

Battlebowl – When So-So Gimmicks Go Bad

Battlebowl

Date: November 20, 1993

Location: Pensacola Civic Center, Pensacola, Florida

Attendance: 7,000

Commentators: Tony Schiavone, Jesse Ventura

This is another of Dusty's brilliant ideas that never really worked after the first time which was only because Sting was the star of the show. At least this year they didn't have it at Starrcade. The idea is we take something like 32 names and draw them out for "random" tag matches. The 16 winners have a battle royal to win....well to win the battle royal. There are no other matches on the card and since this is back in the days before Flair got the booking power, the matches all get at least 8 minutes and in some cases more. This is going to be painful. Let's get to it.

Everyone gets in a quick line about what the show is about. Just like something for the Rumble would go, but for once this isn't a ripoff.

Tony says there are 40 men in the back, meaning that 8 guys aren't going to be out here. They're going for a ring apparently. Don't you feel the desire to win that??? We're also told that Muta, the previous winner, isn't here. Riveting.

Gene and a French maid named Fifi read the names. Barring a funny line or something I likely won't mention that we go back to them to announce a match as they're just drawing them out of a tumbler.

Vader/Cactus Jack vs. Charlie Norris/Kane

Vader is world champion here and he and Jack hate each other. Vader SHOVES this guy out of his chair to get here which is awesome. And no that's not the more famous Kane. This was originally going to be his partner Kole, but Kane took his place. They would soon change their names to Booker T and Stevie Ray and would have some more success. Norris just flat out sucks and everyone knows he does.

Cactus and Vader brawl on the ramp to start us off. Yeah this is going to be one of those nights you can already tell. Norris runs down and Vader just ends him with a punch. Kane (Stevie Ray) and Jack start us off. Vader won't get in the ring but Race yells at him to get him in. Cactus is a face here and getting very popular and far better for his insane style and improving match style. Of course he was released as soon as Hogan got there because we can't have young talented and popular guys on our roster!

Norris is tall. That's about all he's got going for him and he would be out of the company more or less right after this. Vader Bomb gets a big pop as Norris gets flattened. Cactus hits him with a front flip as this is a squash so far. Jack hits a very weak belly to back suplex on Norris for two. Kane can't even throw a proper clothesline. The referee calls a tag before the tag actually happens but whatever.

Tony wants every match to be hardcore. Is he Vince Russo all of a sudden? Norris is absolutely horrible. Cactus gets a double arm DDT from nowhere to bring us back to even. Norris hits a top rope chop to Vader who just shrugs it off. Vader gets some face pops here despite being the top heel in the company. That's how hated Norris was. Vader falls down while powerbombing Norris' fatness but gets the pin anyway.

Rating: D. Match was boring even with Cactus and Vader in there. Nothing at all happened as we were just standing around doing nothing for the most part. Norris was terrible and thankfull he was gone soon after this. There was zero drama

here as we had two guys that mean nothing vs. the main event of Halloween Havoc. Who do you think is going to win here?

Brian Knobbs/Johnny B. Badd vs. Paul Roma/Erik Watts

Watts is the son of Bill Watts and is AWFUL. He's here because of his daddy and absolutely nothing else. Something tells me this is going to be absolutely awful. Roma is a Horseman here for no apparent reason at all. No entrance music at all for any guy which is odd to see. The Nasty Boys are tag champions here so Knobbs isn't happy here. The main attraction here is how bad can Watts be.

Badd and Roma, the more talented guys on their teams (keep in mind that Badd is rather young here and hasn't hit his stride just yet) start us off. Roma is in long white tights here which just looks completely out of place for a heel. At least I think he's a heel. Based on commentary he's a face. It's a bit confusing since almost everyone hated him. He can't even do a backdrop. Decent dropkick though.

Comedy time as Watts is here. Watts hits a dropkick to the elbow to put Knobbs on the floor. Badd comes in to try to save this and they shake hands. We transition from that to hearing about Cactus Jack being a spiritual advisor, which translates into talking about manager of the year. LOTS of basic stuff from all four guys which is the problem. There's no flow at all to the match. Badd will do ok and then Knobbs will come in and screw everything up.

