

Thought of the Day: If At First You Don't Succeed...

It's one of my thoughts, so you know it's going to be based in old school stuff. Anymore WWE seems to be afraid to change anything about a character. Look at Del Rio, Brodus, Ryder, Mahal and a large group of others. They're pretty much the exact same character that they were a year ago, if not even less developed. Let's take a look at the three biggest stars ever:

Hulk Hogan – Brought in as a generic big heel. he had Freddie Blassie as a manager, was at the semi-main event level, and probably would have won the world title one day. Then he went to the AWA, made Rocky III, left the AWA because Gagne wouldn't wake up and realize what he had, came back to the WWF as the REAL AMERICAN and became the biggest good guy of all time, completely revolutionizing wrestling.

Steve Austin – Originally Stunning Steve who wore flowery tights, then a Hollywood Blonde who made camera motions, then a tradition hating guy who cursed a lot, then Superstar Steve in ECW, then the Ringmaster....whatever that was supposed to be, then himself because Ted DiBiase left and they had no idea what to do but let him drink beer, flip people off, curse a lot and be a rebel, relaunching WWF to the top of the business and winning the Monday Night Wars.

The Rock – Brought in as a plucky young guy who was just so happy to be there, gets told to die by most of the fans, comes back as a cocky black power guy in the Nation of Domination,

becomes a cocky jock heel, becomes a cocky jock face, becomes the greatest promo man of all time with at least a dozen catchphrases.

Of the three biggest guys, none of these guys were anywhere close to being the guy that they were brought in to be. Rocky at least was supposed to be a guy who was going to be a big deal. Hogan was never going to be the number one guy in the company in his original form. Austin...not as the Ringmaster he wasn't going to be. Rocky got over huge, but as the polar opposite of what he was brought in as.

Sometimes you have to try a bunch of stuff until you find something that worked. Look at Undertaker and Kane: Undertaker was a natural, Kane took a bunch of tries to get what worked. Try some effort WWE. It'll do you good.

Thought of the Day: How To Fix A Bad Show

This is something I've said for years but it was very true last night: Sometimes the solution to all of the problems with your stories and your angles and everything else that is going wrong is to just have a good wrestling match. Last night everything was going bad, the stories weren't clicking and I was just not caring at all about the show. Then Bryan vs. Ziggler happened and I had a new spirit for the show. Granted after that it was quickly crushed again, but it helped a lot for awhile and it can help almost every time.

When all else fails, have a good wrestling match. It'll help.

I Want To Talk A Little Bit About Mixing Up Stories (WWE Needs More Shampoo)

In wrestling, the stories are moved forward by whatever the writers come up with for that particular feud. The stories are enhanced by the matches and it's a combination of the two that form what is called a program. However, it's becoming more and more common in wrestling to see the same stories over and over again. This is something that causes wrestling to be dull and therefore needs to be changed. Today we'll look at how easily this can be done. Let's get to it.

A few months ago, the main feud over on Smackdown was for the world title between Sheamus and Del Rio. During the course of this insufferable three month feud, one of the plot points was that Sheamus stole Del Rio's car and drove around San Antonio with it. Del Rio pressed charges against him for it. Now that's one way to push a storyline forward and is perfectly fine. Then a few weeks later, more legal charges were brought against Sheamus because of him using the Brogue Kick.

Think about that for a minute: in the span of the same story that stretched over three months, the same plot advancement device was used twice. Is WWE really that creatively bankrupt that they can't come up with something new or at least something they haven't done in awhile every few months? Let's think about this concept a little bit more but on

a wider scale.

The majority (note that I said majority so don't mention ones I didn't bring up) of storylines in the company are as follows: corrupt authority figure/GM under review, legal issues, a romance, someone wanting respect, or someone winning a #1 contenders match to earn a shot at the title. How many storylines can you come up with that aren't either those or something incredibly similar to those?

