



SSICSSIM
2021

MONDAY NIGHT WARS:
WORLD CHAMPIONS WRESTLING
(1995 - 2001)

BACKGROUND GUIDE

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A LETTER FROM YOUR DIRECTOR

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to SSICsim 2021! I know I speak for the entire dais when I say how excited we are to meet you all virtually in November. Before we bombard you with information, a little bit about myself: my name is Aadam Dadhiwala, and I will be your Director of Monday Night Wars: World Champions Wrestling (1995-2001) at SSICsim. I am currently a fourth-year at the University of Toronto double-majoring in Human Geography and History.

The dais and I have worked very hard to design a unique committee experience. This committee will require you to utilize the knowledge you gain through research, be creative, be quick-thinking, and cooperate with your fellow delegates. I hope you enjoy debating it as much as I enjoyed devising it: a glimpse into the duality of plasticky appearances and gritty realities at the heart of the wrestling industry.

It is important to recognize that this background guide does not contain a complete description of the committee's topics and/or focus. We have provided you with broad context for the crisis, but it is crucial that you supplement this information with your own ideas and imagination. It is up to you to learn more about the complexities of the organization, research the backstory of your respective characters, and develop possible solutions from that research.

To me, the wrestling world is the pinnacle of a crisis experience. Although it is personable and realistic, it can (and often does) become an untamed imaginative experience. In my four years as a high school delegate, almost every "practice crisis" we ran used sporting events including WWE to teach us the ins and outs of crisis committees, to help us understand and push the plausibility factors, and to encourage us to let our imaginations run wild as we searched for solutions to any given scenario. By focusing on the wrestlers and their double lives, we are exposing a storyline only one can imagine, truly rewriting the course of history.

Sincerely,

Aadam Dadhiwala

Director of *Monday Night Wars: World Champions Wrestling (1995-2001)*

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

THE BEGINNINGS AND CARNIVAL STRONGMEN

Professional wrestling originated in carnivals traveling across the nation during the 1870s. Impressive athletes would travel with carnies and allow local would-be strongmen to challenge the wrestler to a brawl. Pure wrestling ability determined the wealth and fame of the wrestler, at this point wrestling was legitimate combat between the professional and a local yokel trying their hand at fame. Eventually, carnies and circus workers sought to heighten the grandeur of the event by giving the athletes flamboyant names, clothes, and personality. The fundamental idea of a constantly moving event hosting larger than life characters that battled to entertain an audience was born.

THE BIRTH OF KAYFABE

In the early 1900s, wrestling began to lose touch with the American public. By this time many wrestling matches were scripted, but without truly incredible characters, stories, or champions, the seeming illegitimacy of the sport began to leave a sour taste in viewers' mouths. That is, until Ed Lewis, Billy Sandow, and Toots Mondt changed and reinvented the sport. The trio formed what is considered to be the first notable wrestling promotion and began to travel not with a carnival, but as a group of wrestling entertainers only. Up until this point, wrestling was an attraction only connected to carnivals. The idea of a traveling wrestling show was extremely unique, and quite promising to prospective audiences. Lewis, Sandow, and Mondt sought to reinvent wrestling by placing more emphasis on the theatre of the craft. Instead of focusing on legitimate brawls and dull-looking submission holds, the focus was shifted to creating entertainment rather than competition. The trio used flashy, stylistic moves. They pioneered the tag team match. They worked on months-long feuds between wrestlers to create the illusion of legitimate hatred and intensity in the matches. While still scripted, the showmanship aspect of wrestling was put front and center by these three men, and wrestling as we know it today was born.

RISE OF THE TERRITORIES

Wrestling promotions began to sprout all over the nation. Each promotion with its cast of wrestlers, and each promotion with a champion. These small promotions would constantly "steal" wrestlers from other promotions and bring them into their own to gain fans from other territories and expand their reach. Inter-promotional matches would create tensions regarding which promotion was superior. But the youth of the industry meant that these numerous, scattered promotions could not draw large crowds or noteworthy payouts on their own. Restricted to small geographic regions due to the financial constraints of travel, many territories were simply not able to grow as much as they would like. Then the year 1948 marked a major milestone for wrestling as several notable promotions of the midwestern and central United States joined forces to create the National Wrestling Alliance (NWA). Each member promotion could still have a champion of its own, but there was one NWA World Champion which ruled over all the rest. This way each promotion could still operate within its territory, while also allowing a World Champion to travel to each territory to wrestle. The idea of one ultimate title to chase after and the unification of many wrestling promotions was a major step in the modernization of pro wrestling. Loyalty to the territory system



is what caused the ultimate demise of the NWA, but for now and decades to follow, the NWA's territories were the largest wrestling conglomerate in the country.

