

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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CWA Championship Wrestling – December 26, 1987: Letting Talented People Entertain You

CWA Championship Wrestling

Date: December 26, 1987

Location: WMC-TV Studios, Memphis, Tennessee

Commentators: Lance Russell, Randy Hale

I haven't done a Memphis show in awhile and I found this online so why not check it out. Since things move very fast in Memphis, it's hard to

say what's going on, though I'll go out on a limb and say Jerry Lawler is world champion. This is just a few weeks after the a bunch of titles were merged to make the CWA World Title so things are changing around this time. Let's get to it.

A typical video package opens us up, set to a fast version of Ric Flair's theme.

The announcers run down part of the card.

Here's Hector Guerrero as the most over the top Mexican stereotype you'll see in a wrestling angle. He's in a big sombrero and singing Feliz Navidad while playing the guitar. This is supposed to be a Christmas greeting but instead he rants about Americans stealing Mexican songs. Hector says there is no Santa Claus and Jerry Lawler and Jeff Jarrett won't be getting any presents this year.

Freezer Thompson vs. Tejoe Khan

Khan is your standard Asian monster and Freezer is a fat black guy. Khan pounds him down and hits a nice slam. More chops have Freezer in trouble and a shot to the throat ends Thompson quick.

The announcers tell us about an ongoing tournament called the Lord of the Ring which is for...a ring. Jerry Lawler and AWA World Champion Curt Hennig met in the first round in Memphis so here's the entire match.

Lord of the Ring First Round: Curt Hennig vs. Jerry Lawler

Hennig jumps Lawler to start and stomps away with Jerry in big trouble. Curt pokes him in the eye as this has been one sided so far. Lawler is draped across the top rope for two and a knee lift puts him down again. Curt sends him into the corner as the beating continues. Lawler finally starts getting fired up and takes the strap down as the fans get into the match. Jerry pounds away in the corner so Hennig throws the referee down. Apparently that isn't a DQ so Lawler makes his comeback and punches Curt down, eventually ending him with the middle rope fist drop.

Rating: D. This was more of an angle instead of a match. Jerry was chasing the world title at this point and would finally win in about five

months later. This was more or less a teaser for future matches which is fine, though I'm surprised they went with the champion getting pinned in just over five minutes.

House show ads. Some manager named Nate the Rat says Bobby Jagers will beat Scott Hall in a loser leaves town match.

Tejoe Khan's manager says his man will beat Bill Dundee in a cage at an upcoming show.

Jimmy Jack Funk vs. David Johnson

Jack takes him down with some snapmares to start before dropping him throat first across the top rope. A spinning powerslam ends Johnson in about a minute.

Funk yells about wanting to fight someone I couldn't understand.

More house show ads.

Scott Hall vs. Keith Eric

The video I have says this is Hall's in ring debut, yet he has a loser leaves town match in a few days? Nate the Rat runs his mouth a bit until Hall grabs the mic and says let's get to the match before punching the Rat. It's strange to hear Hall without his trademark accent. Eric tries to get in some cheap shots to start but Hall no sells them and dropkicks (yes dropkicks) him down. Nate is panicking over Hall punching him as Hall bulldogs Eric for the pin in maybe 45 seconds.

Jeff Jarrett vs. Hector Guerrero

Before the match Guerrero sings Mexico's praises even more. Jarrett comes out to shut him up but Hector keeps going about how the United States of Mexico came before the United States of America. Hector wants punches and kicks banned in the match tonight and Jarrett agrees. In other words, you throw a punch or a kick and it's a DQ. Forearms are still legal apparently.

Feeling out process to start with both guys trading armdrags. Guerrero

gets two off a rollup but Jarrett kicks out to another standoff. Jeff scores with some shoulder blocks and grabs a headlock. They fight over a top wristlock with Jeff taking him down to the mat, only to be countered into a crossface chicken wing. Jeff counters into an armbar, making Guerrero tap. Not that it means anything as tapping hadn't become a thing in wrestling but it's interesting to see.

Hector's surfboard goes nowhere and they stare at each other a bit more. Jeff backdrops him down as we hear about the Guerrero Brothers. The most famous one is just mentioned as Hector's younger brother which made me chuckle for some reason. Guerrero grabs a chinlock and wraps Jeff up on the mat but can't maintain a bow and arrow hold.

A pair of dropkicks (I guess they're legal too) gets two for Jarrett and Hector is getting frustrated. We get intellectual now with Hector slapping Jeff in the face to tick him off but Jeff holds off on the right hand. The referee tries to stop him, allowing Guerrero to get in a right hand of his own and put his feet on the ropes to pin Jarrett.

Rating: C+. This is a good example of what Memphis was great at: they took a really basic idea like no punching and turned it into a fun match. It wasn't anything over complicated and it took all of a minute to set up but it was entertaining anyway. This was also a good example of talented guys being able to make almost anything work. The fans are all over Guerrero now because that's solid heel work. Imagine that: heels get heat for CHEATING.

Jarrett says he'll get Hector next time.

Buy the Jeff Jarrett poster! He was pushed as a sex symbol in Memphis which is bizarre given what he would become.

More house show ads, I believe for the same show.

Bill Dundee is ready to stand and fight against Khan in the cage.

Scott Hall talks about getting back from Japan and looking forward to 1988. He's ready for Bobby Jagers and can't wait to run him out of Memphis.

The Bruise Brothers (Harris Brothers, in white trunks and with HAIR) want the Rock and Rock RPMs again. They're faces here.

Bruise Brothers vs. Rough N Ready

Rough N Ready are a pair of masked guys. It's a brawl to start with we'll say Ron dropkicking we'll say Rough down and putting on an armbar. Off to Don as country music band Sawyer Brown is on commentary. Apparently they're sponsoring the Bruise Brothers, whatever that means.

Don gets two on Rough via a suplex before it's back to Ron. Rough takes him down with a headlock but gets caught in a headscissors. It's so strange seeing the Harris Brothers wrestle like normal size guys (they stand about 6'9 each). Back to Don for more arm cranking before Ron comes in to backdrop Rough down. The masked guys go to the floor, only to come back in and get clotheslined down by Don. An abdominal stretch into a rollup of all things gets the pin for Don on Ready.

Rating: D. Other than seeing the Harris Brothers wrestling an entirely different style than I've ever seen them use, there was nothing to see here at all. This was a long squash which didn't get interesting at all. It's an interesting idea to have the monsters wrestle like guys a foot shorter than they are but it didn't work in reality.

The announcers recap the show and wish us a Merry Christmas to take us out.

Overall Rating: C+. Typical Memphis here: some interesting stories performed by talented wrestling making for an entertaining hour of wrestling. Nothing is too heavy here and nothing comes off as stupid. Hector Guerrero's is a very basic idea but they let his talents make it work. They didn't have every single idea mapped out for him but rather just made him over the top enough that it was hard to like him. Oh and he cheated, which you don't see enough of anymore. Check out some Memphis if you get the chance and like good, basic wrestling.

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new book of Complete 2001 Monday Night Raw Reviews at Amazon for just \$4 at:

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