This brings me to the title of this piece. Back in 2002, Booker T started talking about being up for a starring role in a (fictitious) Japanese shampoo commercial. After taking too long to seal the deal on it, Edge wound up getting the job instead. This led to a match at Wrestlemania between the two of them.

Now the match was nothing special, but this story is remembered because of how unusual it was. That's the key change that I think needs to be done today in wrestling. Well one of them anyway. You don't need to reinvent the wheel with these things, but you need to come up with a fresh way of looking at things. Just off the top of my head, here are some stories that haven't been done in years that have been used to set up a match or a feud. These are all real stories that have been used before in major(ish) companies:

Attempted vehicular manslaughter

Blinding another man using hair cream (or cologne)

The crushing of a snake (tell me Santino couldn't have a feud over this)

Racism (Direct quote: "That man isn't a caucasian!")

Using voodoo to harm an opponent

Fear of an object or creature (snakes and coffins have been used)

The theft and cooking of a pet

Refusing to accept help from someone

A bet

Attacking a family member

Breaking an action figure

Stalking

Taking someone else's property

I could go on and on but I think you get the point. In short, you can make a story out of anything. It's so easy to throw out something that hasn't been done in a good while and make a story out of it. From the list, look at the Freebirds vs. Von Erichs feud. The feud started on Christmas Day in 1982 when Kerry Von Erich was facing Ric Flair in a cage for the world title in Dallas. Michael PS Hayes was refereeing and tried to help his friend Kerry win the title. Kerry didn't want it that way, so Hayes' stablemate in the Freebirds Terry Gordy slammed the cage door on Von Erich's head. Kerry's brothers evened the odds against the Freebirds and the groups feuded for most of the 1980s.

I could give you examples of others, but it would just be overkill. It's so easy to make a feud happen over something that hasn't been done in awhile but it never happens anymore. As Jim Cornette said, you can redo anything seven years later and it'll seem fresh. That makes perfect sense, as a lot of the audience isn't going to be the same as it was seven years earlier.

For example, back in 1992 Undertaker feuded with Kamala, who was managed

by Harvey Whippleman. Undertaker destroyed Kamala and Whippleman vowed revenge. Harvey brought in the 7'7 Giant Gonzalez to avenge Kamala. The point of the feud was that Gonzalez towered above Undertaker and Undertaker couldn't use his normal offense against him. Undertaker eventually won the final match of the feud in a gimmick match.

In 2005, Undertaker feuded with Muhammad Hassan, who was managed by Daivari. Undertaker destroyed Hassan and Daivari vowed revenge. Daivari brought in Mark Henry to avenge Hassan. Undertaker destroyed Henry and Daivari vowed revenge. Daivari brought in 7'5 Great Khali to avenge Henry and Hassan. The point of the feud was that Khali towered above Undertaker and Undertaker couldn't use his normal offense against him. Undertaker eventually won the final match of the feud in a gimmick match.

Obvious it's the same story, but they're about thirteen years apart. There will be some fans that are going to notice the story being repeated and complain about it, but how many fans do you think have no idea of the Gonzalez match or more importantly, how many do you think care thirteen years later? Repeating a storyline a long time apart is fine, but doing it multiple times every year doesn't keep it interesting. It waters the story down and makes it less effective. You can only have a GM brought before the Board of Directors so many times before it gets predictable.

Quick sidebar: GM's need to be eliminated, or at least cut WAY down. By having general managers around to make matches all the time, it takes away a lot of the ability for feuds to form naturally. If you want to have some invisible matchmaker then fine, but you don't have to go to the back, have AJ on the phone, have one of the participants come into her office, and have her explain the match to him. For one thing, it's a waste of time. I know 90 seconds doesn't sound like long, but when you do that three times a show, you're looking at almost five minutes wasted. How many matches can you think of that don't last five minutes? I'll give you a hint: most TV matches would fall into this category. End sidebar.