Formed by disgruntled NWA wrestler Verne Gagne, the American Wrestling Association united wrestling territories in the upper midwest and became the most popular promotion in the 1960s. Gagne would be one of the AWA's top wrestlers up until his retirement in 1981. The AWA saw success in its territorial region of the upper midwest but was not as ambitious as its competition in expansion. Also, in possibly the greatest blunder in wrestling history, Gagne refused to allow Hulk Hogan to be crowned the AWA champion, despite Hogan undoubtedly being the AWA's most popular wrestler. Hogan left for the WWF soon after and took that company to unimaginable heights. While the AWA enjoyed dominance in the 60s and relative success in the 70s, the loss of Hulk Hogan led to a disappointing decade in the 80s and the AWA shut its doors forever in 1991.

The New York and New England region followed suit not too long after with the formation of the World Wide Wrestling Federation (WWWF), the soon to be WWE. Vince McMahon Sr. formed the WWWF under the NWA and trusted wrestling icon Bruno Sammartino to be the face of the company for years. In the late 70s, McMahon Sr. would change the WWWF to the WWF, and his promotion became the dominant one in the region, but McMahon Sr. was content with operating within the limits of his territory and respected the hierarchy of NWA custom.

Each territory was different in style, character, and approach to wrestling, but they all had one thing in common- they respected the boundaries of their territory. Wrestling was splintered, no promotion had the gusto to take over the others and assume control. Each one seemed content in a pseudo-feudalistic style of operation where one promotional world champion was more important than the other champions of that territory. Many other promotions did exist but at this point, these few are the most noteworthy for the committee.

GIMMICKS AND CHARACTERS

Gorgeous George. No name is more crucial to the evolution of wrestling storytelling than this one. In wrestling, there are good guys (faces) and bad guys (heels). Good guys fight the bad guys, the audience cheers for the good guy and boos the bad guy. Simple. In the early days of wrestling, most heels were exaggerations of "ethnic terrors." Nazis, terrorists, anygroup that the general American people of the 50s and 60s were not fond of served as the bad guys. But Gorgeous George was different. He was a cocky, narcissistic, unrepentant prick and people paid money to see him lose. One of the first wrestlers to use entrance music, the Gorgeous George character reinvented wrestling personas. Gorgeous George was hated by viewers and when he won, people paid to watch him wrestle again and again because they wanted him to lose so badly. Wrestling was no longer about good guys beating up racist stereotype characters, now "gimmicks" were born. George's gimmick was that he thought himself good looking and acted arrogantly, so naturally, people wanted him to get pummeled. As George became a superstar, other wrestlers and promotions caught wind that new and unique wrestling characters could be explored, and the era of gimmick wrestlers began.

RISE OF VINCE MCMAHON

In 1982, Vincent Kennedy McMahon bought the WWF from his father, and wrestling would never be the same. Unlike most other promotional owners, Vince McMahon had no intention of

preserving the territory system. He wanted to dominate the world of wrestling, and the only way to do that would be to graduate from territories and go national. McMahon immediately broke away from the NWA and began his long term plan to become the first national wrestling promotion.

HULKAMANIA AND THE WWF

One of Vince McMahon's first moves was to sign rising star Hulk Hogan. Hogan had become a popular wrestler during his time in AWA and gained popularity among most Americans by having a lengthy cameo role in Rocky III as the fictional professional wrestler Thunderlips. McMahon immediately pushed Hogan to the main event and world title scene, Hogan became the WWF champion in early 1984 by pinning the Iron Sheik in Madison Square Garden. Hogan was a massive draw, the people came in droves to see him, the money was rolling in. McMahon had an eye for talent, and using this increased revenue he signed territory stars such as "Rowdy" Roddy Piper, Andre the Giant, Ricky "The Dragon" Steamboat, and "Superfly" Jimmy Snuka, all of whom were top tier wrestlers and entertainers. With a healthy stream of revenue, McMahon began to secure TV deals and by 1986 WWF had shows airing all over the country. The dream of going national was becoming a reality.

The only way to truly become a national enterprise was for WWF to tour the entire country, not just the New York area. McMahon began to take his show on the road and the WWF tour of the continental United States began. However, a weekly live wrestling show moving from place to place at all times is incredibly costly, and the bank of WWF could not support the strain much longer. After some time, the company was on the verge of financial collapse due to the cost of national touring. The WWF needed to recover, so McMahon created the most iconic wrestling event of all time.