None of the wrestling is any good but whatever. To say Watts is limited in the ring is the understatement of the year. Roma gets a powerslam for what would be two but Missy has the referee. She manages the Nasty Boys which I think I forgot to mention. This has been going almost ten minutes already, which is the problem with these shows. The matches go on forever because we have nothing else to air, but the matches completely suck more often than not.

We waste a bunch of time to do nothing at all on the floor. Tony talks a bit like a heel and Jesse says how proud he is of him. They speculate that the winner tonight will have a title shot more than likely, be it the TV Title, the US Title or the World Title. I'm not sure which to make fun of: the statement or the match. Watts gets the hot tag and he unleashes his clotheslines. The announcers argue about some quarterback whose name I missed as Knobbs rolls through a cross body and uses the tights for the pin.

Rating: D-. This got 13 minutes for no apparent reason other than WCW was mad at us or something I guess. Watts never was any good and you can't blame him for being thrown out there when he flat out wasn't ready. They never got out of doing basic stuff for nearly 13 minutes. If this was like 5 minutes long it's bearable, but just way too long and not nearly enough talent to go around.

Shockmaster/Paul Orndorff vs. Ricky Steamboat/Steven Regal

Well the second team is stacked if nothing else. Orndorff is passable so maybe Shockmaster (Tugboat if you're not familiar for some reason) can be outside most of the time. Steamboat gets by far the biggest reaction of the night so far, which to be fair isn't saying much. Regal is I think TV Champion here. He held it enough times so we'll go with that. The announcer saying he's TV Champion helps a bit too.

LOUD Paula chant to start us off. Orndorff just looks old here. Regal looks downright British. The two more talented guys start us off, and by that I mean Steamboat for his team. This is before Regal got into drugs so heavily and was still very thin. Jesse starts his political jokes as you can tell he wanted to get into that more. We head to the floor and Steamboat is in trouble for all of 8 seconds.

Shocky looks almost clueless out there. He finally comes in and here's Regal to meet him. In a great heel move he wipes

his hands before he gets in. I still can't get over that being Bill Dundee as his manager. Shocky lifts him up and sits him on the top, patting his head. That was amusing. This ends the entertaining part of his contribution to the match. After a slam he tags out to give us heel vs. heel.

They do very little beyond basics, but Sir William shouting up WELL DONE SIR is kind of amusing for some reason. Regal hooks a full nelson as Jesse thinks we have a tag team here. Regal does a cartwheel. Can you imagine him doing that today without ripping apart every muscle in his body? Steamboat finally comes in and gets caught in a hot shot. Crowd is DEAD by the way.

The problem of this whole show appears again as nothing of note is happening as they're just killing time since they have 9 matches to fill three hours and there are more or less no segments to fill in time. Regal won't tag so Shocky makes him in a decent bit. The partners start fighting and an umbrella shot and a splash end Regal, sending Orndorff and Shocky to the final. Clearly the more talented combo!

Rating: D+. By far the best match tonight and even then it's bad. Regal vs. Orndorff was the highlight...somehow, but the problem again becomes that the only story is face/heel issues, which get boring very quickly as they did here. This wasn't much at all and it never got out of first gear...much like the other matches. I hate this show already.

Gene has handcuffs for some reason.

King Kong/Dustin Rhodes vs. Equalizer/Awesome Kong

Equalizer is more commonly known as Dave Sullivan. The Kongs are very fat men that both sucked beyond any sense of the word suck. Rhodes gets a decent reaction and he should as he's the only one with anything resembling talent. The fat guys both wear masks so I can't tell them apart. Rhodes is US Champion here, which I think he would lose to Austin at Starrcade.

Everyone just kind of stops talking here as the non Kongs start us off. About thirty seconds in the commentary is back as Dustin realizes he's in over his head here with such little anything to work with. Awesome comes in and is so big you actually can't see the referee behind him. They make Vader look small so naturally they heavily suck. They're too light skinned to be the Headhunters. King doesn't want to fight his partner so more or less it's 3 on 1.

King comes in finally and beats up Equalizer. The crowd is so silent you can hear individual fans. They slug it out and then go back to just clawing at each others' faces. Big shoulder block to take down Kong and both tag. Sunset flip gets two for Dustin and it breaks down. The Kongs ram heads and Dustin gets a bulldog on his opponent Kong and wins it.