In short, WWE needs to mix up the ways they set up and advance feuds. There are A TON of possible ways to do it without using one of the same stories over and over again. Let the guys in the feud have some input once in awhile. Let them play to their strengths. Not everyone can be placed into the same stories and get the same results out of them. Mix things up a bit and the badly stale product can be made very fresh all over again. Who knows, you might even be able to find something that people care about and want to pay to see. I know it's a stretch but it could happen.

I Want To Talk A Little Bit About Defining Moments

It's the night of Bound For Glory 2012 and Jeff Hardy won the world title from Austin Aries. That's not really news, nor is it really surprising based on the way the show has been built. However, in a comment about the show, someone said that Aries should have been able to continue with his reign and been given that defining win that his reign needed. This got me to thinking about another growing trend in wrestling which is going on a lot more in the WWE at this point, and it's not really work. Let's get to it.

At the moment, the top story in WWE is CM Punk vs. John Cena over the WWE Title. Going into Night of Champions, Cena said Punk needed to defend the title against him in Cena's hometown of Boston to define his legacy and cement himself as the top guy. The match wound up in a draw, and now the line is that Punk needs to beat Cena in the Cell to define his legacy and cement himself as the top guy.

Now that story makes sense: Punk didn't beat Cena (that time at least) and now he needs to do something else to end the feud with Cena. That's basic storytelling and makes perfect sense. HIAC is in I think two weeks and there's a good chance Punk is going to walk out of the Cell having pinned Cena (again). Let's say that happens and Punk wins as clean as you can in the WWE: so what?

That doesn't define Punk's reign. Punk's reign isn't over yet and we have no idea when it's going to end. It doesn't cement Punk as the top guy. Cena has lost to Punk already at three different PPVs in the last year and a half and Punk has never been the top guy over Cena. Punk can beat the entire roster in a single match while wearing roller skates and writing the great American novel, but it's not going to define his legacy.

Let's take a look back at history. The most famous reign of the last thirty years is Hogan's four year reign from 84 to 88. What is the defining moment of that reign? If there is one, it would be beating Andre, but there's a catch to that: Hogan already was the top guy and had been for years. However, we didn't know that was what was going to define it because no one knew what Hogan's reign was going to end.

At the end of the day, what defines Hogan's reign is what happened during his reign, which would be the rise of wrestling to the mainstream and the wrestling boom of the 80s. Those things happened when Hogan was on top of the company and was unquestionably the top star in the world. Let's look at the progression of Hogan's title reign with regards to major shows.

Hogan won the title in January of 1984. A little over a year later, there was The War To Settle The Score, which was a huge house show that

celebrities attended and had a huge main event of Hogan vs. Piper. It was a HUGE show and one of the biggest moments in WWF history. Then about six weeks later, there was another show called Wrestlemania. This was even bigger and had even more celebrities and a bigger audience. Then two years after that, there was Wrestlemania III, which had over four times the audience of Wrestlemania I.

I could go on and on with countless examples of the same thing happening, but you get the point. Even after Wrestlemania III, there was no way to tell what else was coming for Hogan during his reign. The match against Andre wound up being the biggest single moment of his first title reign, but there was no way to know that until after he lost the belt. There's no way you can define a reign while it's still going on, as the stuff that happens one day might mean far less by comparison. At the end of the day, the War To Settle The Score was huge at the time, but the stuff it set up blow it away by comparison.

Going back to Punk and his reign now, there's another issue with his reign: no matter how many times he beats Cena, or how many times he beats anyone else, Punk simply is not a bigger star than John Cena. Cena has been the main star in the company for at least six years now (and again, the wins over HHH and Shawn at Wrestlemania didn't define a single thing about him or his reign. They were big wins over big opponents and that's it) and has been pushed like a major star.

On the other hand, Punk has been pushed as a big deal for roughly sixteen months with the majority of his push being based around the idea of him saying that he's better than Cena. Simply saying that he's better than Cena and giving him the title doesn't make him better. Punk's latest thing is talking about how many days he's been champion, but not only has Cena had more reigns, he held the title longer over a single reign. At the end of the day, Cena is a bigger deal than CM Punk.

