

Thought of the Day: Stars Do Not Make The Match

By that I mean rating stars. I was reading a summary of Vince Russo's latest shoot interview and he mentioned that the casual fans don't care about a match being four stars and lasting twenty minutes with great workrate. In something that isn't often said, Russo is exactly right on this point. Casual fans care about the story and having fun on any given night. Look at what is considered the greatest match ever: Randy Savage vs. Ricky Steamboat. Do you think the match would be as beloved as it was if not for the basic backstory (Savage injured Steamboat and Steamboat is here for revenge)? The fans wanted to see Steamboat get his revenge and the fact that the match is a masterpiece helps a lot, but it's not the main reason most fans liked it.

In other words, booking for the fans that want long and entertaining matches is a bad idea, as most fans get bored and change the channel for stuff like that.

Thought of the Day: Booking vs. Writing

This is something that will make perfect sense if you watch NXT, which you should. Something that WWE is really bad at for the most part anymore is booking week to week television. Take the Bryan vs. Corporation story. Every week so far, the events of the show are wrapped up clean and neat before the

end of the episode. The overall story will continue the next week, but the events of one week rarely directly connect to next week's stuff. For example: Orton lays out Bryan with an RKO, but the next week that event is barely mentioned and it's just Bryan trying to get the title back all over again. It's very much like a regular TV show with a villain or a hero trying to accomplish the same goal week to week. In other words, they're stand alone episodes.

Now on the other hand look at NXT or most older wrestling shows. The shows are booked week to week, meaning you can't miss a single episode because things will have changed. That rewards fans who are around every week and makes for more entertaining TV shows. For instance in NXT, they alternate with various storylines so you'll have to come back for a few weeks to get the next part of a story you watched. This makes for more interesting TV, and if you've got a good show, you'll be brought up to speed every week. It's a substantial difference and can really enhance how good a show can be.

Required Viewing #1: The Horsemen Put Hard Times On Dusty Rhodes

This is a series I announced almost two weeks ago and I finally have time to get around to it. Again this won't be daily but I'll try to get one up every week or two. We're starting with a double feature today. To begin with, we start on September 29, 1985 in Atlanta Georgia. Ric Flair is the reigning NWA World Champion and has just defeated Nikita

Koloff in a cage match to retain the title. Post match the Russians (a three man team including Nikita) come in to destroy the champion. Dusty Rhodes makes the save and the Andersons come out to jump Dusty with Flair locking the cage. Chaos ensues. I apologize for the commentary issues as this is the best footage I could find.

Look at the crowd as the attack goes on. They want to kill the bad guys in there for hurting their hero. Dusty had connected with the people and they wanted their champion to be ok. This is the exact same idea used at Summerslam 1994 with Owen Hart and Jim Neidhart locking the cage and destroying Bret while the Hart Family storm the cage to get Bret to safety.

About a month later, Dusty Rhodes returned to television with something to say about what Ric Flair had done to him. Did I mention he was facing Flair for the title at Starrcade 1985?

This promo, called Hard Times, is widely considered the greatest promo of all time because the people could and did identify with it. People got what Dusty was talking about and as they listened, they could see what he was talking about in their own lives. The fans identified with Dusty Rhodes and what he was talking about, making Dusty Rhodes THEIR hero. As luck would have it, this hero would be facing a man who was everything the common man wasn't at a major wrestling event, and YOU could watch it if you paid your money right now.

That's how you build to a match people. It gave the fans a reason to want to see the match because it was THEIR hero fighting the man that wants to hold all of them down. It's a perfect buildup and the whole thing still works to this day. Not so much the match but you get the idea.