Rating: D. Again with a weak match as Dustin more or less was a one man team. That's good as he was the only one of the four that's watchable. For you young guys he's more commonly known as Goldust. You had three big guys out there and Dustin, none of which could do anything other than big pounding shots. This went nowhere at all and was boring on top of that. Thankfully it was very short though, so at least there's that.

Sting/Jerry Sags vs. Keith Cole/Ron Simmons

Cole is half of a team called the Cole Twins that never went anywhere. Sting won the first Battlebowl and is the most popular wrestler in the company by far here. Simmons is on the very brink of a heel turn here but not quite there yet. Jesse gets a good shot in at Missy saying it's hard to say which of them is Sags. Cole has a long blonde mullet-esque thing to the back of his head. It's idiotic looking but whatever.

Cole and Sags start us off here. And we stall. That's the sign of a bad match right off the bat. Ok make that Simmons is going to start. Cole did but he was only in the ring for like 4 seconds and never made contact. Nice dropkick by Simmons who

used to be World Champion if you can believe that. We go to a completely random crowd shot during an armbar. Did the camera guy get bored or something?

The fans want Sting and I can't say I blame them. Sags won't tag him in of course, just because he's an annoying pest. Simmons comes in to breathe a bit of life into the match but not much. And now we get Sting vs. Simmons, which is kind of awesome sounding. We get a clean break as Simmons really isn't a heel yet so it's ok. O'Connor Roll is totally messed up as this is more or less a standoff.

And now back to Keith Cole to end the interesting part of this match. Cole and Sags do absolutely nothing of note as we just kill time here. Sting comes in to wake up the crowd a bit and we go back to the interesting matchup of the whole match. Ron acts all heelish and the fans are far from thrilled to put it mildly. Hey look! More armbars! Cole is just bringing this match down so far it's not even funny.

Sting beats up Cole with ease and hits the splash in the corner. Sags comes in because he can and hits a top rope elbow for the easy pin. Simmons beats the heck out of Cole after the match.

Rating: C-. On any other show this is probably lower but this show has been so bad that I'll take what I can get here. Just more or less a nothing match though as the rest of them have been but this at least had something close to a story to it. The whole tag match deal is just REALLY annoying though and I'm bored with it. Naturally there's nearly an hour of it to go because WCW hates me.

Ric Flair/Steve Austin vs. 2 Cold Scorpio/Maxx Payne

Ok this HAS to be good right? Austin is about the level of Dolph Ziggler at this point and I'm pretty sure Flair is a face at this point, so expect more tension. BIG reaction for Flair. Austin cost Flair the world title about ten days ago.

Well of course he did. Payne's head looks a bit like Undertaker which is kind of weird to say.

Austin and Payne start us off here. Payne is a grunge rocker more or less with long black hair and metal band t-shirts. He can wrestle though, and we hear about Flair vs. Vader at Starrcade. The fans want Flair here, which is odd as less than 5 years later Austin would be the biggest star in the world. Scorpio comes in while Flair yells at Austin. For those of you that have never seen him, go find some of Scorpio's early to mid 90s stuff as he's incredibly fun to watch. Basically imagine Morrison with some meat on his bones and a lack of botches with the gimmick of just being awesome.

The future Stone Cold hits the floor and he still looks weird with a star on his tights. Flair comes in again and just owns all. We shift into a far more traditional and old school style of tagging with Flair and Austin making Scorpio the face in peril. Flair with old school heel tactics never gets old, but since he's more or less a natural heel it doesn't make him look evil. That makes no sense to me either so don't try to make sense out of it.

Flair and Austin of course go at it which doesn't last long. TEXTBOOK suplex by Flair. Just absolute perfection there. Austin with a top rope elbow of all things for two. He was a totally different wrestler once Hart broke his neck. In a stupid looking move, Scorpio just kind of falls down, sending Austin stumbling into the corner. Flair and Payne come in and Flair can't do anything. A running knee in the corner misses and the Figure Four ends it to a big pop. That's basic psychology and again it works.

Rating: B-. See, THIS is how you do one of these things. There was a simple story here of two guys making something work and just doing their thing on Scorpio while keeping the bigger and stronger guy out. This was a very simple style, but there is one important thing it had going for it: it worked. Best match

BY FAR up to this point and likely of the whole show.

