

# **HIDDEN GEM: Terry Funk Was Amazing (And Everyone Knows It)**

This is one of the best things ECW ever did.

From ECW, April 12, 1997.

This is another special one as we have Terry Funk's lifetime achievement banquet. This one is rated TV-MA and has another disclaimer to make me wonder what is on here. Joey Styles opens things up at a podium, talking about how he is new in this business but the highlight of his career has been working with Terry Funk, even when Funk tried to kill him. Joey teases the idea of strangling Paul Heyman (next to him) with a plastic bag, which Heyman takes from Joey for a shot to the arm. Getting more serious, Joey talks about how important it is to see Terry wrestle and how much it means to him.

Next up is Sandman, who is already emotional about how he has always wanted to be a wrestler and idolized the northeastern wrestlers. Sandman thanks the people who founded and operate this company for giving him a chance to live his dream. Oh and his wife too. We move on to Barely Legal tomorrow night, which features a three way dance between Sandman, Stevie Richards and Funk himself. Sandman can't believe how far Richards has come in such a short time and it will be an honor to face Funk. It was bizarre to hear Sandman talking all sane and such like this.

Richards is up next (with an unpainted Blue Meanie) and talks about how he showed up to the ECW Arena, willing to do absolutely anything. Now he is getting to wrestle Sandman and Terry Funk on pay per view in the same arena. Richards thanks Heyman and hugs Funk, saying may the best man win.

Blue Meanie is up next and says he isn't used to talking in a normal voice. Meanie doesn't have much to say other than thank you Funk.

Someone who looks like Nova says football had Joe Montana, baseball had Babe Ruth and wrestling had Funk.

Joey introduces the Eliminators (Perry Saturn and John Kronus), with Saturn saying he isn't the best talker. He remembers thinking wrestlers were superheroes and Funk paved the road they walked down. Saturn talks about meeting Funk for the first time and being amazed that Funk thought he was a good worker, to the point where he called everyone he knew.

Kronus loves Funk and that's it.

Styles talks about a young up and coming wrestler who is only going to get better and better. Funk: "Thank you!" It's actually Chris Candido, with Tammy Sytch, with Chris talking about being NWA Champion and being terrified to talk to Funk for half an hour. One night they went to Denny's but Funk had locked the keys in his trunk so he had to eat in his gear, which had him panicking. Dory Funk Jr. said that wasn't true, which is an excuse for a bunch of (funny) Funk impressions. Candido loves Funk too.

Next up is Louie Spicolli, who thought no one could beat up Hulk Hogan until Terry Funk did it. Funk always puts in the work and now he's doing moonsaults because he can do anything.

Joey brings up the Pitbulls, who are nice guys but scare the heck out of him. They can't believe they are in the same locker room as Funk and are very thankful for Funk helping them so much.

Now we have an introduction Joey doesn't want to do, as he brings up Bill Alfonso. Bill talks about being brought in to ECW in 1994 and how much he loved Funk as a kid and apparently they knew each other twenty years ago. Cool enough.

Joey talks about being scared of the next speaker, even if he is a terrifying man. That would be Taz, who talks about how everyone here is great but it's all about Funk. Taz tells a story about his first match in the company and being stunned that Funk took him aside to critique his match that night. He hopes Terry is around for another 52 years (Would you bet against him?).

Joey introduces Francine, who is rather choked up about getting to be up here. She looks at Funk like a father and hopes he walks her down the aisle when she gets married.

Now we have Sabu, who presents Terry with a trophy and whispers something in his ear before sitting back down.

Next up is a referee whose name I couldn't understand. Funk has praised him too and can't believe he has had the honor to be in the same ring as Funk over the years. He talks about how Funk has done so many things for so many people and talks longer than most of the wrestlers.

Now we get a more obscure name with Barry Blaustein, who has made a documentary about ECW (and was regularly mentioned by Jesse Ventura back in the late 80s). It has been an honor to get to show the greatness of wrestling, which has included seeing Funk covered in blood. Funk said he was too old for wrestling that night but Barry knew that could never be true. Blaustein has worked on a lot of big movies but he has never been prouder of anything than this.

Now we have a female wrestling promoter whose name Joey kind of mumbles. She talks about meeting Terry at a commercial for Kodak in 1984 which had nothing to do with wrestling. Then she found out what he could do in wrestling and was amazed at how great he really was.

Joey talks about Tod Gordon (ECW founder) not knowing who he was when he was trying out. Joey: "Do you know who I am now Tod?" Gordon talks about how they needed a big star who could

bring the hardcore when they started and there was only one option: Abdullah the Butcher. Funk didn't think much of the first show they had but then things got better and that is because of what Funk did.

