

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.

Starrcade 1991 – The Only BattleBowl That Was Good

Starrcade 1991

Date: December 29, 1991

Location: Norfolk Scope, Norfolk, Virginia

Attendance: 9,000

Commentators: Jim Ross, Tony Schiavone

This is the inaugural Battlebowl and I believe the first WCW PPV I distinctly remember. This is literally the only thing on the whole card. There are ten qualifying matches with mixed up tag teams and then the two ring battle royal main event. That being said this is BY FAR the best way they ever accomplished it and a good show based on my memories.

The only thing that matters here is Sting vs. Luger as this is more or less one big buildup show to SuperBrawl where they would go at it for the world title. Starrcade went from being the biggest show of the year to this somehow which is something a lot of people never got. This concept would get bad quickly but at first it was good and it had Sting at the height of his drawing powers as a face so we have that to fall

back on. Let's get to it.

The opening is a basic video explaining what I just said to you.

Eric Bischoff, Missy Hyatt and Magnum TA do the drawings. I won't mention throwing it to them as there's nothing to it really.

Michael Hayes/Tracy Smothers vs. Marcus Bagwell/Jimmy Garvin

Hayes and Garvin of course are the Freebirds. Allegedly the matches here were in fact fixed but booked to the point that you couldn't tell they were. The non-Freebirds start us off with Bagwell being the only face in sight. Or is Smothers the only heel? I can never remember with the Freebirds. These shows are hard to talk about as there are no angles so we kind of have to figure that out as we go.

We go to the crowd where we see wide spaces of empty seats. We hear about Mike Graham teaching Bagwell and how great of a trainer he is. That's a lie as he's a terrible trainer but points for trying I guess. No tags yet. Ah there's one as Garvin comes in. Apparently the Birds are faces here. If nothing else they're popular here so that's all that matters. Smothers goes to the floor as this isn't really going anywhere.

Hayes shaking his head at Smothers is funny stuff though. Bagwell back in and the arm gets worked over. Hayes finally comes in to a solid pop. And there he goes again as Smothers is getting destroyed out there. He's a US Tag Champion at this point which means nothing but the lack of angles leaves me a lot of empty space to fill. The fans think Tracy sucks.

Yeah the Pistols (Tracy's team) are heels now which makes more sense. The Freebirds have to go at it for once and of course they don't do much other than strut and lock up a lot. Oh hey there's an arm drag! This is all in good fun though rather

than being bad. And after a good bit of nothing they're both out again. Can't say I blame them though as it wouldn't have made a ton of sense to beat each other up.

Garvin vs. Smothers now as we speed things up a bit. Cross body by Bagwell gets two and then Hayes accidentally hits Garvin, which says a lot as one of his finishers was a big left hand. While they argue, Smothers misses a top rope splash and Bagwell gets his Fisherman's Suplex for the pin. The Freebirds are all cool and Bagwell and Garvin are in Battlebowl.

Rating: C-. Not bad here and the matches will be on a bit of an adjusted scale. In other words this wasn't a great match all things considered but given what they have to work with, as in not their usual partners or in Bagwell's case a tag match in general, this was pretty good and held my interest for the nearly 13 minutes it got, which was probably too many.

Rick Rude/Steve Austin vs. Big Josh/Van Hammer

Let's see: Van Hammer was a total lack of talent but became one of the most popular guys in the company. Josh was a woodsman that danced with bears and was at the first Wrestlemania and was the original Doink. Rude is US Champion, Austin is TV Champion. Both are in the Dangerous Alliance and both are awesome. Austin and Hammer start which works as they had a TV Title feud.

Man it's weird seeing Austin as someone that reminds me of Dolph Ziggler but with a better name. His character was NOTHING like the redneck and he could move out there. You can see the talent too which is weird considering who he's in there with. Not much going on here but nothing too bad I guess.

Hot tag to Big Josh and his offense lasts all of a minute as Austin and Rude's combined awesomeness takes him down. We more or less repeat the same stuff from the previous segment as

Josh gets beaten down and searches for the tag. Sweet goodness Van Hammer was over. It could be argued that he was second only to Sting in popularity. And so much for that as a blind tag and Rude Awakening end Hammer.

