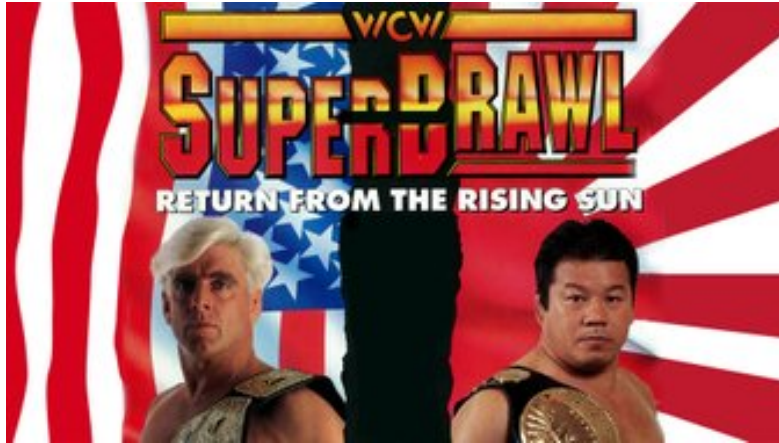


SuperBrawl 1991: The One Match Savior



IMG Credit: WWE

SuperBrawl I

Date: May 19, 1991

Location: Bayfront Arena, St. Petersburg, Florida

Attendance: 6,000

Commentators: Jim Ross, Dusty Rhodes

I haven't looked at some early WCW in a long time so hopefully it lives up to the rather low expectations. This is the first show of the series and is taking place in May instead of the regular February. The main event is Ric Flair vs. Tatsumi Fujinami for both the WCW and NWA World Titles, because that was still a thing back then. Let's get to it.

The opening video has a bunch of American and Japanese flags, to show you what the entire point is.

As usual, I must ask, WHY IS THE BIG WCW LOGO TILTED JUST A BIT???

Singer Randy Brown performs America the Beautiful, because WCW thinks we need some mostly unknown singer at every pay per view.

Dusty Rhodes is VERY excited about the World Title match so I might as well get this out of the way here.

The WCW and NWA World Titles were separate belts but represented by the same champion for a few months. In other words, yes Flair was the NWA World Champion, but not one mentioned that in America, where he was only billed as the WCW World Champion. They mentioned it in Japan though, and back in March, Tatsumi Fujinami beat Flair in a match for only the NWA World Title.

However, since that wasn't a thing in America, WCW said that Flair was still World Champion because he was thrown over the top rope. In Japan, Fujinami was billed as champion because he pinned Flair, making it title for title at SuperBrawl. WCW billed it as only Flair defending in a rematch, because WCW and the NWA liked making things WAY more complicated than they should have been time after time after time (and on top of THAT, commentary in March said that Fujinami's IWGP World Title was on the line but it was never mentioned to the live crowd).

And yes, I did have to write that about three different times so I could make any sense of the whole thing.

US Tag Team Titles: Fabulous Freebirds vs. Young Pistols

The titles are vacant coming in due to the Steiner Brothers winning the World Tag Team Titles. The Freebirds have manager Diamond Dallas Page (with one of the Diamond Dolls) and Road Boss Big Daddy Dink because they needed a three person entourage. Page has a headset microphone and talks a lot of annoying trash, showing why he would have a job for a long time to come.

Steve (Armstrong, of the Armstrongs) starts with Michael Hayes and an early rollup gives Armstrong two. Everything breaks down in a hurry with the Birds being sent outside and taken down by a double clothesline from the apron. Back in and Dink trips Steve down so the Birds can take over for a change. Cue Brad Armstrong (Steve's brother) to even things up a bit as there are WAY too many people involved here.

Thankfully the referee gets rid of everyone but the people actually in the match and it's Steve slipping under a double clothesline for the hot tag to Tracy (Smothers) who clears the ring in a hurry. Back in and a double shoulder gets two on Jimmy Garvin (that hair is amazing) so it's

already back to Hayes. That means a lot of walking around and clapping, because Hayes REALLY likes doing that quite a bit. A low bridge puts Tracy on the floor and Garvin drops him onto the barricade for a nasty looking crash.

Tracy gets knocked off the apron a few more times before Garvin knees him in the head back inside. Hayes gets in a left hand to the head to drop Tracy again but a superkick (nowhere near a big deal in 1991) puts Garvin down. It's off to Armstrong to clean house as everything breaks down again. The Birds avoid missile dropkicks but get clotheslined outside in a heap.

