

Wrestler of the Day – December 7: Steve Keirn

Today we're looking at one of the strangest gimmicks I can remember in a long time: Steve Keirn, better known as Skinner.

Keirn got started back in 1972. We'll pick things up at some point from November 29, 1980.

TV Title: Steve Keirn vs. Kevin Sullivan

Steve is defending and they shake hands before the match. Sullivan takes him down with a quick armdrag but gets caught in an early headscissors. Back up and a shoulder puts Kevin outside but Keirn is nice enough to hold the ropes open so Sullivan can get back in. We get a standoff until the champ takes him down by the arm again.

Keirn stays on the arm despite Sullivan rolling all over the ring to try an escape. He takes Sullivan back down to the mat by the arm but his abdominal stretch is countered with Keirn being sent out to the floor. Sullivan offers to hold the ropes open just like Steve did but jumps the champion coming back in and grabs a small package for the pin and the title.

Rating: C-. The ending helps this a lot as it was looking like a dull match until Sullivan went a bit heelish for the win. It's still not a good match or anything but I'll always take an intelligent ending over something boring. Keirn didn't seem to have much more than basic stuff here, which is probably why he made such a good trainer.

Off to Florida in the summer of 1981.

Dory Funk Jr. vs. Steve Keirn

Dory's Florida Heavyweight Title isn't on the line. Banner behind the ring: "We're the 1 in 81." Apparently Heyman was a CWF fan. Keirn actually takes him down to the mat and grabs an armbar to start but Dory grabs an armbar of his own. That goes nowhere and we reset for a bit.

Dory's sleeper goes nowhere as Keirn makes the rope and blasts Funk with a forearm. A nice piledriver plants Dory for two but Dory sends Steve outside. He comes up holding his knee so Dory sends him face first into the post and hooks the spinning toehold for a pin on the unconscious Keirn.

Keirn's biggest success would come as part of the Fabulous Ones with partner Stan Lane. Here they are in the 1986 Crockett Cup.

Crockett Cup First Round: Fantastics vs. Fabulous Ones

Ok by sheer talent in the ring this has to be good. The Fabulous ones are Steve Keirn (Skinner and the current owner of FCW) and Stan Lane (future member of the Midnight Express). The Fantastics are Bobby Fulton and Tommy Rodgers and are probably my favorite NWA tag team. Fulton vs. Keirn to start and this goes fast. Clipped to Keirn hammering on Fulton. This lack of commentary is really pretty interesting.

A hot shot puts Fulton down but there's no cover. Clipped to his comeback and Fulton's tights being pulled down. Lane comes in for a superkick and we're clipped again to both guys going down off a Russian legsweep. Hot tag to Rodgers gets a big pop as he hammers away on everyone in sight. House is cleaned and an O'Connor Roll pins Lane. WAY too clipped to have any kind of idea if it was good or not.

And again at AWA Wrestlerock 1986.

Fabulous Ones vs. Barry Windham/Mike Rotunda

The Fabulous Ones are Steve (Skinner) Keirn and Sweet Stan Lane. The guest announcer here is another radio guy which is the case with the vast majority of them. Windham vs. Lane starts things off. The crowd has filled in a lot and it looks much better. Feeling out process to start as Barry grabs a headlock. This is back when Windham was awesome and in shape so he's fun to watch.

Off to Rotunda and the arm work (I'm as shocked as you are) begins. Lane tries to escape a hammerlock but gets kneed in the arm instead. Back to Barry who cranks on the arm some more. Off to Keirn who is armdragged

right back down. Back to Mike who works a top wristlock. Barry comes in quickly for a chinlock. Keirn tries a leapfrog but gets punched in the face for his efforts. You can't say Barry is over complicating things.

Windham/Rotunda hit a double dropkick and Keirn is in trouble. Mike misses a corner charge and the heels take over. Things break down quickly but Rotunda can't make a tag. After a long beating by Lane it's back to Keirn. Lane comes in for a neckbreaker but misses an elbow. There's the tag to Barry after a short heat segment. Powerslam gets two on Stan.

