

AJ Styles In WCW: The Long Form Footnote (Includes Full Video)

AJ Styles In WCW

Commentators: Mike Tenay, Tony Schiavone, Scott Hudson

Yeah this happened and it makes sense given that Styles is finally retired. He was around long enough that he was actually part of the final days of WCW. It really didn't last long, but there is something to be said about seeing such an early part of his career. If nothing else, maybe we can see just how far he came later on. Let's get to it.

From Thunder, February 14, 2001.

AJ Styles/Air Paris vs. Knoble And Karagias

The winners move on to a six way match at Superbrawl. Knoble drives Styles into the corner to start as we talk about Styles being 23 years old and only three years into his career. They battle over wrist control until Styles moonsaults over him and grabs a hiptoss. Everything breaks down and Styles and Paris clear the ring in a hurry.

Paris gets backdropped over the top onto the two of them before coming in to face Karagias. A short powerbomb gives Paris two and it's back to Styles to trip Karagias down for a running corkscrew splash. Styles gets dropped to the floor by a cheap shot though and Knoble sends him into the barricade to take over. Karagias comes in with a powerslam for two and a bridging northern lights suplex gets the same.

A surfboard dragon sleeper has to be broken up so Styles and Karagias hit stereo crossbodies. Styles gets in a powerbomb and brings Paris back in for something like a Burning Hammer

to Knoble. Everything breaks down and Karagias hits a big springboard dive to the floor.

Paris gets caught in a Doomsday Device...but Knoble and Karagias fight over who gets the pin. Styles comes in for the save but gets knocked down. Paris and Knoble crash out to the floor, leaving Karagias to 450 Styles for two, with Paris making the save. Styles' springboard shooting star to the floor hits Paris by mistake, meaning it's a springboard dropkick/powerbomb combination to finish Styles at 12:20.

Rating: B-. It was a fun start for the team and you can see Styles showcasing the skills that he obviously has. On the other hand you have Paris, who is best remembered as Styles' partner but it was far from bad in his own right. As a result you had a bunch of guys getting a chance to showcase themselves and it worked out pretty well, especially for one of the last Thunders.

From Thunder, February 21, 2001.

AJ Styles/Air Paris vs. Boogie Knights

Wright uppercuts Paris down to start and stomps away in the corner. A spinwheel kick allows Disqo (it was a 2000 thing) to come in for a facebuster. Styles comes in and avoids Wright's charge in the corner but gets knocked down again. That means dancing can ensue (shocking I know) but it's already back to Paris to slug away. Disqo goes after the leg to take over as we talk about WCW's impending new owners (cue ominous music).

Paris tries to fight back but gets caught with a Doomsday missile dropkick. Styles pulls him out of the way of a charge though and then gets the tag. A running tornado DDT plants Disqo and it's back to Paris, who knees Disqo to the floor. Styles hits a top rope double dropkick to take both of them down, followed by Paris' springboard high crossbody. Back in and Styles hits his own high crossbody to pin Disqo in an upset at 6:59.

Rating: C. Yeah the Boogie Knights were hardly a great team but they had some success so it means a bit more for Styles and Paris to beat them. That's something you need to have every so often and this was a quick enough match to give the new guys some establishment. I don't expect it to go much further, but at least it's something.

From Monday Nitro, March 5, 2001.

Cruiserweight Tag Team Title Tournament First Round: Air Raid vs. Elix Skipper/Kid Romeo

Yeah this was a thing and given that the company was out of business in less than a month, they didn't last long. Romeo (a dancer, because that was REALLY popular in 2001, though he's closer to a stripper) is a mystery partner. Styles gets chopped up against the ropes but sends Romeo outside. A charge is cut off though and Styles is dropped onto the announcers' table, setting up a big dive from Skipper.

Back in and Styles' faceplant gets two on Romeo, followed by a running flipping splash for two. Paris comes in and is quickly knocked down, meaning it's already back to Styles. Everything breaks down and Skipper hits a top rope Asai moonsault onto Paris and Romeo. Styles is taken out with a dive as Chavo Guerrero comes out to watch.

Skipper dropkicks Paris off the apron into a scoop brainbuster to give Romeo the pin at 5:22. Romeo and Skipper would go on to win the titles, with the company going out of business eight days later (and they would lose them on the last show, with Rey Mysterio and Billy Kidman winning, and reportedly keeping, the belts).

Rating: C+. It was nice to see the team getting a spot on Nitro, albeit in a show that is pretty much completely forgotten. This was such a strange time for WCW, and wrestling in general for that matter, but it's better than nothing for the team. They were getting some exposure on a big stage, even

in defeat, and Styles was making it work.

From Thunder, March 19, 2001 (the last episode).

Air Raid vs. Jung Dragons

Yang wrestles Styles down to start and suplexes him into the corner for a big crash. A double Stunner over the top rope drops Styles and Paris before Styles reverses Hayashi into the (debuting and yet to be named) Styles Clash for two. Paris comes in and gets taken down with a standing hurricanrana before Yang comes in to clean house. A comeback is cut off with a powerbomb out of the corner. That's enough for Hayashi and Styles to come back in, with Styles getting dropped with a kick to the head.

Everything breaks down and Styles gets dropkicked out of the air but he's able to shove Yang outside. We get a really obvious edit as Styles loads up what looks like a super Styles Clash but instead we look at the crowd. As we come back, Styles' is on the mat holding his back (after no sound on the landing) and Paris hitting a clothesline on Hayashi. A double powerbomb drops Hayashi for two, with Yang making the save. Hayashi grabs a chinlock and kind of reverse bulldogs Styles for the pin at 8:09.

Rating: B-. So that's how the run ends and...yeah it's not much different than the rest of the team's run. It was cool to see the Clash, which was at least a different kind of move. The Dragons were an underrated team in their own right and of course they never came close to the Tag Team Titles because, well, that's WCW for you.

Overall Rating: C+. This is basically a big footnote in Styles' career, as he would go on to TNA and become a huge star (by their standards at least) just over a year after WCW went out of business. At this point, he wasn't getting to showcase his talents very well, but then again, what were you expecting in the last month and a half of a dying promotion's

life? It would have been nice to see Styles get a singles match (he only had one, a dark singles match against Paris) but he had enough of those later on. For now, this was a nice look back at a pretty much forgotten time.

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