Back in and a Hart Attack (elbow instead of clothesline but close enough) off the top drops Hayes and a dropkick version does the same to Garvin. The referee gets bumped in the process though and here's a masked man in a feathered suit (complete with FANTASIA on the chest) to DDT both Pistols to give the Birds the pin and the titles at 10:21.

Rating: C-. This was a bit disjointed due to a lot of stalling from the Birds, plus all of the interference was kind of a distraction. That being said, at least they had a hot ending with the Birds cheating (as they were known to do) to win the titles. The Pistols looked good though and it's easy to see why they were around as long as they were.

Ricky Morton vs. Dan Spivey

This was during the period where Robert Gibson was injured and Morton was wrestling on his own. Spivey wastes no time in throwing him around and sending Morton outside. It works so well that he does it again, followed by a DDT to drop Morton back inside. A clothesline gives Spivey two and there's a Razor's Edge to keep Morton down. Morton's crossbody is countered with a fall away slam and a legdrop gets two. Spivey gets rolled up for two so he powerbombs the heck out of Morton for the pin at 3:12.

Rating: D+. Total squash here with Morton's offense coming in the form of a rollup. Spivey was a monster who always seemed like he could be something but he never broke through to the next level. When he can do something dominant like this though, you can see why he kept getting

chance after chance.

Z-Man and Missy Hyatt are here. Z-Man is injured but will be back soon. As for Missy, she is going to be in the dressing room for interviews tonight. She tried this at WrestleWar and got chased off by Stan Hansen. Missy promises an improvement tonight.

Nikita Koloff vs. Tommy Rich

Rich hits an early crossbody for one so Koloff glares at him a bit. The early feeling out process continues with Rich's headlock so Koloff sends him into the buckle. Some forearms to the back and an elbow to the ribs get two on Rich but he's back with right hands in the corner. The spinning high crossbody misses though and the Russian Sickle finishes Rich at 4:07.

Rating: D. Another squash here as Koloff is moving forward towards the US Title that commentary mentioned half a dozen times here. It's just such a weird sight to see so many squash matches like this on a pay per view. I know it's a different time and this was normal, but I feel like I'm paying to watch a weekly TV show.

Here are Teddy Long and newcomer Johnny B. Badd, who promise to knock out PN News. Johnny gets in his classic line of "I'm so pretty I should have been born a little girl." to mess with Schiavone's head.

Dustin Rhodes vs. Terrance Taylor

Taylor is part of the York Foundation, a corporate group with Alexandra York (Terri Runnels/Marlina) and security guard Mr. Hughes. The idea is that York has a computer which tells her how her wrestlers can win her matches, which is something that sounds interesting in theory.

Unfortunately that's the extent of its usefulness: in theory. Taylor shoves him into the corner to start but we pause for a word from the computer.

A shoulder puts Taylor on the floor for more consultations as Dustin is getting annoyed. Back in and Dustin takes him down with an armdrag as Dusty is proud of his son. Taylor slips out and let's check that computer

again, allowing Dusty to say Dustin is getting flustered. Dustin wins the slugout and headlocks Taylor down for a breather. As you might have expected, Taylor stalls again on the floor as JR wonders if they're going to overload the computer.

Back in again and Dustin gets one off a suplex but misses a crossbody (after looking like he nearly fell running the ropes) and falls out onto the ramp. A suplex brings him back in for one but Taylor dives into the raised boot in the eternally dumb looking spot. Dustin grabs the bulldog, drawing York up to the apron. Hughes grabs Dustin and loads up a glove but hits Taylor by mistake, giving Dustin the pin at 8:05.

Rating: C. The computer stuff was fine for a midcard gimmick but it got annoying here as they kept doing it over and over. Dustin was going to get a strong push around here due to all of his potential and his dad being in charge of the place, but at least he could do a lot of good things in the ring.

The announcers talk about the live bears that are about to come to the ring. Yes, this is indeed a WCW show.

Black Bart vs. Big Josh

Bart is an evil cowboy who was around forever. Josh is a woodsman better known as Matt Borne, the original Doink. And yes, he does come out with some rather large bears (Ring announcers: "Along with a couple of buddies!"). To be fair, I liked Josh back in the day so they might have been on to something.