WRESTLEMANIA

McMahon spearheaded a promotional campaign in conjunction with MTV titled the *Rock and Wrestling Connection*. Notable music celebrities advertised *WrestleMania* and even had feature performances at the event. By focusing on the entertainment aspect of wrestling, McMahon was able to draw the attention needed to make *WrestleMania* a success. *WrestleMania* did not just seem exciting to wrestling fans, by marketing with MTV, McMahon made sure that the average American knew of, and was excited to see this cross between the insane industry of wrestling and the established and popular world of popular music. McMahon betrayed conventional wrestling norms and pitched his product not just to the fans of the industry, but to the fans of all U.S entertainment, he knew that in order to truly beat out the competition and have *WrestleMania* be a success, he needed to win the viewers, and wallets, of more people than ever before. And it was a success. With 19,000 in attendance and over one million viewers across the nation, *WrestleMania* was instantly the largest wrestling PPV event in history. The event enabled McMahon and the WWF to continue making appearances across the nation and expand the popularity of the promotion. Just two years later, *WrestleMania III* in Michigan housed an astonishing 78,000 people and marked the beginning of WWF's superiority as the ultimate wrestling powerhouse.



NWA, AWA AND THE SLOW DEATH OF THE TERRITORIES

Countless territories with even more wrestlers became a system too chaotic to effectively manage. The WWF was growing rapidly, and with a much smaller cast of much more popular wrestlers, it was far easier for fans to simply pay attention to the WWF and forget the endless amounts of stories happening in all the territories. Territories needed to combine in order to feasibly compete with the growth of the WWF, and Jim Crockett Productions was able to buy up smaller territories and amass enough size to hold its own.

Jim Crockett Productions purchased the most notable territories of the NWA, and its own time slots on TBS to begin airing wrestling nationally as well. However, the nature of the NWA was still far too splintered to compete with the WWF. Slowly, territories began to fall off the map. While the larger bodies such as Jim Crockett, NWA, WCW, and AWA remained for now, none were truly large or self-sufficient enough to mount a competitive effort to dethrone McMahon and the WWF. The mid to late 80s saw a jaw-dropping skyrocket of the WWF's popularity and influence, as the other territories slowly faded into relative obscurity.

TED TURNER AND THE WCW

In 1988, Jim Crockett Productions was bought by media mogul Ted Turner and later that year WCW began to air. Legendary wrestler Ric Flair was the flagship champion for the promotion and helped bring in wrestlers such as Ricky Steamboat, Lex Luger, Sting, and Scott Steiner. While Flair initially was able to help improve ratings, WCW fell into a slump from 1990 lasting until 1994. The NWA and WCW both recognized the same world champion, but WCW began to incorporate titles of their own to craft their own identity. Sharing a champion caused issues for both companies, as many territories wanted the champion to defend the title under their rules and terms regularly, which was a taxing excursion for any athlete. At the time, Ric Flair was the main booker for WCW, but many wrestlers accused Flair of booking matches in his favor, so he was released from this role. He was replaced by Jim Herd. Herd was a tad too experimental in his ideas for WCW. He created the Ding Dongs, a tag team in which all members were obsessed with bells for some reason, and the lumberjack Big Josh who walked to the ring beside dancing bears every time he wrestled. Unsurprisingly, Herd was removed from this role because his ideas were the worst. His replacement, Bill Watts, was the exact opposite. Watts was far too conservative in his approach to WCW, as Watts favored a return to traditional territory wrestling rules. He banned moves from the top rope, which had become a staple of wrestling at the time, and took the focus away from larger than life characters and more on mat-based wrestling. Watt's awful ideas led to a final split with the NWA. IN 1993 WCW became fully independent from the NWA and kept the belt that represented the WCW and NWA world champion. Watt was removed and entertainment rookie Eric Bischoff took his place.

I'M ERICH BISHOFF AND WELCOME TO MONDAY NITRO!

Like McMahon, Bischoff understood that to build a successful wrestling empire, one must focus on the entertainment aspect more than the wrestling aspect of the product. But, for now, he was not in control of the creative decisions of WCW. Then in 1994 after years of disappointing ratings and lackluster product, Ted Turner entrusted the creative decisions behind WCW to Eric Bischoff.



