

Saturday Night's Main Event #21 (2025 Edition): How 1989 Of Them

Saturday Night's Main Event XXI

Date: May 27, 1989

Location: Veterans Memorial Auditorium, Des Moines, Iowa

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jesse Ventura

Time for another one almost thirty five years in the making. This one might not be the most well known, but it has one of the most famous matches in the show's history. This time around we have Hulk Hogan vs. the Big Boss Man inside a steel cage with a spot you might have seen before. Let's get to it.

Hulk Hogan is ready to pass sentence on Big Boss Man and Slick. He is the judge, jury and executioner. Hogan LOVED that line and used it on probably three Saturday Night's Main Events at minimum.

Oddly, Boss Man and Slick don't get a rebuttal.

Opening sequence. I could listen to that song for at least several minutes.

Vince and Jesse welcome us to the show, with Jesse being extra sick of Hogan due to No Holds Barred.

We look at Bobby Heenan cheating Ultimate Warrior out of the Intercontinental Title at Wrestlemania.

Heenan denies cheating to help Rick Rude win the title, because it was all about winning. Jim Duggan is dreaming of winning the title, so Rude is ready to give him a Rude Awakening.

Jim Duggan (now the King) dedicates the match to the troops on

Memorial Day weekend and suggests that Rick Rude is, uh, pink. Duggan is going to keep one eye on Bobby Heenan and one eye on Old Glory. Well not looking at your opponent doesn't sound like a good way to win a match.

Intercontinental Title: Jim Duggan vs. Rick Rude

Rude, with Bobby Heenan, is defending. They stare at each other to start and then lock up for a grapple around the ropes. Duggan blocks a sunset flip with a right hand and then hits the running clothesline over the top. A knee drop gives Duggan two but he charges into a knee in the corner. Duggan is right back with an atomic drop and you know Rude is all about settling one of those. Another knockdown gets three but Rude's foot is on the rope.

Cue Haku to yell at Duggan and be taken to the back as we take a break. Back with Rude raking the eyes and dropping an elbow for two, setting up the chinlock. Duggan fight sup but gets dropped with another knee. A top rope fist to the head puts Duggan down but of course ramming him into the buckle just wakes him up. The three point clothesline sends Rude outside and it's a countout at 7:17.

Rating: C+. In case you were wondering what the most 1989 WWF match ever could be. Duggan is a great choice to come after Rude because he's a big enough name to possibly be a threat and the fans loved him. They were also smart enough to have Rude escape with the title without beating Duggan, which was always a possibility.

Naturally Duggan seems to think he's the champion, even if he's still the King no matter what.

Jim Neidhart doesn't like the way Randy Savage has been acting, including when he was the WWF Champion. Apparently if Savage wants the title back, he has to go through Neidhart. Huh? He's not scared of Scary Sherri either.

Randy Savage is rather pleased with his new manager and is ready to take out Neidhart and then face Hulk Hogan again.

Randy Savage vs. Jim Neidhart

Sherri is here too. Savage bails to the floor to start and Sherri grabs the leg, allowing Savage to try a sunset flip. That's blocked with a simple sit but Savage is back up with some shots to the face. Sherri chokes away from the floor and then does it again but Savage's slam attempt goes rather poorly. Sherri offers a distraction on the floor but Neidhart cuts off Savage's cheap shot and hits a dropkick. A powerslam gives Neidhart two and Savage is tied in the ropes, only for Sherri to break him out. The top rope ax handle sends Neidhart into the barricade and the big elbow finishes for Savage at 5:57.

Rating: C+. This was just a way to get Savage back on the winning path after losing the title at Wrestlemania. Neidhart is kind of a perfect choice for this spot as he is a name but won't be hurt by losing a match to one of the biggest stars in the company. It wasn't a great match and I don't think it was expected to be, but it did what it was supposed to do.

The Big Boss Man, with Slick, is ready to beat Hulk Hogan and rehabilitate him. Slick promises a surprise for a bonus.

WWF Title: Hulk Hogan vs. Big Boss Man

Boss Man, with Slick, is challenging in a cage. Hold on though as Slick has a surprise: ZEUS! So this is weird even by WWF standards, as Zeus (played by actor Tom Lister) is the villain in the movie No Holds Barred and wants revenge on Hogan for what happened in the movie. As in the "real life" actor Hogan is fighting the movie character. Hogan comes out and Zeus won't let him in the cage, instead beating Hogan down as Jesse is THRILLED.

