

On This Day: October 5, 2008 – Florida Championship Wrestling TV (Debut Episode): NXT's Granddaddy

Florida Championship Wrestling TV

Date: October 5, 2008

Location: Florida Championship Wrestling Arena, Tampa, Florida

Commentators: Todd Grisham, Dusty Rhodes

This is something I found that seemed like a good idea to take a look at. This is the debut of Florida Championship Wrestling's TV show which airs in the Tampa area. Considering that this is over a year before the rise of NXT, expect some very interesting names to pop up here. For example, the heavyweight champion is Sheamus, who won the title from Jake Hager about a month before. Hager had to drop it because he debuted on ECW as Jack Swagger. The tag champions are Heath Miller and Joe Hennig, more commonly known as Heath Slater and Michael McGillicutty. I have no idea what to expect here so let's get to it.

We open with a video about Championship Wrestling From Florida which was a huge territory back in the day.

The graphic introduction is kind of cool.

John Cena will be here tonight.

Jake Hager defends against Heath Miller. This must be on tape delay because Hager had lost the title in September. Hmm whatever. Those kinds of things happen a lot and you get used to them after awhile.

And here's Ric Flair. Why do I have a feeling a lot of this is

going to be people saying how awesome FCW is? Dusty gets to claim lineage from the former CWF (the aforementioned company). Wait I listed that wrong. He can, but the rest of the company can too I guess. Flair talks about all the people that are running this place and how great they are. This was fine and not long enough to get ridiculous.

Shawn Spears vs. TJ Wilson

We go to a break after Spears' entrance. This is on the night of No Mercy with Hardy vs. HHH where Hardy didn't win either. Spears was in ECW for like a week back in 08 and never went anywhere. TJ Wilson is more commonly known as one half of the Hart Dynasty: Tyson Kidd. Wilson has tassels on his boots like Warrior did. It's weird hearing Dusty talk about Stu Hart.

Kidd does a lot of arm work to start and looks good doing it. Wilson can move out there and is rather acrobatic, far more than you would see on WWE today. Spears works on the head and takes over. The crowd is very energetic here which is nice. Kidd hits a nice running dropkick and a Northern Lights Suplex for two. He tries another running...something, but gets caught in a reverse neckbreaker for the pin. This of course begs the question: what is a forward neckbreaker?

Rating: B-. Basic but good here with both guys not trying to do too much and it resulted in a good match. Often times in wrestling you have to remember that less can be more and this was definitely an example of that. They just went out there and had a wrestling match and didn't try to do stuff that they weren't capable of. The result was definitely successful, although it's weird seeing Spears beating a current champion.

Afa and Rocky Johnson are here.

Sin Bowdee/Alicia Fox/Jay Bradley vs. Colt Cabana/Brianna Bell/Ricky Ortiz

Bradley was on Smackdown like twice as Ryan Braddock and

Bowdee is more famous as Kizarny. Based on who all is in there, this needs to end fast. Kizarny hadn't debuted in WWE yet so this was even weirder back then. I'm not sure how but just go with it. Cabana is rather popular here and I'm surprised he got to keep his more famous name. Grisham says Cabana is like Dusty. Is that a compliment?

This is more or less a regular tag match with Divas on the side. Dusty explaining bare basics to Grisham is rather amusing. If you don't get that Brianna Bell is Brie Bella, I can't help you. Speaking of her she gets an X Factor for the pin on Fox.

Rating: D+. The tagging between the guys was good but of course the girls were nothing special. Fox could be pretty hot if not for her hair. None of these guys other than Cabana are particularly good so keeping it really short was likely the best idea. This was ok but it really wasn't anything all that good.

Nic Nemeth vs. Greg Jackson

Nemeth is Dolph Ziggler and he's a natural. My cousin is named Greg Jackson but I have no idea who this guy is. I'd bet on a squash here. Jackson has a good armdrag if nothing else. AHA! Jackson is more commonly known as Trent Barretta. I knew I had seen him before. Good to see that the second biggest team on Smackdown has one guy that's unrecognizable.

Sweet dropkick to take out Jackson on a springboard clothesline. Nemeth has half black hair here which is a weird look for him. Jackson makes a short comeback but a jumping Downward Spiral ends Jackson and completes this glorified squash.

Rating: D+. Again not much here but they were kind of flying through this since it was only a squash. The match never really went anywhere but for a glorified squash what can you really ask for? At least the right guy won as Ziggler is by

far and away the better talent of the two.

Some Tampa Bay Bucs are here. And so is the Champ. Ok so he's not the champ at the moment but Cena is indeed here. Cena talks about how the opportunity is for the city of Tampa and how these guys are here to entertain the people. Putting WWE over as family entertainment is a good idea which is something they should do more often.

And here comes Shawn Spears to do something. I would have gone with another heel to give someone else more exposure but this works too. Spears asks what would happen if tonight an FCW Superstar tried to make a name for themselves? Cena says he'll knock the maple syrup out of Spears (Canadian). Spears backs off and then charges into a big backdrop and the FU. Cena's theme music is kind of ironic here.

Florida Heavyweight Championship: Heath Miller vs. Jake Hager

Miller thinks he's handsome and gives off a kind of Rick Rude/Johnny Nitro feel. He's more famous as Heath Slater though. Hager is Jack Swagger and is a cross between Angle and Goldberg. He's undefeated here and the streak is part of his character. Mixed reaction for Hager who is in regular trunks here. Miller is a rock star without the instruments. I'm not sure if that's better than one man rock band or not.

Miller also has shoulder length hair which is a weird look for him. Big high knee sends Miller to the floor. Hager is a tweener I think but it's not really clear. Miller with a nice springboard clothesline to take over as we're running very low on time. Hager avoids a Zig Zag and hooks the gutwrench for the pin and the end of the show.

Rating: C+. Nothing great here but the idea was to have Hager look like a champion as an introduction to the audience which he certainly did. This was a decent little TV match that gave us something to look forward to on the show. I'm not sure why Hager was fighting him but I guess I can let that slide on a

debut for a local TV show. Not bad.

Overall Rating: B. For a debut show, this was very good. You got four matches to give you a nice taste of what you could expect out of FCW. Hager looks like a big star which is exactly what he was supposed to do. This flowed very well and the Cena/Flair appearances helped legitimize things a lot. The production values were very good as you could see there was some effort put into this and it felt like a professional show. They're better than OVW's for sure. This was a well done debut show and I'd watch the next episode if I could, which I might do someday.

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Florida Championship Wrestling, WWE's Developmental Company, Closing

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This came out of nowhere. I haven't heard anything about things going badly down there, but maybe this is a sign of something huge changing in WWE.

Thoughts on this?