Bishoff swiftly signed Hulk Hogan, who despite being out of wrestling for a brief time, was still a massive draw. “Macho Man” Randy Savage was signed soon after. Bishoff was targeting WWF’s old talent and banking on their popularity to increase the appeal of WCW. Finally, with respectable star power, WCW became competitive. Ric Flair, Hulk Hogan, Randy Savage, Sid Vicious, and others began to draw in respectable ratings. Through a series of pre-taped weekly shows and PPV events, WCW began to garner a sizable following and was nearly ready to tour the country. Ted Turner asked Bishoff what it would take to dethrone McMahon and the WWF. Jokingly, Bishoff said that a time slot on Monday night to directly compete with.

WWF Monday Night Raw with a live show of their own was the only way for WCW to compete sustainably. Shockingly, Turner agreed and by complete accident WCW Monday Nitro was born and alongside it, the Monday Night Wars.

On September 4, 1995 the first live showing of WCW Monday Nitro aired from the Mall of the Americas in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The venue was chosen quite carefully. At the time, malls were immensely popular, and this mall was the largest in America. Bishoff and Turner selected this venue so that the feel and atmosphere of Monday Nitro would appeal to young adults, rather than targeting small children as the WWF had been for some time.

The first episode of Nitro was monumental. By sheer coincidence, Monday Night Raw was not airing that night due to the Westminster Dog Show claiming the time slot. Nitro aired unopposed and wrestling fans across the nation were in for a treat. After a solid debut with quality wrestling, the finale of the premiere episode of Nitro was an act of hostility and in many ways, the formal declaration of ratings war. Lex Luger, new golden boy of the WWF appeared on Monday Nitro, challenged Hulk Hogan to a match, and declared himself a WCW talent. Luger had wrestled for the WWF less than 24 hours prior, he signed a contract with WCW that very morning, not even his own family knew that he had made the jump to WCW. By essentially stealing the “new Hulk Hogan” from WWF and airing unopposed, WCW Monday Nitro was off to a rip roaring start.

THE CURTAIN CALL

As you will learn in the next section, Kevin Nash and Scott Hall moved from WWF to WCW in 1996, but their departure was significant not only because it added two incredibly popular wrestlers to WCW’s roster, but also because the nature of their departure changed the perception of wrestling forever.

Many people knew that wrestling was scripted, newspapers had stopped printing the results to wrestling events in the 30s, but what is crucially important is that wrestling never acknowledged that wrestling was fake. WWF and WCW never claimed to be legitimate combat, but they also never conceded to being pure fiction because that would damage the illusion which wrestling seeks to create. While on the job, wrestlers were to maintain the illusion. At all times, kayfabe was not to be broken, because if the audience realized that the whole thing was a shtick and none of the wrestlers took it seriously, then why should the audience take it seriously?. Kayfabe was sacred and to be maintained at all costs.

Then, in May 1996, Shawn Michaels and Scott Hall faced Kevin Nash and Triple H (performing under the name Hunter Hearst Helmsley at the time) in a tag team match. Heroic babyfaces Michaels and Hall wrestled Nash and Triple H in what was known by the four of them to be Hall and Nash’s last match in WWF. Everything went well, until after the match finished. The group



were close friends, so they decided to all break kayfabe to celebrate together, the heroes and the villains who had been beating each other to a pulp not even one minute prior, were hugging and celebrating. The audience was stunned, cameras captured the event (although it did not air live). The cat was now undeniably out of the bag, wrestling was an industry of fibs and they admitted it in front of New York City. For the first time ever, a wrestling company had to admit to being fake. It was humiliating for McMahon and the WWF. The illusion was shattered. Nash and Hall had left the company so they did not care much since they could not be punished anyway. Michaels was the WWF champion and very popular, so he was immune to punishment. So, Helmsley was punished harshly, he was booked to lose and lose and lose and lose to the point where his credibility as a wrestler was nearly nonexistent and the fans had no reason to care about him; he nearly lost his career. Eventually, Helmsley was able to reinvent himself as Triple H, claw back to the main event and have a Hall of Fame career, but the Curtain Call nearly cost him everything.

The Curtain Call is the most significant break of kayfabe to date, many believe that wrestling kayfabe never truly recovered from the blow, and promotions approach to wrestling since then could never truly lose themselves in full immersion because it was expected for each company to acknowledge that the industry was essentially a lie. From this point on, the curtains to the backstage of pro wrestling would slowly be unveiled as fans became more and more intrigued by the details of the industry, but for now, WWF and WCW did what they could to maintain the illusion of their product.