Zeus leaves and Boss Man goes outside and sends Hogan inside

for some choking. Hogan fights up with some rams into the cage and the big boot but it's way too early to go over the top. Boss Man starts to go out but Slick tells him to beat on Hogan more, with commentary not being impressed. Hogan fights up, at least until Boss Man plants him with a spinebuster.

Boss Man starts going up, with Ventura having no idea why he wouldn't just go through the door. He gets most of the way down but Hogan finally gets up and grabs him through the cage. They go back up onto the top rope and Hogan SUPERPLEXES HIM DOWN for an absolutely massive spot from its era (and not a bad one in modern times either).

They're both down so the referee comes in for the slowest count in recent memory. Hogan pops up (and the fans are with him) and goes for the door but Boss Man cuts him off with an uppercut. Slick throws in a chain (making sure to throw it over the top so people would see it) for some choking but a double ram into the buckle leaves both of them down again.

Back up and Hogan finds the chain to knock Boss Man silly. The legdrop connects but Slick rams the door onto the referee's head. Slick goes in but gets knocked away, allowing Hogan to crotch Boss Man on the top rope. Boss Man gets handcuffed to the top rope and Hogan gets out before Slick can unlock him to retain at 10:02 (Ventura: "Wouldn't you know it?").

Rating: B. It's not a particularly great match but DANG that superplex spot was huge and makes up for a lot of the weaker points. It's entirely designed around that one moment and Hogan gets to come from behind and get a big win on TV to kick off his title reign. Boss Man was a great choice to go after the title and there's a reason the two of them did some solid business together for a long time.

Post match Hogan beats up Slick for fun. He even puts on Slick's hat, which doesn't do much for him.

Bobby Heenan is ready for the Brainbusters to win the Tag Team

Titles.

Demolition isn't so convinced and promise destruction.

Tag Team Titles: Demolition vs. Brainbusters

The Brainbusters, with Bobby Heenan, are challenging. Smash shoves Blanchard into the corner to start and then knocks him to the floor without much trouble. Back in and the bearhug goes on but Heenan offers a distraction, allowing Anderson to get in a knee from behind. That doesn't last long as Anderson comes in and gets beaten on by Ax. Anderson gets laid across the top rope and hammered down but comes right back with a suplex.

That has all of no effect on Smash, who hands it back to Ax for a slam to Blanchard. A bearhug has Blanchard in more trouble and an elbow to the face sends him outside. Heenan gets knocked down so he goes onto the apron and actually has to be taken into the aisle as we take a break.

Back with Ax working on a neck crank before Smash comes in to hammer on Blanchard. Anderson comes in with a cheap shot though as Heenan is calm at ringside again. Blanchard actually hits something like a top rope seated senton and Anderson adds the always great spinebuster. Smash almost gets over for the tag but Anderson trips him down and Blanchard decks Ax in a smart move. Stereo right hands knock Smash and Anderson down and it's back to Ax, who knocks the referee down for the DQ at 9:15.

Rating: B. There is a reason this era is considered part of the gold standard for tag team wrestling. You had so many teams like this that you could throw out there and have a good match and that's what you got with this one. The ending set up a rematch, which would see the Brainbusters take the titles on the next edition of the show, which isn't something you would often get on this series.

Randy Savage declares himself the new #1 contender to the WWF Title and is ready to take away Hulk Hogan's Hollywood looks.

Jimmy Snuka vs. Boris Zhukov

Slick is here with Zhukov and has a great exasperated look when Snuka's music cuts off Zhukov's singing. Ventura gets back from interviewing Savage and asks what he missed. Vince: "Absolutely nothing." What a great endorsement of the show. Snuka wastes no time in striking away and hitting an ax handle. A backbreaker sets up the Superfly Splash (that always looked great) to finish Zhukov at 1:10.

Hulk Hogan talks about his issues with Zeus before, during and after filming No Holds Barred. Now come see the movie!

Vince and Jesse wrap it up and the credits roll.

Overall Rating: B+. I had a great time with this one and it's one of the best episodes of the series. You have two rather awesome matches and a pair of good ones, plus an all time spot from the cage match. They picked a good one to bring out of mothballs here, as it's a very fun show from an entertaining era, which made for a heck of a quick sit.

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