You can check out a review of the match (which isn't Required Viewing) here:

[Starrcade 1985 – The Original I Quit Match](#)

Or a version that doesn't suck in the History of Starrcade book, available from Amazon at:

Thought of the Day: One Of A Kind

In something that won't be said either before or again, this is going to be about a Dirty White Boy, Bismark, North Dakota and Big E. Langston. Back in the mid 1990s, the WWF had a stupid idea for a lot of one note characters, such as a wrestling monk, a rock guitarist, a magician (I think that one had potential but that's for another time), cowboys, a garbageman and a tag team called Well Dunne. All of these were really basic characters with only the cowboys (Smoking

Gunns) going anywhere. In addition to all these guys, there was one in particular I want to focus on: T.L. Hopper, as played by Tony Anthony (who wrestled as Dirty White Boy in SMW).

T.L. Hopper was a wrestling plumber. End of gimmick. Seriously, that's it. He was a wrestling plumber and nothing more. We didn't know whether to cheer him, boo him, or anything about him other than his job. Why was he a wrestler? Why not stay a plumber? Was he the WWF plumber? Was it a side job? Why are we thinking of all these questions? In short, there was nothing to this character and it didn't shock anyone when he was gone in less than a year.

At the end of the day there was one major issue above all others with Hopper: there was nothing special about him. Open your phone book and see how many plumbers you find in the yellow pages. There are probably dozens if you live in a decent sized city. In other words, there's nothing special about a plumber. This one happens to wrestle and that's the end of the differences between him and any other plumber you can name.

Flash forward to about 2011. Down in Florida Championship Wrestling, a power lifter turned wrestler joined the WWE developmental system. His name was Big E. Langston and all we knew about him was that he was strong. He needed a nickname so he was christened Florida's Strongest Man. Uh....ok?

That's kind of impressive but is he stronger than everyone in Oregon? On the street I live on? Can he out lift everyone in Bismark, North, Dakota? Tell you what: I'll go to Oregon and if the strongest man there sucks, I'll come buy a ticket to see Langston, providing there isn't a flight to Bismark later in the day. It also didn't help that there was a guy on the main WWE roster known as the World's Strongest Man. It really makes Langston look like a low rent imitation, so why would I want to pay for someone who might be one of the strongest men

in the country, let alone the rest of the world?

The lesson here should be obvious: make the gimmick something you can't find elsewhere. Look at Kurt Angle when he debuted. The emphasis was on the fact that he was the ONLY Olympic Gold Medalist in WWF History, as in no one else has ever done this. Randy Orton is the APEX Predator, as in the top of the food chain. Most titles are the WORLD Heavyweight Championship, not the Louisiana and Missouri Champion.

In short, make a gimmick something that will draw a crowd, not something that makes people look at what better options there are. Make them say "I want to see THAT!"

John Cena Tops 2013 PWI List

The best is ranked #1. I'm as shocked as you are. Here's the rest of the top 10.

1. John Cena
2. CM Punk
3. Hiroshi Tanahashi
4. Bully Ray
5. Kazuchika Okada
6. Sheamus
7. Jeff Hardy
8. Alberto Del Rio
9. Dolph Ziggler
10. Kevin Steen

The awards cover the period from I believe July of 2012 to June of 2013 or something close to that.

Happy Birthday Hulk Hogan

My childhood hero is 60 years old. I don't know how to handle this.

Thought of the Day: When All Else Fails, Repackage

Why this isn't done anymore is beyond me. Lately the Wyatt Family has been the hottest group in wrestling due to its amazing leader Bray Wyatt. He's so into the character right now and it's absolutely amazing. However, this isn't the first time we've seen Wyatt in WWE. A few years back he was Husky Harris, a fat guy who ran pretty fast. There was clearly potential there, but there was nothing to go on. The solution for WWE: completely repackage him as something unlike Harris at all.

This is called repackaging and it can be the solution to anyone's problems. A ton of people have been repackaged over the years to incredible results.