Rating: D+. Total run of the mill stuff here but Austin and Rude make it worth watching. They had the advantage here due to experience together but the creativity of the faces made something like this far better than I expected. Not a great match but it worked. Somehow this was the same length to within a few seconds of the previous match which blows my mind.

El Gigante/Larry Zbyszko vs. Dustin Rhodes/Richard Morton

I smell a comedy match here. Larry, the genius that he is, allows Gigante to do the vast majority of the work here. To be fair that's a rather smart strategy considering who his partner is. Larry is the coach apparently, barking orders at Gigante throughout the entire match. Rhodes does the vast majority of the work for his team which is odd as Morton is certainly capable of holding his own out there.

Larry comes in and has a good mini match with Dustin. Rhodes, more commonly known as Goldust today, was getting better every day at this point and Larry was a solid veteran that retired very early for a wrestler, hanging up the boots for the most part at around 40. He started doing more independent stuff but that's certainly common. Larry tags Gigante in and then slaps him, sealing his own fate. Larry tries to run but Gigante throws him back in by his head and into a double dropkick for a growl at the referee and the easy pin. Morton was never legally in.

Rating: C-. Another quick but solid match. Actually no it wasn't another quick match but rather the first quick match. This had a story to it which tells you what can be done if you rig the matches properly. While there was no direct connection

here the idea of a loudmouth and a monster doing their thing was well done. Morton literally not being in there was weird but whatever.

Bill Kazmaier/Jushin Liger vs. Diamond Dallas Page/Mike Graham

Oh where to begin? Kazmaier is at the time the greatest competitor in the history of the World's Strongest Man from America at this point. The problem is he makes Mark Henry look like Lou Thesz. Liger I'm sure you know of. DDP was still terrible at this point as he had just entered into the wrestling world having been a manager forever. Graham is the son of Eddie Graham, the legendary Florida promoter. He wasn't horrible but he was more or less just a territorial guy put in a spot he wasn't ready for.

Graham and Liger start us off which is by far the best possible combination. Liger is young here and completely awesome. Also keep in mind that he's unlike anything that anyone had ever seen in America before. The roof of the place is rather weird looking to the point that it looks like a spaceship or something. And here's Kazmaier. This could be painful to put it mildly, but at least Page isn't here yet.

And I need to learn to stop talking. Page can't slam him as Bill hasn't really done anything at all. Kaz can't do much of anything here so he has to defer to DDP which is a losing situation too. And here's Liger vs. Page which is going to be a disaster too since Page won't be able to do anything so Liger has to calm his stuff down. Back to the two talented ones and that lasts all of a second.

Back to Kazmaier, a power guy, that locks on a wristlock. Sure why not. Back over to Page as this is dragging something fierce. We get the eternally awesome Liger Surfboard on Graham as this match needs to end soon. Graham gets out and puts on a pretty bad looking Boston Crab. Very boring match so far. Back to DDP and Kaz which lasts about a second before it's Liger

and Graham part 5.

And so much for that as we're back to the bad workers. They're tagging very fast here. Graham goes to the floor and Liger hits a big front flip to take him out. Well at least I think that's what he did as Ross can only tell us about it since the camera missed it. Second rope moonsault gets two for Liger. Everyone in there now as Kaz press slams Liger onto Page for the pin.

Rating: D+. It was FAR too long and that's definitely the biggest thing it has going against it here. The other thing is Liger is the best worker in there while Graham was just ok. He however was the best wrestler on his team and the only one that belonged in the ring at all. Page wouldn't get much better for about four years but he got better in a hurry once he started. This could have been decent if it had cut off about 4-5 minutes.

Lex Luger/Arn Anderson vs. Terrance Taylor/Z-Man

Z-Man is the only face out there. The heel team is rather impressive sounding. Luger is the dominant world champion at this point. Anderson and the face start us off and Taylor seems to not care that he's a bad guy. Everyone goes in almost immediately and Luger and Arn are sent running. Luger and Zenk (What did you think the Z stood for?) and Luger have a nice fast paced sequence.

Taylor comes in as the faces (more or less) work on Lex's arm. We hear about Luger trying to put Sting out of action using the gift boxes which was the biggest angle going at the time. In a nice sequence, Taylor goes for a sunset flip but Luger punches him. He has to do this twice more and STILL can't get rid of Taylor but as he's going down he tags Arn.

