

The Return Of A Stable

This is an idea I remember being floated around back in the Immortal days in TNA. The idea was to have the Main Event Mafia return to fight Immortal. I hardly ever remember a team that is long since gone coming back to face a current stable. We've seen stables fighting each other before but never one that comes back to feud with one. It's definitely an interesting idea and if done properly it could create some interesting stories.

Is this something you would be interested in seeing in the future if stables came back as a thing, or should dead stables stay dead?

Thought of the Day: Dolph Ziggler

Yesterday I watched Edge vs. Ziggler from the 2011 Rumble. I just finished Punk vs. Ziggler from the 2012 Rumble. On Monday I saw Cena vs. Ziggler on Raw. My conclusion:

Ziggler is the exact same worker he was two years ago. He hasn't gotten any better other than having a superkick instead of the sleeper now. His talking has gotten a bit better, but at the end of the day he's about 95% the same guy that he was back in 2011. That's not a good sign for a guy who is allegedly the future of the company.

Thought of the Day: More Proof Tag Wrestling Doesn't Work Anymore

After the big push last year, we're back down to HELL NO vs. the Scholars again and the same formula that has been used for years now. At the end of the day, the division isn't going to last long term and there's really no way around that. The TNA tag division is dead again now too with just the champions and apparently a thrown together team of two main eventers.

Thought of the Day: Favorite Does Not Mean Best

This is something I've gotten asked a good deal recently and I want to clarify it. My favorite baseball team is the Cleveland Indians. That means I like them better than all other teams. That does NOT mean I think they're the best. Anyone who follows baseball can tell that there are many better teams. The same is true in wrestling. My favorite wrestler is Mick Foley, but I certainly don't think he's the best ever. There's a very big difference between best and favorite, which needs to be remembered.

WWE vs. TNA Lawsuit Dismissed

The whole thing about WWE stealing information to find out what talent they could steal from TNA finally comes to a close. While not confirmed, it looks like a settlement was reached. I never really got why this was such a big deal in the first place.

Thought of the Day: Heels Don't Cheat Enough

I've touched on this before. I was watching a Nitro last night and Alex Wright put his feet on the ropes to cheat. At Genesis this past week, there were multiple instances where a heel pulled the trunks to win. Why don't we see these kind of things more often? It's so simple and it's almost a guaranteed way to make the people boo you, but instead it's almost always interference or something like that. In WWE, when is the last time we got a belt shot to the head? It may be easy heat, but it's better than no heat.

Favorite Wrestling Vehicle

In honor of Del Rio's title win, what is your favorite vehicle in wrestling? It could be a car, a motorcycle, the horses the Vince and Jesse rode into SNME on, anything. Mine: The ring carts used to get down the aisle at Manias 3 and 6. Those things were straight up cool.

Your picks?

I Want To Talk A Little Bit About Stone Cold Steve Austin

I mentioned this in another post and I had planned on saying something short about it, but the more I thought about it the more I realized it deserved something big. I mentioned that Stone Cold Steve Austin was a near perfect character and today we're going to look at why that's the case. Austin is one of the few if not the only character ever to be both completely over the top while also being one of the most realistic. I'll explain what I mean by that in a bit so let's get to it.

First and foremost a clarification: I'm talking about Stone Cold, not Steve Austin in general. I'm talking about roughly the period from the day he started defying authority and ending at Wrestlemania X7 (with a few exceptions past that date). Before then his character barely existed and after that it changed for the worse, although he was always talented enough to get whatever he was doing. Austin is on the list of people you

hear about who could read the phone book and entertain an audience for hours.

The easiest way to sum up the Austin character in a nutshell is with a famous movie line. In the movie *Network*, one of the characters says "I'm as mad and I'm not going to take it anymore." That is Steve Austin in one sentence. Austin was tired of playing second fiddle to all of these older guys who were given better spots than him because they had been around longer. He felt that the spots should be based on how good you were, not when you started in the company.