THE NWO AND HOLLYWOOD HOGAN

Bishoff's philosophy on his product was simple but brilliant. Simply put, he did the opposite of what WWF did. WWF pandered to kids, so Bishoff went after adults. WWF gave their wrestlers gimmick names, so Bishoff had his wrestlers use their real names. WWF focused on clean, family television, so Bishoff was all about mature content. The late 90s were a time of edginess, grit, and anti-heroes. McMahon was stuck in the past trying to make a wrestler like "Mantaur" a half man / half bull become popular. But Bishoff had a brilliant scheme which didn't insult the intelligence of the audience. The Outsiders.

In 1996 Razor Ramon left the WWF, but in a time before the internet the general people didn't know that. So when Razor Ramon, real name Scott Hall, showed up at a Monday Nitro event, beat up some WCW wrestlers and claimed he and his friends were going to you take over the show, people believed that the WWF legitimately had wrestlers sabotaging the competition. Of course Hall actually just signed with WCW, but the point is that Bishoff created a storyline that blurred the fictional world of wrestling, and the real world of business. When WWF wrestler Diesel, real name Kevin Nash, joined Hall in these antics, it was astonishing. Bishoff would have them escorted out of arenas by police, they attacked WCW wrestlers, the whole story was unbelievable. They called themselves The Outsiders, and they claimed they had a third man, unknown to everyone. What followed, is arguably the most shocking moment in wrestling history.

At Bash at the Beach 1996, The Outsiders had a tag team match against Lex Luger, Randy Savage, and Sting. The infamous third man had not revealed himself yet so The Outsiders were down a man. Late into the match The Outsiders used illegal tactics to savagely beat the champion Randy Savage and render his teammates too injured to help. The villainous Outsiders were pummeling the beloved champion when suddenly Hulk Hogan emerged from the entrance ramp, began furiously yelling at The Outsiders as he came to save the day. The crowd erupted with cheers, The Outsiders fled the ring in fear. As Hogan entered the ring to check on his friend the



champion, the unthinkable happened. Hulk Hogan, the American Hero, the be-all, end-all of wrestling good guys took a step back, ran forward, and performed his classic finishing move, the Atomic Leg Drop on the champion. Hulk Hogan was the third man, Hulk Hogan had turned heel. Hogan announced the trio as the New World Order of wrestling, and what followed was years worth of WCW supremacy in the ratings.

Bishoff knew that turning the golden boy of wrestling into a villain was risky, but would definitely draw attention. The wrestling genius that he was, Hogan made for an excellent villain, everytime he went out to the ring fans would literally angrily shower the stage in trash. The nWo alone was responsible for the monumental rise of WCW. The era of the WWF was over, the time of WCW was now.

The nWo started off as “Hollywood” Hulk Hogan, Scott Hall, and Kevin Nash working together to “take over” WCW, win all the title belts, beat up all the other wrestlers, and do whatever they wanted on camera. The struggle between the nWo and the rest of WCW was one of the most entertaining feuds in all of wrestling history and the fans adored the gritty, rebellious anti-heroes in all their arrogant glory.

For the next two years WCW dominated the ratings. McMahon had nothing to compete with the nWo. Every week the nWo would wreak havoc on Nitro, beating up other wrestlers, winning all the titles, stealing the show. They pulled up to the arena in limousines, smoking cigars, accompanied by movie stars, NBA players, rappers, models, you name it. They were the coolest dudes in all pro wrestling and the audience knew it, and more importantly, they loved it. nWo merchandise alone generated more than enough revenue for WCW to operate at a competitive level against the WWF.

From late 1995 to early 1997, the nWo was the premiere professional wrestling attraction. The most popular wrestlers of WCW would join the nWo and increase the size and scale of the faction. Eventually, Bishoff became a character on Monday Nitro the same way McMahon would eventually become a character on Raw. Initially, Bishoff would attempt to prevent the nWo from hijacking the series and dominating the title scenes, but soon after Bishoff, like many others, would join the nWo and help them “fight” against in their attempts to take over the product.

FAMILY FRIENDLY VS. M FOR MATURE

The nWo made for must see television. WCW was performing at nearly double WWF’s ratings heading into 1997, and for Vince McMahon, it was very clear that something had to change. He knew that the WWF needed to change their formula, and they found the solution in a man called Stone Cold. Stunning Steve Austin was released from WCW in 1995, he moved to WWF and soon adapted the persona of a cussing, beer-drinking, middle finger flipping redneck - Stone Cold Steve Austin. This character was a smash hit, this was the adult content that WWF needed to stay competitive, and slowly, the ratings began to even out. WWF was doing away with the dated, family-friendly content and had caught wind of what was profitable for modern wrestling. Both promotions would run into issues with the parent networks about some of the more explicit content, specifically in regards to drugs and nudity, but McMahon and Bishoff were both fairly persuasive, so it did not become a major issue for WWF or WCW for the time being. This new era of curse words, middle fingers, anti heroes, nudity, sex, blood, grit, and a general “I don’t give a crap what you think” demeanor became known as the “Attitude Era” and is widely regarded as the greatest period of professional wrestling ever. Stars such as Sting, Hollywood Hogan, Stone



Cold, The Rock, Triple H, Chris Jericho, and other legends found their fame by being outspokenly profane, disrespectful, witty, and rebellious.