Again let's look back at Hogan in the 80s. This is basically a carbon copy of the Mega Powers from the late 80s, with Cena and Punk originally being friends (by WWE's standards) in the early days of Punk being champion. Then Punk kept winning and holding onto the title, but no matter what he did or who he beat, he simply wasn't overtaking Cena in the eyes of the fans. Back in the 80s, Hogan was always a bigger star than Savage, Savage eventually went insane, and eventually Hogan and Savage had to have a match over it.

Did Savage's match with Hogan define his reign? Of course not. It ended the reign and Hogan was champion again for another year. Savage's reign is now defined as being important because it happened during Hulkamania. That's another quick thing: not every title reign has a defining moment. Often times the definition of the reign is determined as a whole instead of a single moment or match.

In short, this concept of saying a moment defines someone or a title reign or anything like that is nonsense. Simply saying that a match or a moment defines the champion's reign doesn't make it so. We have no idea of when the reign is going to end and it could be years to figure out what the reign means. We probably won't know what defines Punk's reign until after Punk's career is over, because we don't know how this reign will stack up to future reigns. He might have another reign that blows this out of the water in terms of length or quality, which is why you can't say that it defines anything about him.

The other thing to remember is that Punk flat out is not a bigger star than Cena and a single win over Cena isn't going to make him a bigger star. Like I said earlier, even if Punk wins over Cena, so what? He's done it before and it didn't make him a bigger star, so why would this make him a bigger star now? I get that it's storytelling, but it's a

stupid thing to say because it doesn't make sense when you think about it. Punk isn't going to be the biggest star on the show, at least not while Cena is around, and that's all there is to it.

Thought Of The Day: Goldberg

This is another internet wrestling/wrestling in general obsession that I don't get. Goldberg debuted in 1997, won the US Title in spring of 1998, won the world title in July of 98, lost it in December, feuded with Hall and Nash until the summer, left for a month or two, came back and feuded with Sting, feuded with Russo and hurt his arm attacking the limo, missed four more months, came back, turned heel, turned face, restarted the Streak, and got hurt again in January and was never seen in WCW again.

Then he debuted in WWE in March of 2003, feuded with and beat Rock, feuded with HHH over the summer and won the world title, lost the title in December, feuded with Lesnar and had a horrible match with him at Wrestlemania 20.

That is Bill Goldberg's American wrestling career, with every major moment listed in two paragraphs. Goldberg last appeared in a WWE ring over eight and a half years ago, or longer than Austin and Rock's WWF careers.

So why is the audience still obsessed with the guy? You hear his name chanted anytime someone goes on a winning streak, people seemingly drool over the idea of him coming back, and

people keep wanting him to come back for one more run. Why? What is this obsession with Goldberg? I don't get it at all. He's going to be 46 in December so it's not like he'd have a long run in him. His entire career ran for about five years yet people STILL want him back.

Someone explain this to me.

Thought Of The Day: Missed Masterpieces Of The 80s

Barry Windham vs. Randy Savage

Ted DiBiase vs. Tito Santana

To the best of my knowledge, neither match ever happened. Tito vs. Ted might have on some house show but I'm 99% positive that Windham vs. Savage never did, at least not when it would have been great (read as before 1989ish when Windham just stopped trying). Imagine either of these matches getting 20 minutes and see if you don't smile a little.

I Want To Talk A Little Bit About Wrestlers Sticking To Their Strengths

For some reason wrestling fans expect wrestlers to be able to do everything. I'm not sure where this comes from but I think it has something to do with the theory that wrestling is based around being able to do a lot of moves. This is another of those ideas that needs to be crushed and needs to be crushed quickly. Today I'm going to be talking about wrestlers using the moves that they're supposed to use and why the amount of moves someone uses is completely irrelevant to their talent level. Let's get to it.