Joey talks about trying to work for WWF and WCW but only ECW called him back. That brings up the one person who called him back: Paul Heyman (oh boy). Paul talks about how emotional this is and thanks Gordon for giving him a job in 1993. He can't believe how far they have come and goes into a promo about how extreme ECW is. New Jack, in a white suit and top hat, stands up after a mention from Heyman, who knows Jack had that hanging in his closet.

Heyman knows that everyone here put on a suit because they know Funk deserves the honor. New Jack (in the back of the room) says something the mic doesn't pick up and we get the ECW chant. Heyman talks about doing photography for years in the early 80s and hearing about how he should just go straight up to Funk because he was such a great guy. That got him thrown out of the locker room and Heyman didn't see Funk again until 1989.

They met again in Amarillo, Texas and Funk offered to take him for a ride the next morning. Funk drove crazy fast and Heyman was scared to death but he met Terry's wife...who thought Heyman was hilarious (meaning more impressions). Then they went to a show with Funk vs. Eddie Gilbert as the main event. Heyman was taken to the ring where he was terrified (mainly because Ric Flair (WCW boss at the time) was going to kill him for some reason). Funk gave him some advice that night: if Missy Hyatt gets in your face, slap the f\*\*\*\*\* s\*\*\* out of her.

Then they had the match and Funk went off the apron and head first through a table. Gilbert thought Funk was dead and Heyman knew Flair was going to kill him. Heyman went over to check on Funk, who was fine enough that he cracked a joke to

him (which is hard to understand but pops the room).

Then a few days later, Funk broke his tailbone a few days before the 1989 Great American Bash. For the first time, Heyman saw Funk crying because he was devastated. There was nothing that was going to stop Funk from going to the show and giving the fans what they paid to see. Then Funk wrestled 34 straight days on the road and Heyman was so in awe that he called his father to talk about how amazing Funk was.

Heyman prayed he could find one wrestler like Funk and now he has him in ECW. The criteria to work here is work ethic and the example for that has been set by Funk himself. Heyman talks about the wrestlers who have worked so hard here and they do it because Funk made them want to. The people who work behind the scenes do the same things and they do it because of the locker room.

That brings Heyman to Funk's protege: Tommy Dreamer. Heyman praises Dreamer for everything he has done, without even being nervous about Barely Legal. Dreamer never gets shaken up but tonight has messed with him because he wants everything to be perfect for Funk. Everyone wants to make it special, like Taz, who has never mentioned his personal life but his wife is here with him because it is worth the honor to Funk. Having Funk in the locker room is like an audience with the Pope or the President because he means that much.

Heyman explains to the fans in attendance how much this means and they give Funk a standing ovation. ECW was ready for pay per view last year with November To Remember but they needed to do something special and someone to build around. They needed Terry Funk and now Heyman knows what can happen tomorrow and it is going to be a tribute to Funk.

Heyman introduces Tommy Dreamer (after stealing the show by being an AMAZING storyteller), who thanks a bunch of the wrestlers around here, capped off by finally thanking Funk

himself. Dreamer talks about what a family ECW is and (of course) breaks into tears (Dreamer: "Yeah right I'm hardcore."). He presents Funk with a plaque and a bunch of wrestlers come up to hug Funk.

It's time for Funk himself to speak...and he needs to go to the bathroom...and he actually runs off so we get a lot of hugs between the speakers. New Jack gives Heyman an ECW ring as Funk is back. Funk thanks everyone for the plaque and talks about what it means to him. If he could present an award tonight, it would be the Against All Odds Award to Heyman and Gordon for making it so far.

Funk praises his wife, who the fans deem hardcore. He praises his wife for the hardcore matches they have had over the years and can't wait to spend the rest of his life and eternity with her. Funk introduces his children and announces that he is done wrestling in the United States after this year. Even the people here don't seem to believe him but Funk has a few more things to say.

Stevie Richards came into ECW with a couple of old bags but he never mentioned their names. Then we have the referees, who Funk knows are lying because they are referees. Funk talks about how the book of Genesis says Jacob met an angel and they didn't play hockey or baseball. They wrestled each other, because it is something is always going to be around.

Funk talks about the people in the arena and in the ring who work so hard to make their mark. Wrestling is in his heart and there are people in ECW who have that passion too. Funk has his family come around him and the family applauds everyone for being here tonight and supporting ECW.

I'm not a big ECW guy but this was GREAT, as you could feel how much Funk meant to everyone here. Heyman's stuff was outstanding and the story of Funk in Amarillo was awesome. I didn't think Heyman was going to be topped and then Funk came

in and blew the doors off of the place with one of the most powerful wrestling speeches you will ever here. This is worth seeing, though depending on your ECW taste, you might want to just watch Heyman and Funk.