In that sequence you had Taylor, Luger and Anderson all involved in one straight stretch. It's not something you see that often either and it was rather creative. I liked that

more than I should have more than likely but whatever. Race interferes, allowing Anderson to hook a DDT (his finisher) on Zenk for two as Taylor makes the save.

Luger was kicked out of Miami for disciplinary reasons. I've never heard that before. Anderson goes for a double axe handle off the middle rope while Z-Man is on his back. It's one of those stupid spots where the guy jumps into the feet. Never liked that but it's a wrestling staple I guess. Taylor gets a rollup on Luger for two. Backslide gets two.

Gutwrench powerbomb gets two on Luger to the point where Anderson has to make a save. Taylor is showing off here and it's working. Wow did I just say that? He calls for the Five Arm (another reason I can't stand him) but Anderson gets a knee in the back to set up the Attitude Adjustment (Luger's Piledriver. I guess 19 years is long enough to steal a name) for the pin.

Rating: C+. Definitely the best tag match so far. We had a definite face and heel team out there and it helped a lot. Having Anderson being the expert in tag wrestling that he was and making the save for Luger against the young hot shot that was giving him trouble was a nice story. This was a solid match and it worked very well given the circumstances here.

Ricky Steamboat/Todd Champion vs. Buddy Lee Parker/Cactus Jack

Champion is one half of the Patriots and is more or less an army ranger kind of character. He's big and handsome and that's about it. Parker is a weak cop character and more famous as the guy that said Batista had zero future as a wrestler. He's considered one of the biggest jerks in wrestling history as he accomplished a grand total of nothing in his career but expected insane praise from anyone new in the business.

Almost all of his trainees (including one Bill Goldberg) would probably enjoy this as while he's leaving the locker room

Abdullah the Butcher beats the HECK out of him because Abdullah wanted to be partners with Cactus. Side note: why was there never a Cactus vs. Steamboat feud? How awesome would that have been? The beating in essence makes this a handicap match for Cactus.

Abdullah comes out to be his partner but of course isn't allowed. Parker stumbles out through the curtain and Abdullah kicks his teeth in again, beating him half to death with the stick he carries with him. The two legends start us off here as Steamboat isn't sure what to do with the ultra-aggressive Cactus.

Parker, trying to remember what planet he's on, crawls back up onto the ramp after Abdullah kicked him off to the concrete below. Steamboat skins the cat and sends Cactus to the floor and hits what we would call a suicide dive to take Cactus down. Back in and Ricky throws in a superkick and enziguri to make the tag. To say he was ahead of his time in America is an understatement.

Champion, more or less just a big power guy, locks on a camel clutch. Parker is literally crawling on his stomach towards the ring. He's selling the beatdown if nothing else. Tony sums it up perfectly (I'm shocked too) by saying that he looks like he's in the desert reaching for a drink of water. Cactus hits his elbow from the middle rope to the floor which in his book he credits with causing his knees to slowly fall apart over the years.

Parker has made it all the way to the other ring but still has one more to get through. Cactus apparently has no clue this is happening but that was typical of him back in the day. Champion gets a powerslam for two as Parker has made it to the corner! Cactus goes up top but Champion gets a punch to the stomach to block it.

They collide and Parker, who is a jobber mind you, gets the

tag. His reward for making it all the way here after a beating like that: A fresh Ricky Steamboat. Dang talk about having a bad day. Naturally a powerslam and the cross body end him in about 6 seconds. Well at least they made it quick.

Rating: C. Pretty good match here considering it was a handicap match more or less. Cactus was getting very good around this point and everyone knew it. They put him together with Sting soon after this and it was totally awesome. Steamboat here was of course good and Champion fit in very well as the power guy against Foley. Nothing great but all things considered this was fine.

Sting/Abdullah the Butcher vs. Bobby Eaton/Brian Pillman

That's actually a good sounding heel team. Since Sting is on one team they're the automatic faces of course. Abdullah was one of the guys that Luger sent to try to take Sting out so this is almost 3-1 against Sting. Abdullah with his rather horrible physique of course jumps Sting and beats him with his stick (called a kendo stick so it wasn't WWE that invented it).