Back in 1997, Shawn Michaels had a "knee injury" and couldn't wrestle at Wrestlemania 13, so instead he did commentary on the world title match. That night, Sid defended the world title against the Undertaker. During the match, Sid was in control and Shawn said something like "Sid doesn't deviate from his game plan that much, because that power takes him everywhere he needs to go."

That right there is a lesson that a large amount of wrestling fans need to learn. Today, you hear people talking about guys like Punk and Bryan and using the words Best in the World to describe them. Their justification for this seems to be that Punk and Bryan put on long and entertaining matches with a wide variety of moves. These same fans tend to criticize guys like Hogan and Cena for using a much smaller moveset.

Think about it: how many times have you heard someone criticize Cena because "he only knows five moves"? If you've heard it once, you've heard it way too many times. This is a stupid thing to say for a number of

reasons which we'll cover today. Not only is this stupid to say about Cena, but it's a stupid thing to say about anyone.

Let's take a look at the greatest wrestler of all time: Hulk Hogan. Love him, hate him, whatever you think about him, there is zero denying that since 1980, no one has had a bigger influence on professional wrestling. No one has been a bigger star than Hogan and few have become a bigger household name (which is another article for another time as well). In short, he's the biggest star ever in wrestling and there isn't much to argue about that.

Now that being said, I don't think anyone would call Hogan a ring general, in the sense that he wrestled a lot of matches the exact same way. Hogan had a formula to his matches and he rarely shifted from that formula. There isn't much denying of that, nor is there really any denying that Hogan used probably less than ten different moves (punch, big boot, legdrop, high knee, choke, back rake, suplex, ax bomber and that's about all that jumps to mind) in his entire career.

Here's the big secret though: there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. Hogan wrestled a very basic style and found something that worked (aside: how many botches can you think of from Hogan when he was in the red and yellow? I'd be impressed if you could come up with more than five. The guy was a very safe worker which he never gets credit for) so he never really shifted from it.

Why did Hogan never change or mix it up? Well why should he have done so? Hogan got some of the biggest reactions for well over 20 years doing the exact same stuff, and it never stopped working. Hogan got to the top of the wrestling world using the same formula and it never stopped at all. Somehow being the biggest star ever made him into the worst wrestler

ever.

Another subject that often gets the same reaction is the current biggest star in the world, John Cena. I've never been what you would call a Cena hater. I've never come close to one and I likely never will be one. I'm not a huge Cena fan either, but I respect the guy. One of the biggest knocks on Cena is that he doesn't have as wide ranging of a moveset as Bryan or Punk. This is another criticism that has a true premise (Bryan and Punk likely do have more variety in their offense) but an untrue conclusion (this makes them better wrestlers).

Cena's offense (which has more than five moves: shoulder block, AA, STF, Shuffle, top rope legdrop, spinout slam. There, idea proven wrong) is one based around firing up the crowd at the right times. Look at his matches with Punk. I don't think anyone would suggest that they're boring and I don't think anyone would suggest they're bad. Cena and Hogan both are masters at making comebacks and working a crowd, just like guys like Bret and Shawn were.

This is what makes Hogan and Cena great: they know how to work a crowd. Look at the biggest names in the history of wrestling (in no order): Hogan, Cena, Rock, Austin. What do these four have in common? Among many other things, they play to the crowd. That's what makes them great. They get the fans to care about them and get the crowd to care about them. The true test of the greatness of a wrestler is the amount of a reaction they can draw from an audience.

Think of it like this: when is the last time you remember Cena coming out to no reaction? Ask the same question about Rock, Austin or Hogan. The people respond to them and care about them. How many wrestlers have you seen come out and no one moves? How many times have you seen a tag match

with the hot tag without a reaction from the crowd? The match may be fine from a technical standpoint, but no one cares at all. I can't count how many indy matches I've watched with a lot of flips and high flying moves and ten minutes after the match I can't remember the people in it. That's not a good sign.