While the expanding nWo carried WCW, Stone Cold, D-Generation X, and The Rock would bring ratings back to nearly equal as wrestling moved into the late 90s. Soon enough, a rise in younger talent would put the advantage in WWF's favor, but for the time being, both promotions had incredibly high quality and profitable products that consistently performed outstanding in the ratings.

STING

In mid 1996, the nWo was still massively popular, but they had all but run out of worthy opponents because pretty much everyone joined the nWo as part of the nWo's storyline. In order to stay interesting, the nWo needed a worthy adversary. Enter - Sting. Years prior, Sting was a blonde haired, colorful, face painted hero who felt like he belonged in the 80s. He was very popular, and incredibly talented, but his character felt out of place in a WCW where raunchiness and grit defined the product. So, inspired by the film "The Crow" Sting reinvented himself. He grew his hair out and dyed it black, his flamboyant face paint now mostly white with obsidian black lines, he wore a dark trenchcoat and carried around a black bat, and waged war against the nWo.

This new Sting was ghostly. He was almost silent, he moved very deliberately, stalking his opponents. He had his dark bat at his side at all times and would beat down the members of the nWo with it at every opportunity. Sting became so popular that he was one of the only wrestlers in all of WCW capable of holding their own against the nWo.

Sting would force wrestlers to choose between joining with him or joining with the anarchist nWo, once he amassed a sizable faction, these two groups had incredible tag team matches that sold out arenas and beat out Raw in the ratings constantly. It would be utterly ridiculous to talk about WCW and not mention The Icon Sting, one of the only wrestlers popular enough to stand firm against the nWo in a legendary feud.

THE MONTREAL SCREWJOB

Perhaps the most infamous incident in pro wrestling history, the Montreal Screwjob, and the changes that came because of it, are arguably the most significant happenings in the results of the Monday Night War. In 1997, WWF champion Bret Hart had decided to move to WCW, but a loyal friend to Mr. McMahon, he would finish out his contract before making the jump. It was decided that Hart would drop the title to rising star Shawn Michaels at the Survivor Series pay-per-view, and the following night Hart would debut on WCW. Except, Hart wasn't so hot on the idea. Hart and Michaels abhorred each other, and the thought of dropping the title to Michaels was enough for Hart to put his foot down. He insisted that he win the match against Michaels, and then willingly vacate the title the next night on Raw, where he would then leave for WCW.

McMahon apparently agreed to this and Hart was satisfied. However, the idea of leaving a company as champion has long been shunned in the wrestling industry. It is known that if you are leaving the promotion, you drop the title in a match fair and square; it is basic wrestling courtesy



which even the most premadonna of wrestlers upheld. But Hart wouldn't budge, he insisted he win against Michaels and willingly vacate the title, effectively leaving as an unbeaten champion.

So, the night came. The match went on for some time, and Michaels put Hart into Hart's own signature submission hold, the Sharpshooter. Bret Hart did not tap out, but the referee called for the bell, and Shawn Michaels was declared champion. McMahon had called for an abrupt and illegitimate end to the match. Hart lashed out, destroying pieces of the set, spitting in McMahon's face on live TV, and spelling the letters WCW in the air angrily to signify his leaving the WWF. When confronted backstage, Hart punches McMahon in the face, hurting him badly. Hart left the WWF in shame, and moved to WCW some time later.

There are two important takeaways from the Montreal Screwjob. The first is that WCW now had Bret Hart, a superstar wrestler, someone as talented as they were popular, and they utterly dropped the ball. WCW debuted him as a special guest referee for some reason, and when he did wrestle, he was never given a proper push to the top. The misuse of Bret Hart is often cited as a major reason why WCW fell behind in ratings in the years to come. The second major development was the creation of the character Mr. McMahon. Vince McMahon had a presence on his show as an announcer, and was a bad-tempered, intense boss who was often yelling, but those two never went together. On screen he was friendly as can be. After the Screwjob, McMahon created the character of an evil, loud, conniving Chairman of the WWF who would often wrestle his own employees and "fire" them on live shows. Mr. McMahon would evolve into one of the greatest heels in all of wrestling, and this character had a legendary feud with Stone Cold Steve Austin, another major contributing factor to WWF's ultimate victory in the war. Without the Montreal Screwjob, McMahon's ruthlessness and cutthroat nature is never exposed to the fans of wrestling, that character never comes to light, and WWF programming never sees the legendary Austin-McMahon feud.