Brian runs down and makes the save for his buddy, beating on him with the same stick. Eaton works on Sting's bad knee as this is going insanely fast so far. Eaton throws him into the ring and we're finally going officially. The other two are still brawling on the floor and Sting is in big trouble already. The hero fights back through and Eaton is in trouble as we're on the ramp.

Eaton is part of the Dangerous Alliance who Sting is feuding with. Sting is just ridiculously popular here. Eaton slaps Pillman which is apparently a tag. Ok apparently it isn't. Butcher blasts Sting just because he feels like it and Sting is in trouble again. He drops down to the floor and grabs a pencil from Ross' desk. Tony: I don't think he's going to use that pencil in its proper use. You can't buy announcing like

this people.

Naturally the pencil goes towards Sting's throat. Who would you disqualify there? Pillman makes the save for his friend and Sting is all ticked off. He beats up Eaton on the floor as he's getting violent out there. Pillman slams Butcher in the ring and hits a big old splash on the fat dude. Brian won't tag Eaton.

Eaton tries to tag Abdullah who has no issue with wanting to beat up Sting. The announcers talk about how Sting has been in there the whole time which Eaton has as well. Sting counters something into a tombstone which is more or less botched. Pillman and Abdullah come in to fight some more as Cactus come lumbering out. Abdullah holds Sting but Cactus misses and blasts Butcher with the stick. After a dropkick for Jack, a cross body to Eaton ends this.

Rating: C+. Well it was certainly not boring. It wasn't particularly great but Eaton vs. Sting is always worth checking out. Total one man show out there from Sting which is all the fans wanted. Pillman wasn't quite a star yet so he was the only person anyone cared about out there. It would play into the ending of the show later on so this was important. Very fast paced and never once boring.

Cactus and Abdullah fight up the ramp for fun.

Vader/Mr. Hughes vs. Rick Steiner/Nightstalker

Nightstalker is Brian Clark, AKA Adam Bomb. It was originally supposed to be Diamond Studd (Scott Hall) but he has an arm injury. Vader is kind of new at this point but would become awesome very shortly. Steiner is the only face here. Vader and Hughes apparently team from time to time. Vader and Steiner start us off.

Everyone here played college football apparently. Wait Rick did? Are you sure about that? Ah never mind he just said

college sports. That's ok then. Steiner jumps from the apron to the floor to nail Vader as this is really just those two having a match while the other two are standing around which is likely the best idea for everyone involved.

Steiner and Vader get into a big power match on the floor so Vader rams him into the post. In an impressive show of strength Rick suplexes Vader back over the top rope and into the ring. Rick won't tag out because he knows Nightstalker is awful. He tags Rick instead and promptly gets drilled by Vader. Bulldog off the top from Steiner to Hughes but he's not legal so a splash on Nightstalker ends it.

Rating: D. Bad match here but at the same time look at who was out there. Steiner was all his team had and Vader was just a monster that if you weren't named Steamboat or Sting you had no business in there with. This was the shortest match on the show at barely over five minutes so there's that at least. Nothing good here at all but Steiner was trying.

Ad for Superbrawl, an hour and a half into this.

Scott Steiner/Firebreaker Chip vs. Arachnaman/Johnny B. Badd

Arachnaman is Brad Armstrong and Chip is Todd Champion's partner in the Patriots. Basically Steiner is the only one in this worth anything. Badd means nothing at this point. He and Chip, who is roided like there is no tomorrow, start us off. And I'm bored. It's not too bad but we're just waiting for Scott to come in there and destroy everything in sight.

Yep there's the tag and there goes Johnny. Armstrong (you try spelling the other one over and over) comes in and as usual gets his head handed to him. Steiner is just killing anything in sight with raw power. Down goes Badd again and Chip gets tagged back in. And of course he gets beaten down again. When I say beaten down I mean for a very long time as the heels (I guess?) take turns destroying him.

There are long stretches in here with nothing to say as no one cares about anyone but Steiner and with good reason. We speed things up a bit and Steiner gets a blind tag from Chip. Steiner comes in to a solid pop and just massacres them. Armstrong gets a kick but goes up top, only to get caught in a GORGEOUS belly to belly suplex from Scott to end this. Awesome suplex to end it as it looked devastating.