This was perfectly illustrated at the 1996 King of the Ring which is commonly considered Austin's coming out party. In the finals, Austin beat Jake Roberts who was back in the WWF for "one more run" as a nostalgia character. Following the match, Austin cut his legendary Austin 3:16 promo, talking about how Roberts may be a legend, but he just got beat and there was nothing anyone could do to stop Austin's rise.

What followed was the feud that made Austin, as he fought the ultimate current legend, Bret Hart. While Bret beat Austin at the Survivor Series, Austin continued to torment Bret, cheating him out of the Royal Rumble and costing him the world title a few nights later on Raw. This all lead us to Wrestlemania and the I Quit match between the two of them where we saw some of the best storytelling ever.

The basic idea of the match was simple: Bret was as submission master but Austin would never say he gave up. At the end of the match (one of the

best ever and well worth seeing if you somehow haven't), Austin was bleeding terribly and finally passed out in the Sharpshooter to give the win to Bret. Now notice something very important here: Bret could not stop Austin. All he did was slow down what was coming and hope to survive it.

This brings me to my second point: Austin wasn't just a character. He was a revolution and a new way of thinking in wrestling. The reason for his mass popularity though was he captured the thoughts of the audience. Austin was the voice of the voiceless, in that people are always tired of being told that they have to wait their turn no matter how good they may be and are tired of putting up with corporate suits telling them to work within a system and other various excuses to avoid answering the complaints people had.

In September of 1997 (don't worry we'll come back to the summer months later), Monday Night Raw was broadcast from Madison Square Garden for the first time. Around this time, Austin had been injured in a match with Owen Hart and might not be able to wrestle again because of it. Vince had told Austin to work within the system, to which Austin responded with the first of many Stunners to the boss. In a word, the building erupted. As I said before, it was the audience channeling themselves into Austin and getting to do something they had always wanted to do but never could do in real life.

What followed over the next three and a half years was a path of destruction by the rebel Austin. He did everything from fill Corvettes with cement to blowing up buses to pretending to shoot Vince in the head to spraying down the Corporation with beer and everything in between. The entire time though, Austin was rebelling. This is another of the keys to

why Austin was a perfect character: he DID things rather than merely be labeled as something.

In a word, Austin was a rebel. That's the single word definition of what his character was. Now, can you imagine if he had come in with the name "The Rebel"? Dick Slater had that exact same name back in the late 80s, and remarkably almost no one remembers it. He came out in a Confederate flag vest and that's about it. We were simply told what his gimmick and character were, as opposed to being SHOWN what the character was.

There's an old saying which is a cliché, but in this case it's the absolute truth: actions speak louder than words. That's one of the reasons Austin's character worked: we got to see him doing all this stuff. This is true with any wrestling character. Look at the gimmicks like Duke Droese, Henry Godwinn and T.L. Hopper. We were told immediately what these guys were and that was about the extent of their character development.

Now look at someone like Razor Ramon, who debuted with a series of vignettes of him in Miami being a jerk. Those promos told us everything we needed to know about Ramon and all we were told directly was that Ramon was "the bad guy." Again, it's about seeing these people do things rather than being told about them. Austin is the epitome of this because the actions he took were huge.

Jumping back to the summer of 1997, we'll get into another reason why Austin worked so well: he was allowed to be seasoned. Today one of the

major problems is pushing people to the main event before they're ready. A legitimate case could have been made that Austin was ready for the world title after losing to Hart at Wrestlemania, but instead he was given another year of feuding with first the Hart Foundation and then a brief run against the Nation of Domination before entering the world title scene.

Now while Austin won his feud with the Nation, defeating Rock for the Intercontinental Title to end things at D-X In Your House in December, he didn't have the same kind of luck against the Harts. In his war with the Hart Foundation, Austin regularly lost. He lost to Bret at Survivor Series, he lost to Bret at Final Four, he lost to Bret at Wrestlemania, he beat Bret by DQ at Revenge of the Taker, the Foundation cost Austin the title at Cold Day In Hell, and Austin's team lost at Canadian Stampede. Austin completely lost the Border War, but he wasn't on Bret's level yet.