The Ones cheat again and Barry gets caught in a chinlock. We're ten minutes into this and it hasn't really kicked into high gear yet, which is a shame given what you have to work with here. Barry grabs a small package on Lane for two. Off to Rotunda who speeds things up and gets two on Lane. There's an airplane spin for two. Lane backdrops him and sets for a piledriver but Barry comes off the top with an elbow to the back of the head, giving Rotunda the pin.

Rating: C. Not a great match or anything here but it was ok I guess. They never cranked this up as high as they could and that really hurt it. Also the lack of any reason for these teams or wrestlers in any match for that matter to want to fight each other is really bringing things down. If they don't care, why should I care?

Off to Florida with PWF Homecoming in 1989.

Scott Hall/Steve Keirn vs. Dick Slater/Bam Bam Bigelow

Keirn has an alligator with him named Wally. Get the reference? Gordon says this is an Australian tag match, whatever that means. Bigelow and Hall start things off. Bigelow is the only one here that looks like he usually looks. Hall works on the arm and brings it's off to Slater who takes over. Back to Bigelow who looks silly working on the arm. Monster heels go after RIBS man. RIBS. Bam Bam misses a headbutt and Hall hits a dropkick.

Off to Keirn who works on the arm as well. Slater is knocked to the floor and Keirn suplexes him back in for one. This is another boring match. Swinging neckbreker from Slater puts Keirn down but he won't tag. I guess

it's supposed to tease tension or something. Slater drops an elbow for a delayed two. Keirn hooks a sleeper so Bigelow makes the save. Hall knocks Slater down and after about a day and a half Keirn tags him in. A quick sunset flip gets the pin. Oh and apparently Slater and Bigelow are part of Page's stable.

Rating: D-. Scott Hall's mustache alone keeps this from failing. Other than that there's NOTHING here that anyone should want to see. This show continues a complete lack of being able to tell us anything about the stories leading up to the match. Bigelow and Slater are in the Diamond Exchange? Thanks for telling us that with 10 seconds left in the match. It really made the ending epic.

Off to Memphis now with the Fabs getting into a quick heel run. We'll start on January 12, 1991.

Fabulous Ones vs. Bill Rush/Sgt. O'Reilley

The Fabulous Ones come out to The Boys Are Back In Town which is a nice touch. Cornette runs his mouth on the floor and he's fired up tonight. The perk of such a small place like the TV studio is you can hear individual fans so Cornette is having a ball trading insults with them. Lane starts with the Sarge and it's clear we're in squash territory here. Rush comes in and gets the same treatment. Keirn pins the Sarge with a plain forearm smash. Total squash.

From the next week.

Tag Titles: Fabulous Ones vs. Cody Michaels/Jerry Lynn

Cornette says why not make it a title match. Michaels and Lane start things off with Lane being sent to the mat. Lane comes back with one of his own and it's off to Keirn. Michaels grabs the arm and works on it as Keirn can't shake him. Lynn comes in and does the same, taking him to the mat with an armdrag. The referee misses a challengers' tag but lets it go anyway.

Michaels gets sent to the floor where Keirn drills him with a chair as the Fabs take over. Suplex puts Michaels down and it's back to Keirn.

Cody hooks a sunset flip but Cornette has the referee so it doesn't even get a count. Tag to Lynn who slams Keirn and everything breaks down, missing a near fall on Keirn. Cornette gets a shot to the head of Lynn with the racket so Keirn can get the pin.

Rating: C. This was fine as throwing out a title match is a good way to keep things interesting. Even if it was pretty dominant for the Fabs, putting the titles on the line at least made it seem possible that something big could happen. Lynn was still good even when he was young, which is impressive. He looks about the same too.

And one last run from February 2,

New Kids vs. Fabulous Ones

Tony dropkicks Stan down to start as Cornette is running his mouth on commentary. Miller is kicked down by Stan Lane the Karate Master so it's off to Christopher. Brian superkicks Keirn down for two and Cornette is losing it. He goes to manage as Keirn can't figure Christopher out. A backdrop finally puts him down so it's off to Lane who gets caught in a quick sunset flip for two. Off to Tony who is slammed down with ease.

Jim is back on commentary to make the match that much better. The New Kids keep trying for a fast win because they can't go man to man vs. the Fabs. Keirn slams Tony's head into a chair on the floor and it's back inside. Tony gets between Stan's legs and makes the tag to Christopher. The Fabs double team him again and it's back to the outside. Keirn is illegal and piledrives Miller for the DQ. It was a DQ at times and at times it wasn't so it's hard to keep up with.