Rating: D+. Total dominance from Scott as everything here was designed to make him look like a star. If he hadn't kept getting hurt he really could have been something special. Back in his young days he really was the prototype athlete as he had insane strength and agility for someone his size. Shame he completely lost his mind.

Ron Simmons/Thomas Rich vs. Steve Armstrong/PN News

This is the final tag match which is a good thing as you can tell that the fans are pretty much sick of them at this point. They really needed some singles stuff thrown in here and there to give the people something of a break. Power vs. power to start here with News vs. Simmons. Rich is a former world champion and Armstrong is one of the Young Pistols.

Simmons is on the verge of a huge push where he would win the world title. Simmons dominates for a good while until Rich more or less demands to come in. And then Armstrong beats him up so he begs to get back out. Simmons says no you wanted in so stay in like the jerk he used to be.

News and Armstrong beat up Rich for a LONG time and it gets very boring. The fans want Ron, Rich wants Ron, I want a stiff drink. This concept is fine but it REALLY needs to have shorter matches. We're about ten minutes into this and there's just nothing to talk about. Simmons finally gets the hot tag and the fans pop BIG. He slams News (who weighed like 450) and hits a Spinebuster on Armstrong to win it.

Rating: D+. Yeah whatever let's just get to the battle royal

so I can stay awake. See the previous match's rating and substitute Simmons for Steiner.

Battlebowl

Two ring battle royal with the 20 winners from the ten tags that I'm not going to list off. Ok so I am since it takes a good while for the entrances: Vader, Marcus Bagwell, Jimmy Garvin, Dustin Rhodes, Bill Kazmaier, Jushin Liger, Steve Austin, Richard Morton, Todd Champion, Abdullah the Butcher, Firebreaker Chip, Thomas Rich, Ron Simmons, Ricky Steamboat, Mr. Hughes, Scott Steiner, Lex Luger, Rick Rude, Arn Anderson, Sting.

They saved Sting for last and I guess the fans were counting as just after Anderson you can hear them erupt. Sting is just ridiculously popular to the point where it's hard to tell who the second most popular guy in the company is since it's such a gap between whoever it is and Sting. Steamboat I suppose. This is on the Essential Starrcade DVD if you want to see it. The DVD is well worth picking up anyway as it's awesome. Bad documentary though.

The first guy, Vader, misses his cue so the announcer has to stall by saying "The first competitor.....in Battlebowl.....the very first.....is.....VADER!" Funny. Quick summary of the rules: you start in the first ring and have to be thrown into the second ring (never specified if it has to be over the top) and then from the second ring over the top to the floor to be eliminated. Whoever wins the first ring will meet whoever wins the second ring in an over the top rope challenge for the whole thing.

They all start as Sting hits the ramp. Like the idiot that he is he goes straight for Vader. Anderson vs. Steamboat happens on the ramp. If nothing else the image of Anderson PANICKING when Steamboat is revealed as Dustin's partner at Clash 17 is great. Kazmaier is put on the ramp over the top and Vader and

Hughes, the guys that put him out, look legit confused when he's allowed back in.

It's so weird seeing Austin with blonde hair long enough to be in a ponytail. Ok apparently it is over the top to get into ring two. Vader and Steamboat go to the ramp too which is another drool worthy match. I know they had at least one big time TV match because I've seen it. Sting and Austin go at it in the corner. Imagine that match in 1998. Sweet goodness that would have drawn millions.

Vader puts Steamboat on the ramp again just because he's evil. Rhodes and Anderson are brawling on the floor. Liger beats on Abdullah which is one heck of a weird match when you think about it. Thomas Rich goes into ring 2. You just have to go over the rope and can land between the rings as going over both sets would be really hard since there's a good three foot gap between them.

Sting goes after Luger and the fans ERUPT. Morton throws Bagwell into ring 2 to give Rich something to do. Thankfully they go to a wide shot instead of the very annoying double screen. Dangerously gets on Tony and Jim's nerves which is really funny. He was such a freaking jerk. Vader won't go near the other side of the ring which is really smart. Well who's going to make him I guess.