Rick Rude/Shanghai Pierce vs. Marcus Bagwell/Tex Slazenger

Tex is Mideon and Shanghai is Henry Godwin under a mask. Rude is the International World Champion here which in essence is the NWA Title without the NWA. Why do announcers welcome us to a show an hour and a half into it? Are they thinking we got here late or something? Tony points out that we have more wrestlers than spots left in matches, meaning we won't have everyone called.

Rude is a rather interesting case as he was rarely more than a comedy upper midcard guy but in WCW he was sent to the moon and would have been the regular world champion had it not been for his career ending back injury. The future WWF Tag Champions come in but no one actually does anything as Rude is brought back in.

Rather boring match so far with little happening, but Bagwell plays a decent enough face in peril. He makes a comeback and this isn't too bad. I can't remember a quieter crowd in forever though, which is a really bad sign methinks. The commentary stops again which I never got the first time. It's WCW though so basic errors like these are expected.

This crowd is absolutely silent. It's almost creepy in a way. Rude and Bagwell go at it and we hit the chinlock because this match hasn't died enough already. Tony tries to tell us how the crowd is awesome but you can hear the wrestlers calling spots because the people are so quiet. Rude sends Bagwell to the floor while he's not legal as the crowd FINALLY moves a bit.

Pierce wants a boot from Rude as this is turning into something close to a tag match. It's still boring but at least we've got something going here. The team of heels beat on Bagwell and this is just boring. They switch without a tag and hit a chinlock. This goes on for the better part of eternity

until Bagwell makes his comeback. Pierce with a SWEET gutwrench sitout powerbomb. That makes this match not a failure on its own.

Tex makes the save and the crowd wakes up a bit for the showdown between these two. They actually fight and kind of go insane with it. And then Rude makes a blind tag and hits the Rude Awakening to end it. He's the only guy that has ever made that move look awesome.

Rating: D-. Literally that powerbomb was the only thing that keeps this from being a failure. This match just was boring and nothing of note ever happened. There were about 10 minutes of chinlocks here as of course they decided to give this 15 minutes. Who thought that was a good idea? I mean really, The Godwins and Bagwell and Rude in a 15 minute match. Horrible match but dang that was a cool looking move. Naturally it didn't get a pin but whatever.

Jesse says it's too early to pick a winner as we go to our last pairings.

Hawk/Rip Rogers vs. Davey Boy Smith/Kole

Kole is Booker T and Rogers is basically the guy that made OVW mean something. He gets beaten up on the ramp by all three guys as no one liked him and he was a jobber. This basically starts off as Hawk vs. both guys as Davey starts for his team. They make sure we know they're friends and here we go. They do a bunch of clean breaks and really don't do much at all.

Test of strength is a standoff and Booker more or less demands a tag. Rogers has a fight with his jacket on the ramp as Booker comes in. I love the face Bulldog saying hey Hawk, I know you're my friend but I'm going to let this other guy come in and beat on you for no apparent reason. Smith cheers for Hawk as he fights back. Booker with the Spinarooni about 5 years before that had a name.

Rogers finally gets up and Booker smacks him down. Yet again there's a mini story here but the match isn't much. You know Rogers' team is going to win here so why even bother with the false pretense? We hit the chinlock as Smith cheers on Hawk again. And just as I expected, Hawk picks up Rogers and throws him at Booker who can't kick out for the pin. This would be like Santino getting there.

Rating: D. It's another comedy match with nothing at all happening as Hawk and Smith wouldn't fight each other and Rogers was in the match all of 9 seconds. This show just needs to end now as this was just another 8 minute match with a stupid ending. At least it was just 8 minutes I guess.

Battlebowl

Cactus Jack, Vader, Johnny B. Badd, Brian Knobbs, Shockmaster, Paul Orndorff, King Kong, Dustin Rhodes, Sting, Jerry Sags, Steve Austin, Ric Flair, Ric Rude, Shanghai Pierce, Hawk, Rip Rogers

This is just a battle royal with 16 men in int. Yeah that's all there is going on here. Just to waste time the guys don't start coming out until after the announcements are done. Rogers can barely move after earlier. Hawk vs. Vader isn't as much of a train wreck as you'd expect. I really don't like watching these matches for reviews as there's nothing to call. Rogers is out first.