Rating: C-. Not much of a match but this is how you give someone a rub. The New Kids weren't proven yet so having them hang in there with a famous team like the Fabulous Ones and even pick up a win here is a great way to make the New Kids look a lot better. The Fabs couldn't pin them which is a major key. Not a great match, but a good rub.

It's off to the WWF with Keirn's best known character of Skinner.

Team Mustafa vs. Team Slaughter

Colonel Mustafa, Berzerker, Skinner, Hercules

Sgt. Slaughter, Tito Santana, Jim Duggan, Texas Tornado

A lot of these guys are on their way out. Hercules would be in WCW by May, Tornado would job to the stars until leaving in July as would Mustafa (Iron Sheik), and the rest of the guys would do nothing of note for the rest of their time in the company. Kerry (Tornado) looks high as a kite and almost falls off the apron getting into the ring. This is pretty recently after Slaughter's face turn as he was a heel at Summerslam. This isn't exactly the most talent laden match ever and the only feud is Slaughter vs. Mustafa.

Tito and Skinner start with Santana taking over with a headlock. There's the flying forearm out of nowhere and Skinner hits the floor without a cover. Off to Berzerker vs. Tornado which would work a lot better down in Dallas. Berzerker (a crazy viking who tried to stab Undertaker with a sword) misses a dropkick and it's off to Mustafa. After some very brief offense, Kerry tumbles to his corner and brings in Duggan to face Hercules, which was in the first ever match at Survivor Series.

Duggan gets taken down by double and triple teaming and it's off to Mustafa. He loads up his curled boots (it's a Sheik thing) and does nothing with them. Thanks for wasting our time with that. Duggan pounds away and backdrops Mustafa down before the hot tag to Slaughter. The big showdown is an atomic drop and a clothesline to Mustafa for the elimination.

Berzerker comes in with some clotheslines and a kick to the fat gut of Slaughter. A boot to Slaughter's face puts him down and it's off to Hercules for some two counts. Back to the viking who gets crotched on the top rope and kicked in the legs. Off to Duggan who clotheslines Berzerker to the floor and backdrops him back there a few seconds later. Tornado comes in and pounds away on him before it's off to Hercules again. Tito gets a blind tag and hits a forearm to the back of the head (El Paso Del Muerte) for the pin and the elimination.

Skinner, the guy that owned now former developmental program FCW, comes in as it's 4-2. When you have Skinner and Berzerker as your only guys

left, the team is in big trouble. A blind tag brings in Slaughter who rolls up Skinner for the elimination. Slaughter whips Berzerker into Duggan's clothesline for the elimination and the win.

Rating: F. The match sucked, it was never in doubt, and the biggest deal on the heel team was Skinner, who would get an IC Title shot soon after this. What a horrible match and one of the most worthless ones in the history of the show so far, which is covering quite a bit of ground. Nothing to see here at all.

Here's that title shot at This Tuesday In Texas.

Intercontinental Title: Bret Hart vs. Skinner

If you don't know who the champion is here, you're beyond my help. Skinner is in the ring when the champion's music plays so what do you expect out of this? Bret's singles push was in full swing here, having beaten Perfect in their classic at Summerslam. Skinner is apparently undefeated at this point, meaning he had beaten about three jobbers or something.

Bret gives some girl the shades and she FREAKS. You would think it was 1999 and she was a 13 year old at an N Sync concert. Bret is crisp as all goodness here, and given that Steve Keirn, more commonly known as Skinner, is a very good wrestler in his own right means this should be solid. He's the head trainer in FCW, or at least he was as of a few months ago. We get a WILL YOU BE SERIOUS from Monsoon as those two somehow have more chemistry than Ventura and McMahon.

That's a very high compliment if there ever was one. Bret goes into the post to turn the tide here. That shouldn't be a DQ as some commentators freak out about. It's part of the ring after all. Bret goes into his standard great selling as the clinic on psychology that is a Bret Hart match begins. We get an abdominal stretch and say it with me: Gorilla criticizes it. One of my favorite bits that they do is Gorilla saying something and Heenan repeating it.