This is something I can't emphasize enough: Austin lost. A lot. People often forget that Austin was a SIX TIME WWF Champion. That's a lot of times to win and lose a world title. When you look back at it, he didn't hold the belt long other than one reign. His first reign lasted about three months, his second reign lasted one day less than the first, his third and fourth reigns were under two months each, and his sixth reign was less than two months. Only his fifth reign, the one in 2001 when he won the title from the Rock, lasted a good amount of time and it wasn't even six months long.

Let's look at how Austin lost the title each time. The first time was a first blood match to a masked man. The question my friends and I asked back then was "how can he make a guy bleed when he can't get to his

face?" Austin couldn't do it. The second time was in a glorified handicap match against Kane and Undertaker. Again, these odds seemed impossible and Austin failed. The third loss was against Undertaker with both Vince and Shane McMahon as guest referees and Shane fast counted him.

In other words, when the odds were stacked to the roof against Austin, he usually lost. Think about that and think of how rare it is. There was no Superman comeback. Austin didn't beat four guys on his own. Austin didn't come up with some cute way to keep the belt. He lost and that was it. Here's the secret the WWE seems to forget today: you can win a title back. Of the five times Austin regained the title after losing it, three of them were less than six weeks after he lost it in the first place.

This is what I was referring to when I said Austin was both over the top as well as realistic. Rather than making a superhuman comeback, he would lose. At the end of the day, it would have been REALLY hard for fans to buy Austin beating both Kane and Undertaker in the same match. If nothing else, it's bad for business because why should I believe Kane or Undertaker could beat him one on one if they couldn't do it together? Also, it doesn't hurt Austin to lose in a situation like that because it's not like he missed a layup or something. He lost to the most dominant pairing in company history. It was a much smarter decision to have Austin go down and get the title back later.

This brings us to the final reason why the Stone Cold character worked so well: he was really entertaining. I mentioned this earlier but Austin is one of the few wrestlers where he could make eating a sandwich entertaining. Austin could do anything from drinking beer to singing Jimmy Crack Corn to Stunning people to shouting WHAT over and over again to singing the Rick Roll song (Youtube that one. It's hysterical.) to

telling funny stories and people would be entertained. Look at him now as after his wrestling career is over he's enjoying a decent career as a B-movie action star.

The other side of Austin's entertainment value is his ability in the ring. People often forget how excellent of a pure wrestler Austin was. Think about to some of the matches he had with Bret, Rock, Foley, Benoit, Angle, Jericho, HHH and I could go on. With Austin, his work on the microphone is so good that it's constantly overshadowing his work in the ring. To give you an idea of how good he was, according to Meltzer, Austin has two five star matches, the same total as Bret Hart and Shawn Michaels.

Overall, Stone Cold Steve Austin was one of the best characters of all time because he was both realistic and over the top as well as incredibly entertaining. He connected with an audience that wanted to express themselves but couldn't as well as never going so far overboard that he was unrealistic in the ring. On top of that, he was an excellent in ring wrestler that had one of the best collections of matches that anyone has ever had. Austin might be as close to a perfect character as there has ever been.

Thought of the Day: The Worst Feud I've Ever Seen

Given the news that broke earlier in the week this popped into my mind. Those of you who regularly read my stuff might already know this. The worst feud I've ever seen was Matt

Morgan vs. Elijah Burke (D'Angelo Dinero) down in OVW. They feuded for months over the OVW Title with Morgan finally taking it from Burke to end things. This NEVER became interesting whatsoever and the matches were consistently terribly dull. I have no idea what the point of this feud was and it kept me from ever caring about Burke again.

The Official Rules of Professional Wrestling

I saw a link to this and thought it was pretty cool. Over the years, wrestling rules basically are altered to fit whatever story was going on. This however is an official set of NWA wrestling rules circa 1974 from a souvenir sold in the Mid-Atlantic area. It's pretty cool stuff.

<http://www.ddtdigest.com/features/prog1974/pictures/backib.jpg>

I'd LOVE to see a WWF version of this just for the sake of comedy.