Let's take a look at another side of this. Another criticism of guys like Cena or Hogan is that they don't know how to perform moves like Punk and Bryan do. Is this honestly believed? Do you think Cena couldn't do a hurricanrana if he tried to and practiced it? Let's take a look at this from the other perspective: what do you think would happen if Punk tried to AA the Big Show? Even with months if not years of physical training, do you think he could pull it off on that frame? Cena uses his physical abilities in the right way. Here's another example of that which might make a little more sense.

When the names of worst wrestlers in the world are brought up, one that is often mentioned is The Great Khali. Usually when people say this, I roll my eyes because it's clear these people have little idea what they're talking about. Khali is legitimately over 7'0 and weighs probably 400lbs or so. He has physical attributes that only a handful of people on the planet have. In other words, almost no one in the wrestling world are built like Khali.

SO WHY WOULD PEOPLE WANT HIM TO WRESTLE LIKE EVERYONE ELSE??? Khali doesn't run the ropes or use armbars and wristlocks because it would be REALLY stupid for him to do so. He's a freaking giant, meaning that everything he does is enhanced. Khali using a simple move like a chop isn't the same as say Michael McGillicutty using a chop. You're talking about a guy's arm probably being ten feet off the ground and coming down with 400lbs of weight powering it. His size alone makes it look painful.

No, Khali can't get down on the mat like a Bret Hart or fly through the air like a Kofi Kingston, but Bret Hart can't make power moves look as devastating as Khali and Kofi can't realistically use a chokebomb as a finisher. It would make no sense for them to try because that's not their natural strength. Complaining because Khali can't perform basic wrestling moves is ridiculous because he doesn't need to perform them to be effective.

In short, the idea that a wrestler's ability is tied to the amount of moves that he uses is ridiculous. To say that for example Daniel Bryan is a better wrestler than Cena because he uses a ton of submissions makes no sense. If that's what determined who the best wrestlers in the world were, William Regal vs. Dean Malenko would have headlined about seven Wrestlemanias in a row. Wrestling is a performance first, not an athletic event first. It's about using what works, not using everything there is.

Thought Of The Day: Why Are You Doing That?

This is something that occurs to me a lot lately and something WWE is very bad at: everything that is done should be to either make you want to watch the TV show or make you want to buy the PPV. That's the point of the company: they should be trying to make you want to see more and preferably to make you want to pay to see it. Instead, it seems to be to do whatever whim the company is on at the moment. Instead things seem to be about pushing whatever their latest endeavor is to get them publicity. It's like they're focusing on everything but their in ring product if that makes sense. How many times do you see the company pushing the in ring product

or a future match on the show? Now on the other hand, how many times do you hear something pushed that is about hearing something else about the product? As in hearing about Twitter, Tout, Facebook, the App etc. As in you're not hearing about the product, but about something that is about the product. That seems to be counter productive to me.

(Not My) Thought of the Day: Titles Make No Sense

This is something I've thought of before but this was written by Lance Storm, who you should certainly read on a regular basis. As you can likely tell, this was written late last year. What do the Intercontinental and United States Titles even mean? Punk is the best wrestler in the WWE, Bryan the best wrestler in the World, so is Rhodes the best wrestler in North and South America, and Ryder the best wrestler in the USA. There seems to be a lot of contradiction and over lap with that explanation.

Thought of the Day: Dusty Rhodes Is The Best GM Ever

This is one of the reasons why NXT is possibly the best wrestling show today. Dusty Rhodes is the GM of NXT and he's

been on the show maybe three times. He makes matches but he doesn't do so on screen. What might happen is two guys will have an altercation in the back and then when they have the match, Regal might say something like "this match was set up by NXT GM Dusty Rhodes." No TV time wasted, no theme songs being pounded into our heads, no holding the hand of the viewers, just matches being made when they make sense.

Why can't Raw or Smackdown get this?