That's just great stuff that you just can't teach. Danny Davis is the referee here, despite being banned from doing so for life plus ten years. We go through the motions of Skinner working over the shoulder and things are working quite well indeed. Just as I say that, he goes after Bret's leg and even Gorilla points out how stupid that is. Heenan says that it's like beating on a lizard and goes into a biology thing, which Gorilla is annoyed with.

The crowd is WAY behind Bret here. Skinner hits his finisher, a reverse DDT, but Bret gets out at two of course. Bret plays possum, and despite the fact that he does this IN EVERY MATCH HE HAS EVER HAD, Skinner falls for it and Bret goes into the original five moves of doom, which of course he doesn't get through before Skinner breaks up the streak, just like everyone else does.

See, the difference between Hogan and Hart is that while they always finish the same, Bret had a million different ways of getting there while you could plot a Hogan match from bell to bell with relative ease. Skinner goes up top for no apparent reason, and in a great impression of Ric Flair, gets slammed off of it. Sharpshooter goes on and the match goes off.

Rating: B. It's a formula match, but since Bret is the master of formula matches, ok second master after Flair, this was fine. Skinner was built up as the challenger of the week, he went in and did his stuff, Bret survived and got the tap out. Do that about 10 times and you have yourself a dominant champion, which is exactly what they did and it worked like a charm. This was very solid stuff all around and it worked quite well to open the show. The bad part is that it's probably going to be the best match of the night.

From Wrestling Challenger at some point in January 1992.

Skinner vs. ???

We see the nerd Jamison eating a sandwich at ringside. A dropkick puts

Skinner down to start and he rolls to the floor for a breather. Back in and Skinner is ready for a leapfrog and shoves the jobber down. Now it's the unnamed guy being sent out to the floor where Skinner spits on Jamison. Back in and a sunset flip gets two on Skinner but he plants the guy with something like a Pedigree. A reverse DDT is enough for the pin.

Rating: D. Yeah what else were you expecting here? Jamison was the most interesting part of the match and even then he wasn't anything to see. Skinner was about as low level of a guy with a gimmick as you could find, which says a lot given how lame the midcard was around this time.

From Wrestlemania VIII.

Owen Hart vs. Skinner

Skinner catches him with the tobacco juice to the face to start and hits a shoulder breaker for no cover. Skinner's reverse DDT gets two but Owen gets tired of selling and rolls him up for the pin. This was about a minute long.

From a tape called Bashed in the USA on December 14, 1992.

Intercontinental Title: Shawn Michaels vs. Skinner

Dude really? Also heel vs. heel? Skinner has an alligator skin cowboy hat which JR critiques. Skinner slaps Shawn to start as maybe he's a face here? I don't remember that at all but he might just be face by default here. He knocks Shawn to the floor and back in, punches him a few times. Swinging neckbreaker gets two. Ross thinks Skinner is like a guy from Deliverance. I'll let you make your own jokes there.

Shoulderbreaker puts Shawn down for two again. What is with Shawn getting beaten up in back to back matches here? Shawn hits the floor again and is in big trouble. He avoids being rammed into the post as Skinner goes into the post instead. Horrible looking dropkick puts Skinner down in the ring as Savage talks like Yoda. Some headbutts by Skinner put Shawn down. And then Shawn hits the superkick to retain the title. Totally out of nowhere there but at least it's a pin.

Rating: D+. What is UP with this tape? Shawn got beaten up for the most

part here and then won at the very last second. He's still champion at least and he got the pin but why is Shawn losing until the very last minute only to either cheat or hit a quick move to win? I'm not sure what's going on here but it's kind of stupid.

We'll wrap it up on Raw, February 22, 1993.

Undertaker vs. Skinner

The match is joined in progress with Undertaker being knocked out to the floor. After about eight seconds we see a commercial for G.I. Joe toys. Back with them heading outside and Skinner choking Undertaker as we go off the air. They would show the "conclusion" next week which was Undertaker winning in about 30 seconds with the Tombstone.

Keirn is a guy that was a good hand in the ring but needed someone there with him to make things better. He's not bad in the ring on his own but without someone to dance with, there's only so much he's going to be able to do. He's very solid with the basics though, and that's a good sign for a trainer, hence why he started FCW and still works in NXT today.

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