The Screwjob changed the course of wrestling history, the formation of Mr. McMahon, and the acquisition of Bret Hart by WCW both had all the potential in the world to be massive successes, or humiliating failures. Mr. McMahon soared to the top of wrestling bad guys, and Hart's career withered into disappointing obscurity, should this event and the subsequent developments gone differently, there is no doubt that the Monday Night Wars would have progressed in a totally different fashion.

WOMEN'S WRESTLING IN THE 90S

Women's wrestling was reduced to nothing but barefoot bikini matches and softcore porn in the 90s. Less than a decade prior, legendary singer Cyndi Lauper teamed with WWF Women's Champion Wendy Richter to massively increase the mainstream popularity of WWF and even main event pay per view events. But as the industry shifted to more sexually charged and violent content, the women found themselves as a mockery of a once respected and legitimate aspect of pro wrestling. WCW even retired the Women's Championship in 1998 and would often not even feature women's wrestling at all on Nitro. In summary, the women's division of both WWF and WCW were absolutely nothing to be proud of, but based on the past success of the division, it is a safe bet that audiences are hungry for a talented and capable group of female wrestlers to rejuvenate the industry. When Madusa came to WCW as the WWF Women's Champion in 1995, she tossed the WWF Title Belt into the trash on live TV, which was one of the first insulting gestures made by WCW to WWF, and got fans very excited for the future of the women's division



in WCW, but sadly nothing really ever came of it. One of the major tasks of this committee is to reinvent women's wrestling, and restore female wrestlers to their former stardom.

97-99 A RACE FOR RATINGS GOLD

After the Screwjob, the war between brands became even more real. Relations between the wrestlers of each company grew bitter as it became abundantly clear that whoever lost the ratings war in the long run would likely go out of business since these were the last two major wrestling promotions in America. As the WWF began to engage in more sexually charged, highly violent, vulgar content, Monday Night Raw began to vastly improve as a product. Nitro was still in the lead, but the gap was shrinking. Hollywood Hogan and the nWo brought in the money for WCW, Stone Cold and McMahon brought in the money for WWF. Writer Vince Russo joined the WWF creative team and modeled Raw's stories on that of the Jerry Springer Show, a vulgar and explicit tabloid talk show that relied on shock value and crudeness to make money. WWF storylines became shocking and explicit, making for popular TV angles. While WCW's nWo,

Sting, Eddie Guerrero, and Chris Jericho content maintained their supremacy in the ratings, WWF's adoption of shock based storylines made the weekly shows far more appealing for more and more viewers. WWF also emboldened younger talent, such as The Rock and Triple H, where WCW relied more on the star power of older wrestlers, a strategy that was not ideal for long term sustainability in an industry where youth is crucial to performance. Late 1997 saw Sting battling the nWo weekly on Nitro, while

Stone Cold dominated Raw programming week after week. The feud between McMahon and Austin was becoming the hottest trend in wrestling, and on April 13, 1998, after two long years, the WWF finally scored a ratings victory over WCW.

Two weeks later, D-Generation X would mount an armored vehicle, drive right to Monday Nitro and wreak havoc at the show live in an unscripted, very real invasion. Raw and Nitro were airing in the same town of Hampton, Virginia, so WWF decided to allow DX to ride over to the competition in an armored truck with army gear, and just cause a ruckus. DX was starting a party with the fans right outside of Nitro's filming, but despite their best efforts, they could not enter the building and crash the actual show. The invasion was a mockery of WCW's now lesser ratings, and DX rolling up on WCW was a genuinely funny and unique segment that boosted Raw's viewership for the week and made for a great wrestling moment.

The Austin-McMahon feud was becoming too decisively popular too fast, so WCW made a change. The nWo had a schism. Hollywood Hogan led the nWo Hollywood, while Kevin Nash led the new nWo Wolfpac faction, which splintered off from the original group. At first, it was a well-received change that fans enjoyed, but after nearly 3 years of nWo, the group was becoming too stale for the fans to bear. They needed something new. Then along came Goldberg.

