sort of question will NEVER be made to Tony Schiavone again. Ever. Luger pounds Sting into the corner but Sting does the exact same thing to Luger before pounding him in the head. That's not very friendly behavior.

Lex wants time out and comes back with some forearms to the back. A big clothesline takes Sting down as Luger has shifted from the face he was against Flair to a heel now against Sting. That's something you don't often see but it's really cool to watch. Sting comes back with a slam but a middle rope splash hits Luger's knees. A bunch of elbow drops have Sting in trouble for a few moments and Luger easily blocks a Deathlock.

Luger kicks Sting low in a VERY evil move and follows up with an atomic drop for good measure. As is Luger's custom he loads up another of the same move, only to be rolled up for two. Sting suplexes Luger down and follows up with the bulldog for no cover. In a very smart move, Sting Irish whips Sting to the adjacent corner instead of the opposite because it would have allowed the fresh Flair to tag in. I love stuff like that.

There's a Stinger Splash but second one misses, allowing Luger to hook the Rack. As Sting is lifted up though, the referee is kicked and knocked out. Flair nails Luger, sending him to the floor. Sting is thrown on top of Luger and the referee is up, allowing for a double countout to eliminate Luger and Sting, sending Flair to the title match.

Rating: A. This match ROCKED with three solid matches in one, along with

some insanely good psychology and a brilliant ending with Flair sneaking in and stealing the win as only he could. This was a smart match, full of psychology which is something you almost never see anymore. If you haven't seen this one before, do some research on their histories together and check it out.

The title match is immediately after the triangle match. Jimmy Hart comes out to manage Flair because that's the kind of guy he is.

WCW World Title: Ric Flair vs. Randy Savage

Michael Buffer (the "Leeeeeeeeeeeeeet's get ready to rumble!!!" guy) takes like five minutes to introduce the guys before we're finally ready to go. Savage starts with a fast backslide for two and throws his shirt into Flair's face. The champion pounds Flair in the face (why overcomplicate things?) as Paul Orndorff, who had his neck broken by the Horsemen, comes out into the aisle to watch. Flair goes for a quick Figure Four but Savage kicks him away.

Savage charges at Ric in the corner but gets sent out to the floor where Flair pounds him up against the barricade. Back in and Flair takes him down to the mat with a hammerlock, throwing his yellow and red boot onto the ropes for good measure. Flair stays on the bad arm before putting on a sleeper to stop a Savage comeback bid. Savage comes back with a belly to back suplex and pounds away with some clotheslines.

Jimmy Hart gets on the apron to distract the referee while throwing in his megaphone. Savage steals it away and blasts Flair in the head, busting it open. The top rope elbow hits but there's no referee, so here are the Horsemen. The referee is taken down, Anderson hits Savage in the head with a foreign object, Flair gets the title back.

Rating: C-. This was the very abbreviated version of the Savage vs. Flair as they only had about nine minutes to work with here. It wasn't terrible but at the same time, how much can you do in that amount of time in the main event of Starrcade? These two would trade the title back and forth a few times over the next few months and the matches would be much stronger.

Brian Pillman, one of the Horsemen, destroys Savage because Pillman is nuts. The Horsemen celebrate to end the show.

For some reason there was another match after the main event where One Man Gang won the US Title. Why it didn't air and wasn't mentioned isn't explained but I'd assume time.

Overall Rating: B-. This is a tricky one to rate. There are nine matches on the card but anywhere from five to seven mean nothing (depending on your take), leaving you with the main events. Luckily, the triangle match is nearly half an hour long and is excellent, making it more than worth checking out. The problem at the end of the day was that none of this stuff meant much given what was coming in a few months, but we'll get to that next year. This show is VERY different though and it's worth checking out if you're looking for a change of pace and a great match.

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