Hulk Hogan – Generic heel to REAL AMERICAN

Papa Shango – Voodoo priest to pimp

Bret Hart – Cowboy to Excellence of Execution

Steve Austin – Ringmaster to the Texas Rattlesnake

Undertaker – Demon who worshipped Vince McMahon to biker

I could go on and on but you get the point. The key thing to repackaging is that somewhere out there, there's a gimmick that works for you if you have the talent. Look at Kane for example. He went from generic heel characters like Unabomb and Doomsday to a gangster in WCW named Bruiser Mastino (he fought Sting once on WCW Saturday Night) to an evil dentist to a fake Diesel until they FINALLY found the character that worked for him: the Undertaker's brother who could manipulate fire. The key thing though was the man had talent and the key was putting him in the right character to make that talent come out. He tried everything and finally got it right, giving him a career that has run 16 years and a ton of titles.

Now jump back to WWE today: think of how many people could thrive as a completely new character. Wade Barrett comes to mind. He's just a generic English brawler. A new gimmick could do wonders for him. Look at what happened to guys like Brodus Clay. He went from a monster heel with a good look to the Funkasaurus and was the hottest act on Raw for a long time. It can be done, but the key is to do the work, which WWE seems to not want to do most of the time. Instead they would rather have a guy lose and lose and lose and lose then give him two wins and wonder why no one cares about him.

Thought of the Day: Hulk Hogan Is TNA's Gorilla Monsoon

This makes sense when you think about it. I'm 25 years old, meaning I grew up watching Hulk Hogan in the WWF and later in WCW as Hollywood Hogan. Hogan retired from full time competition when I was about 15 years old.

Now let's flash back to my childhood and a few years before. The voice of the WWF was Gorilla Monsoon, a play by play announcer who would later become Commissioner. Monsoon had been a wrestler in the 70s but retired in 1981, several years before I was born. I never saw Monsoon wrestle and to the best of my knowledge his last match was in 1987 in an old timers battle royal.

This brings us to modern TNA. Hulk Hogan is now retired and the GM of Impact. He's wrestled two matches in TNA but is far from an active competitor. As mentioned, Hogan last wrestled in 2003 and to call him a regular back then is a stretch. For all intents and purposes, Hogan's last full year as an active wrestler was in 1999.

Therefore, unless you're about 17 or older, you probably don't remember Hogan as an active wrestler. I'm sure you've heard of him and know who he is, but there's no direct connection to him. Growing up, I knew who Monsoon was and that he used to be a wrestler but I knew nothing about his career other than a few Coliseum Video matches. In other words, Monsoon was an

old guy who used to be a wrestler apparently.

For younger fans, that's what Hulk Hogan is in TNA. He's like Jack Brisco or Dory Funk Jr. to someone my age. I know of their work and I respect what they did, but there's nothing that ties me to them, much like younger fans with Hogan today.

Yet in TNA, Hogan is the focal point of the show a lot of the time. The portion of the audience that has a connection to him as a wrestler is shrinking and the portion of the audience that knows him as that guy who used to wrestle is growing. To them, Hogan is a guy they've never seen wrestle other than on DVD.

And they wonder why their audience barely grows.

Thought of the Day: It's The Story, Not The Characters

The Divas are teaching me something. AJ vs. Kaitlyn started out as a feud I had zero interest in and that I usually rolled my eyes at. Over time though, the story has won me over. I still don't care about Kaitlyn, but I care about how she's been abused and made fun of and I want to see her destroy AJ because of it. It's the first story in the Divas division in months if not years and it's working like a charm. Think about it: how many times has the Divas Title match been set up by a one off #1 contenders match or a lame battle royal? Now

how many times has it been because of some personal issue?
Which do you care about more?

It's the story that sells the feud.

Steve Austin On Wrestling

If you've never heard Austin talk about wrestling, make the time to do so. The guy just gets the idea behind the business and has one of the most brilliant wrestling minds you'll ever hear. He also has one of if not the best wrestling podcasts in the world right now. Check it out. The more interviews I read of him giving his take on things the more brilliant he seems. He's also one of the few guys who can critique nearly any wrestler ever because of how big a star he was. Check his stuff out and you'll have a blast doing it.

Here's his podcast page which has episodes of him just talking about whatever comes to mind or interviews with legends like Angle, Hart and Nash plus many others.

<http://www.podcastone.com/Steve-Austin-Show?showAllEpisodes=true>