

That Bret Hart vs. Tom Magee Match



IMG Credit: WWE

So here's one of those things I never, ever thought I would live to see. Back in 1986, a wrestler named Tom Magee came to WWE. He was from Canada (a good place for a wrestler), stood about 6'5 and looked like he was carved out of stone. Throw in a martial arts background and powerlifting experience and how could he not be a smash hit?

Well he wasn't very good. However, the look alone and his athletic background kept him around the WWF for years, though he never rose very high. You might be wondering how someone could stay around on just potential alone, and the answer is that isn't exactly the case. There was also an infamous match with Bret Hart, where Magee allegedly looked like a star. The reason it is so infamous is that it never saw the light of day...until now. The match was taped for TV but never aired due to a promise to Bret, so it's a full on WWF TV match, complete with commentary.

Thanks to the magic of technology (and Bret's assistant finding the tape and being given permission to sell it to WWE), we have the match on the WWE Network. Throw in a documentary because of course WWE has one and I give you something I never actually thought I would see.

I'll spare you the discussion of various people (mainly Canadians)

recapping the story and how it was mainly Hart being the real star. Kassiu Ohno gets in a great line with "They thought they were looking at their next World Champion. It was just the wrong guy." They certainly don't bury Magee, but they make it clear that he wasn't the best in the world. The discussion about the match being this urban legend that almost no one has ever seen is kind of amazing.

Magee himself even shows up and seems to be a rather positive guy which is rather nice to see. He's happy that the match came back and hopes people enjoy it. It's really cool that he doesn't come off as jaded here as it seems wrestling was just something that he did at one point in his life. Both Hart and Magee say they would watch it again if they had the chance. Funny they should say that.

Bret Hart vs. Tom Magee

Date: October 7, 1986

Location: War Memorial, Rochester, New York

Attendance: 8,200

Commentators: Gorilla Monsoon, Bobby Heenan

Joined in progress (I'll take what I can get) with Bret holding a headlock as Jimmy Hart is rather pleased from the floor. Magee fights up and my goodness his back is HUGE. A cartwheel into a standing backflip gives the crowd something to cheer for and it's an armdrag into an armbar to put Bret down. Back up and Magee does it again as Heenan insists that he is NOT worried about Magee sticking around.

Bret fights up again and Magee moonsaults over Bret out of the corner, setting up a pair of dropkicks to put him on the floor. Even Heenan is impressed and Hart takes a breather on the floor. Back in and Bret grabs the atomic drop as Monsoon needles Heenan about Paul Orndorff being a Benedict Arnold. A legdrop to the back of the head keeps Magee down but he gets in a sunset flip for a breather.

The backbreaker cuts Magee off again though and the middle rope elbow (with feet out instead of knees under as Bret is better known for) gets

no cover cover. Instead Magee gets up and whips him chest first into the buckle (you knew that was coming), setting up a rollup for two. Another dropkick misses though and Bret sends him outside for some yelling from Jimmy. Back in and Magee slips out of a suplex and grabs an O'Connor roll for the upset at 7:48.

Rating: C+. So that's that. The match is far from a classic but for someone who seemed a bit limited in the ring (as Magee was since he was only 28 here and had never wrestled on this kind of a stage), it was certainly watchable. That being said, this was almost ALL Bret who was doing the heavy lifting and walking Magee through the match. I don't mean that as an insult as Bret is one of the best of all time and has carried a lot of people over the years. It's a completely fine, if not pretty good match, but to call it a classic or some game changer is a bit much.

Magee certainly had talent and was an athletic freak, but it seems that anyone who thought he was the next big thing was just looking at the surface. He looks like Kerry Von Erich, though a lot of people have had that kind of a physique over the years. Magee needed more time in the ring and some good coaching to get somewhere, but for what we had here, it was easy to see why the company thought so much of him. It's definitely worth seeing just for the sake of history, though I wouldn't expect some kind of classic.

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