Josh takes him down to start and hits the Log Roll (a bunch of stomps to the ribs) and the strikes put Bart down again. The armbar has Bart in more trouble but he rakes the face for his comeback. Josh pulls him down by the arm a few times and hits the Northern Exposure (running seated senton) for the pin at 3:47;.

Rating: D-. This was unbearable for the most part as it was a sloppy brawl with neither looking good. I can see why Josh is someone they wanted to push for the sake of making kids smile, but my goodness this was a terrible match and it's probably about as good as the two were

going to be able to do.

Here's Paul E. Dangerously, in a pink shirt, shorts and a cowboy hat, for his Danger Zone interview segment. After mocking the microphone for not working, here's Stan Hansen as his rather angry guest. Heyman says the hat makes him a real cowboy and Hansen looks ready to kill him. With the tobacco dripping out of his mouth, he wants to talk to all of the young guys who won't fight him tonight, including Dustin Rhodes. And that's it, with Hansen leaving so Heyman can talk about the rest of the card until his microphone dies.

With that out of the way, we get the huge entrance for OZ, complete with the Great Wizard (who the ring announcer points out is NOT the Wizard of Oz), Dorothy, the Scarecrow, the Tin Man and the Cowardly Lion. They get up to the big castle set where they find Oz, in his big green robe with a horned hat, who promises to show them who Oz really is. Great Wizard (Kevin Sullivan), over and over again on the way to the ring: "WELCOME TO OZ! WELCOME TO OZ!"

Oz vs. Tim Parker

Emerald City Slam (James Storm's Eye of the Storm) ends Parker at 25 seconds. This is one of the all time great disasters, as WCW was told to do something with the fact that Turner had acquired the rights to the Wizard of Oz. Next up was supposed to be Rhett Butler from Gone With The Wind, and no I'm not kidding.

Missy tries to get another interview and finds Terry Taylor, who says this isn't it for the York Foundation and Dustin Rhodes. That doesn't interest Missy but she thinks Z-Man might be in the shower. Instead it's Stan Hansen, who apparently wears his underwear in the shower. From walking to the ring and talking a lot??? Stan chases her off again.

Brian Pillman vs. Barry Windham

Taped fist match. Windham shoves him down to start and that doesn't please Brian at all. Pillman takes him into the corner and hammers away with Windham asking the referee if Pillman knows the rules. Some right hands to the ribs slow Brian down but he's fine enough to dropkick

Windham off the top for a big crash. The top rope right hand to the floor drops Windham again but he posts Pillman to shut that down. They're already both busted as Pillman is sent onto the ramp, allowing Windham to drop him face first onto the barricade. Pillman gets back to his feet and Dusty is VERY into this. Back in and Pillman scores with a spinwheel kick and some chops with the sweat flying off of Windham's chest. More chops rock Windham but he's grabs a belly to back suplex. They hit heads for a double knockdown and it's Pillman heading up top. That earns him a quick low blow though and Windham superplexes him for the pin at 6:09.

Rating: C+. They were beating the heck out of each other in there but the match never really got into another gear. That being said, their feud wasn't all that great in the first place as Pillman didn't really win any of the bigger matches and jobs again here. What exactly were they expecting him to get out of the feud after Windham beat him time after time?

Diamond Dallas Page gets an interview, though only after he asks everyone in the back to shut up (politely) and then asks if we are live, because WCW can never get their production right. He promised to bring gold back to the Diamond Exchange and that is what happened earlier tonight with the United States Title.

Page throws us to a pretaped interview with Sting and Lex Luger, who are ready for an unreal match with their friends the Steiner Brothers. Back in the arena, Page brings out the latest addition of the Diamond Mine: the Diamond Stud, better known as Scott Hall (so yes, Hall and Nash both made their debuts on the same show in your forgotten trivia of the night).

Sid Vicious vs. El Gigante

Stretcher match. It's so weird to see Sid, who is freaking huge, coming up to Gigante's chin. Gigante offers a test of strength in a funny bit and then clotheslines Sid outside. Back in and Sid kicks at the leg but charges into a boot to the chest. The Claw finishes Sid at 2:12, because WCW has a weird definition of Stretcher match.