We do the split screen for no apparent reason. Oh it's to show Rogers going out. Pierce is out second. It's a lot of filling time as we're about two hours into the show at this point. Badd is out and Penzer kind of messes up the elimination. It comes out as "Johnny B Badd.....eliminated.....from Battlebowl." Just sounded weird but it's BY FAR the most interesting thing at the moment.

People are literally just standing there waiting on anything to happen. Someone goes out but something tells me it doesn't

matter. Kong is out. Shockmaster is out. Oh apparently the other guy was Cactus. Orndorff is out. That was very rapid fire and we have like 9 left or so. Sting goes to the ramp but that's not an elimination because I guess that's not the planned elimination for Sting.

Yeah 9 left and I don't really care enough to count them all. The worst part is that there is some awesome talent in there (Sting, Flair, Vader, Rude, Rhodes, Austin, Nasty Boys and Hawk, so 6/9 are at least good) and this is still horrible. Actually the Nasties and Hawk are at their best in brawls so they're all good in this kind of match. And yet it's still boring somehow.

Everyone just kind of brawls around and nothing is happening at all. Dustin and Austin head to the floor to fight it out a bit. Flair and Vader fight it out which gets NO reaction at all. Rhodes is busted as Austin is back in now. Austin beats on Rhodes as we kind of pair off. For no reason at all Sting/Hawk would get a tag title shot at Starrcade (in a match that went THIRTY MINUTES and ended in a DQ) so they fight for awhile.

The fans are dying more every second. Rhodes puts out the Nasties and Austin puts him out in like 4 seconds to get us down to six. Rude and Hawk are out too so it's Austin, Sting, Flair and Vader. There's a great tag match in there somewhere. Race pulls Flair to the ramp and they slug it out a bit which brings a small smile to my face. Naturally no one says anything about their epic rivalry but that might be interesting so we'll steer clear of it.

Everyone leaves the ring to fight on the ramp for awhile. No one went over the top so they're all still in. Stuff like this makes my head hurt as it makes the whole match just seem completely pointless. Vader hits Flair with a splash on the ramp and gets stretchered out to take him out of the match. Now logical booking would have him come back and make a big

heroic win by throwing Vader out to build drama to Starrcade. How much do you want to bet that doesn't happen and Vader wins clean?

Back in the ring Vader and Austin both go for top rope splashes on Sting but the only face left fights them both off. He does what would become known as a spear to Vader as the fans chant Whomp There it is for no apparent reason. Vader splashes the heck out of Sting to take him down. Lots of splashes follow but Sting finally gets away and slugs it out with Austin.

He makes the Superman comeback and the chant starts up again for no apparent reason. That lasts about 30 seconds as they beat on him some more. Vader hurts his back on a Vader Bomb. A corner splash misses and Sting throws Austin to the ramp. Vader knocks him over and Austin falls off the ramp to eliminate him. That's something I'd book in OCW.

This leaves us with Vader vs. Sting, with the logical booking being give it to Sting I guess so my money is on Vader. Sting does the falling headbutt into the groin spot which is one of my favorites. He gets the always awesome fireman's carry of Vader. Sting's strength is always underrated. Sting misses the Splash though and falls out so Vader wins to end the show.

Rating: D. A boring battle royal to end a boring show. Isn't that appropriate? This was just a weak match that went on FAR too long. A 16 man battle royal got nearly half an hour. At least with 91 they had two rings so the double elimination thing ate up some time. This was just boring on so many levels.

Overall Rating: F+. This show isn't so much bad as much as it's painfully boring. The idea is fine but the problem with it is that you need more than one decent tag match to end the show. For one thing the whole idea was partner vs. partner at times and other than that it was just awkward pairings that

never got anything going whatsoever.

Also having Vader win is freaking stupid. The champion wins a big match like this? It was dumb when Hogan did it in the Rumble and it's dumb here. Just a completely boring show that never went anywhere at all. This show was DYING for another match or two to flesh out the card so we didn't have all these matches get 12+ minutes. Note to promoters: long does not necessarily mean good. Definitely not worth seeing.