Chip hits ring 2 also giving us three people there. Liger and Morton go over also as the first ring is thinning out a bit. I love that they don't even bother showing us that ring as no one cares. Ok now they won't show ring 1. Well to be fair what happens there doesn't really matter I guess. Morton and Liger have a solid mini match and then both go out, eliminating them from the match altogether.

Hughes is in ring two now. That gives us 14 people in ring 1 I believe. Rich is out. Steamboat and Anderson have fought around the ring and just kind of go into ring 2 for the fun of

it. Garvin and Champion are in ring two now. It's reaching the point of just needing to know who is left in ring #1. Tony thinks there are ten left in there but counting may be beyond his skill set.

Austin and someone else that may have been Scott Steiner hit ring 2. Garvin is out. Kazmaier and Abdullah go to the second ring. So does Simmons even though he went through the ropes. In ring 1 we have Sting, Rude (who both go to ring 2 as I type their names) leaving Luger and Vader (Rhodes went over as I was typing) in ring 1. Luger beats up Vader and Harley Race looks awesome here since he manages both guys. Or at least he would manage Vader soon.

Chip is out as Luger wins ring 1. You can't say he wasn't pushed as a strong champion. Abdullah and Kaz and Champion all go out. Luger gets to chill for awhile as Steiner has the future Steiner Recliner on Hughes. There's a chance I've missed some people as it's hard to tell as everything is going kind of fast. We do a wide shot and a split screen to annoy me. Granted the split screen are just small windows and are over the ring skirt (the thing that says WWE or TNA and is below the apron).

Rhodes is out and so are Hughes and Simmons. Bagwell is out and so are Vader and someone else I missed. Steiner is out and we have one heck of a tag match left with Steamboat, Sting, Austin and Rude as the final four. Steamboat pairs off with Austin and Sting beats on Rude. Stinger Splash to Austin which just sounds right coming out of JR's mouth.

Rude is US Champion, Austin is TV Champion and Steamboat is a tag champion here. With four people left is there really a need for small split screens? Rude accidentally hits Austin to out him out. Rude throws Steamboat but he skins the cat and gets a headscissors on Rude to eliminate him. Rude grabs him as he gets back in to eliminate him then slides back in to hit a Rude Awakening on Sting.

The fans go NUTS for the idea of Sting vs. Luger though, making this the perfect ending for Battlebowl. This was the top rivalry at this point and everyone was just waiting for Sting to rise up and take the title off the monster champion. All Luger here as Sting is more or less dead. Both guys are in yellow here which is weird. Luger doesn't throw him out when he has the chance, showing his incredible intelligence.

Luger throws him to the ramp and Race beats Sting up so Sting has to fight him off too. Sting goes into the guardrail and Sting is more or less nothing right here. Sting blocks a shot to the railing and takes over with the fans getting into things again. Sting puts him back into the ring and is all fired up. He beats the tar out of Luger and has him draped over the ropes.

Race comes in and Sting has to stop him, allowing Luger to rest enough to avoid the Splash and leave Sting hanging over the top rope. And again like an idiot he pulls him back in. Luger throws him over but Sting holds on and just goes OFF, beating the heck out of Luger and finally hitting a big clothesline to put Luger out and then collapses in the ring.

Rating: B. This was rather fun actually. The two ring idea worked very well and the final pairing was perfect. This is what you get when there's a POINT to a battle royal rather than just having one for the sake of having one. Sting looks awesome and we set up the main event of the next PPV. What more can you ask for?

The announcers say time is running out for Luger to run as Sting is coming for him. He'd get him in about two months.

Overall Rating: C. This was a hard one to grade as this is the definition of a hit or miss show. The concept is a novelty for sure, but this is the only time it ever really worked. The main reason for this has to be Sting and Luger. At the three other versions of this the winners were Great Muta (left for

Japan soon after), Vader (already world champion) and DDP (glorified jobber).

Here with Sting winning it you have a story and reason for him now to fight Luger since he's beaten him in a major competition. That being said, this is more or less a failure as a build for the biggest show of the year as THIS should have been Sting vs. Luger, not Superbrawl. At least we got something entertaining between them before Luger was a jerk at the title match, knowing it was his last match and more or less phoning in the phone call he made to phone the match in. Either way, if you want to see Battlebowl at its best, this is the show to do it. Good show but ODD choice for Starrcade.