Post match it's the One Man Gang and Kevin Sullivan coming in to jump

Gigante as Sid walks away without touching the stretcher because WCW (and because he's going to the WWF). Gigante puts Gang on the stretcher but Sullivan throws powder in his eyes. Some chain shots don't do much to Gigante, who glares both of them off.

Ron Simmons vs. Butch Reed

In a cage with former Doom manager Teddy Long in a small cage above the ring. If nothing else, I get to hear the old Ron Simmons theme three times and that's a rather appealing situation. Simmons punches him down in a hurry but misses a charge into the cage. He's fine enough to grab a belly to back suplex but gets sent into the cage again. Reed gets in a few rams into the cage and there's a rake of the boot over the face.

Simmons is busted open so Reed hammers away and then brags to Long. A middle rope ax handle to the head drops Simmons, who pops back up to send Reed into the cage. Reed does the same though and they're both down again. It's Reed up first with a piledriver and another ram into the cage, setting up the chinlock.

The fans get behind Ron but a swinging neckbreaker brings him right back down. Reed's splash hits knees but he knees Simmons down without much trouble. A double clothesline puts both of them down so Long throws something down to Reed. Reed picks it up but walks into the spinebuster for the fast pin at 9:40.

Rating: C-. They were trying here but it felt more like a house show match than anything else. Simmons got beaten up for the better part of ten minutes and then hit a quick spinebuster for the pin. That's not exactly thrilling but Simmons would be getting a rocket strapped to his back sooner rather than later and Reed was gone after this so it's not like there was any other option.

Video on Sting/Luger vs. the Steiner Brothers. They're both great teams (or at least one great team and one team of two very successful singles wrestlers) and this is THE match on the show, bar none. The video does a very good job of making this feel epic too so well done on getting the big one right.

World Tag Team Titles: Steiner Brothers vs. Lex Luger/Sting

Luger (US Champion)/Sting are challenging and everyone is friendly here. Everyone shakes hands to start and it's Luger vs. Rick to get things going. They fight over a lockup to start with Rick driving him into the corner and then wrestling Luger to the mat with ease. Back up and Rick sweeps the legs again as Luger can't do a thing with him in the amateur stuff. Rick tries a flying shoulder and just bounces off of Lex, who snaps off a powerslam for two. This is one of those matches where you can feel the energy on everything they do and it's an awesome atmosphere.

Rick is back with a belly to back suplex and a heck of a Steiner Line for two. There's a backdrop to send Luger flying but he EXPLODES out of the corner with a clothesline of his own. The big gorilla press has Sting fired up and he comes in with a clothesline over the top, setting up the big dive to the floor, which wasn't something you saw every day back in 1991. Back in and Sting hits that running bulldog of his before putting him upside down in the corner, ala Rick Steiner.

The Stinger Splash misses though and it's off to Scott for a tiger driver. There's the tilt-a-whirl to plant Sting, who pops back up with a hot shot. It's back to Luger for a suplex before going back to Sting, who is quickly atomic dropped. A belly to belly superplex gives Scott two but he misses a clothesline and nearly falls onto the announcers' table. Another suplex brings him back in for two and they seem to botch something, only to have Scott snap off something like a spinning northern lights suplex.

Luger knocks him down again and loads up the Rack, only to switch to a Russian legsweep with Scott almost landing on top of him. Rick comes in off the blind tag though and there's the top rope bulldog into an elbow for two. Sting gets a tag that the referee misses and missile dropkicks Rick as everything breaks down. Luger and Rick hit heads and it's a double tag so Sting can belly to back Scott.

A Tombstone plants Scott with Rick making a save. The ref gets bumped to the floor and Rick follows him out with Luger. There's the Stinger Splash into the Scorpion Deathlock but here's Nikita Koloff (with a shot from

behind in one of those images that is burned into my memory from childhood) to hit Sting with a chain (though he was aiming for Luger) to give Scott the pin to retain at 11:10. The Steiners did not see Koloff interfere.

Rating: A. There are certain matches where you can just feel everything and that was the case here. This was presented as a special match and they lived up to the whole thing. The ending might seem cheap but you don't want to change the titles, beat Sting or beat the US Champion so what else can you do but a dirty finish? Check this one out if you want to see four guys beating the heck out of each other and the fans being into every second of it. Outstanding stuff and there is a reason this match is considered one of WCW's best.

In the back, Koloff says Sting was in the wrong place at the wrong time so here's Sting for the brawl. They go out into the parking lot and the camera loses them.

TV Title: Bobby Eaton vs. Arn Anderson

Eaton is challenging and JR makes a big point of him having no partner or manager anymore, mainly because WCW boss Jim Herd HATED Jim Cornette (it was mutual) and the Midnight Express. They go to the mat a few times for a standoff so Eaton just pops him with a right hand to the jaw. Anderson is a good bit wobbly as he gets up to kick Eaton in the ribs.

Eaton comes out of the corner with a clothesline for two but gets launched off the top and down onto the ramp for a big crash. The piledriver on the ramp is countered into the backdrop though and a second backdrop puts Anderson inside again. The armbar stays on Anderson, who pops right up and wraps the leg around the post. Anderson works on the leg but Eaton fights up this time and sends Anderson face first into the turnbuckles about fifteen times in a row. A big right hand rocks Anderson again but the knee gives out to slow Eaton down.

Anderson is back on the knee with a crank and stomp, followed by the longer form crank. The Vader Bomb hits knees but Anderson snaps off that perfect spinebuster for two. Eaton punches him out of the air and hits a running neckbreaker to drop Anderson. It's time for the Alabama Jam (top

rope legdrop)....as Windham and Pillman have the most random run in this side of a Russo show to brawl on the ramp. Anyway Eaton drops the leg and gets the pin at 11:49, which goes down as we look at Pillman and Windham (who never touched Anderson or Eaton) running away. It really is as random as it sounds.

Rating: C. The ending interruption really did come out of nowhere and feels insane. I liked the story they were telling here with Eaton fighting through the pain to finally win a singles title and you can't argue with Anderson putting him over clean. Eaton was a great star on his own but he would drop the title later in the month to some newcomer named Steve Austin. They were trying here, but nothing was following that tag match and I think they knew it.

Tatsumi Fujinami's manager Hiro Matsuda (who trained Hulk Hogan and Lex Luger among others) says they're bringing the title back to Japan.

WCW World Title/NWA World Title: Ric Flair vs. Tatsumi Fujinami

I've lost track of which titles are on the line just from listening to the introductions so we'll say it's both for the sake of my sanity. Flair is in the classic black and white robe but WHAT IS THAT MUSIC??? He has one of the most iconic themes ever and they switched it??? There are two referees here (one from America on the floor and one from Japan on the floor) to make it even more confusing. Fujinami shoulders him down to start and it's clearly in first gear so far.

Some chops rock Flair and a backdrop makes it worse as Fujinami can stomp away. The surfboard keeps Flair in trouble and Fujinami switches to a Boston crab to keep him screaming. We go old school with an Indian deathlock as Flair can't get anything going here. A suplex finally gets Flair out of trouble but Fujinami is right back with a running forearm for two.

They go outside with Flair scoring with some chops, meaning it's time to start in on the leg. A shinbreaker sets up an early Figure Four and Flair slaps him in the face with the hold on, which is rarely a good idea. Fujinami gets out and grabs a Scorpion Deathlock (Flair just can't get away from that thing), sending Flair straight to the rope. A belly to

back suplex drops Fujinami and Flair stomps away, setting up a W00.

They head outside with Flair going into the barricade to draw some blood (yes, in a Flair match), meaning Fujinami has a fresh target. The staggered Flair falls back outside where he gets in a thumb to the eye but gets slammed off the top. The Octopus goes on and you can see the fans looking confused. Flair flips his way out but loses a slugout to knock him down again. A small package gives Fujinami two and we get a ref bump. The American referee comes in and Flair grabs a rollup with trunks for the pin to retain/win/whatever it is at 18:39.

Rating: C. The wrestling was fine but egads they misfired on the story here. Flair was a heel coming in, the title situation was a complete wreck and Fujinami isn't known by the masses. Flair and Fujinami are both amazing performers, but there is only so much that you can do when you're in this lame of a situation. Then again, given some of the horrible drek on this show, this was on the higher end of the show.

The announcers talk about the card and we look at the ending of the main event again.

Credits roll to end the show.

Overall Rating: D-. That tag match is the ONLY thing that keeps this show from being a failure but there is only so much that can be done in an eleven minute match on a two hour and forty minute show. There is a great reason why WCW in 1991 is such a complete and utter nightmare and that's what we had here. Horrible show here and run FAR away from this outside of the all time classic tag match.

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