Bill Goldberg was an ex-NFL linebacker who was booked as an unbeatable monster during his run in WCW. Goldberg's finisher was a vicious spear tackle that looked like it could split a man in two. Goldberg went 173-0, and the unstoppable rampage of Goldberg was a smash hit which put WCW back on top for a time. When Goldberg defeated Hollywood Hogan for the World Championship in July, 1998, 5 million people tuned in to watch the spectacle. The undefeated streak of Goldberg was enough to even the odds at the height of wrestling's popularity, and WCW was competitive as ever.



In early 1999, Raw and Nitro amassed a cumulative 10 million viewers per week. Wrestling was all over popular culture. Magazines, commercials, movies, and more all featured the wrestlers of WWF and WCW. The war between the companies propelled professional wrestling to heights previously believed to be unattainable.

OWEN HART

One of the saddest and most horrifying moments in professional wrestling was Owen Hart's death. At the pay-per-view event *Over the Edge 1999* Owen Hart was to descend from the top of the arena into the ring via a cable. Sting often entered WCW rings from the tops of the arenas suspended on cables, so McMahon wanted to emulate this and make Sting's entrance seem less unique. However, Owen was not properly secured and the locking mechanisms on the cable snapped. Hart fell 78 feet to his death in front of thousands of people. WWF was airing a pre-taped segment at the time, so viewers at home did not see the tragedy live.

Shockingly, Vince McMahon continued the show. Owen's corpse was removed from inside the ring, as the Undertaker and Stone Cold Steve Austin had a WWF title match just moments later. Videos of Austin and Undertaker looking horrified as they look upon the blood stained mat where their friend died can be found on youtube to this day.

McMahon somehow seemed to escape both public backlash and legal liability for the incident, the WWF went largely unaffected by the entire tragedy. Still, Owen Hart's death remains the most tragic and terrifying moment in all of wrestling history, and is a testament to the kind of businessman McMahon can truly be.

THE FINGERPOKE OF DOOM

While 1999 saw the heights of the war reach unprecedented levels, the beginning of the end for WCW was near. World Champion Kevin Nash was set to face Goldberg in the main event of Nitro, but Goldberg was arrested, in kayfabe, not real life, mid show. Hollywood Hogan returned after some time off and was Nash's new opponent. Nitro viewers were very excited about this matchup as the men who formed the once great nWo were now set to face off.

When the bell rang, Hogan poked Nash, Nash fell to the ground and let Hogan pin him for the win. The nWo reformed, and no one was happy. Fans, naturally, were outraged that they were cheated out of what should have been a historic match. Unsurprisingly, the credibility of WCW tanked after this, and the company continued to use similar booking tactics which would decrease viewership and attendance until its demise.

WWF was achieving higher ratings than ever, and WCW continued to insult fans' intelligence with booking matches where contestants changed last minute, and then the match ended seconds later anyway. WCW was sinking fast.



POOR MANAGEMENT, POOR RATINGS, POOR WCW

Vince Russo joined WCW's creative team in late 1999 in a desperate attempt to save the company, but by then he had lost his touch with writing wrestling shows, so the addition was not noteworthy in a positive sense. Legitimate criticisms of the company was that older wrestlers such as Hogan and Flair played backstage politics to stay in the spotlight and not allow younger stars like Booker T or Chris Jericho to enter the main event picture, which is bad for the longevity of the company. WCW creative tried to turn this into an on screen rivalry between older and newer wrestlers, but the idea flopped with fans. At this point WCW was desperate. Actor David Arquette became champion in an attempt to gain casual viewers. Vince Russo was even champion at one point. The product became more and more confused with each week, viewers began to tune out of WCW Nitro for good.

One of the final nails in WCW's coffin came at Bash at the Beach 2000, where Champion Jeff Jarrett was forced to lay down and allow Hogan to pin him for the victory under Russo's orders. Hogan was so disgusted with the decision to cheat fans out of a title match that he left WCW that very night. Russo, that same night, ordered a reversal of the outcome, making Jarrett the champion again, only to have Jarrett lose it that very night to Booker T. The pay-per-view was an utter disaster, and the fans were angry. Ratings were dismal and WCW fans had a diminishing population.

The booking had become too outlandish and stupid for even the most diehard fan to handle. Actors were winning titles, winners were changed after the matches concluded, it honestly seemed like the company was run by people who did not have a grasp on what it meant to put on a wrestling show. Nitro, which only a few years prior was absolutely dominating the world of pro wrestling, was now a poor husk of its former self.

FINAL DAYS OF THE WAR AND VICTORY FOR MCMAHON

In order to secure the older wrestlers that brought WCW its initial fame, Bishoff was fairly trigger happy with Turner's checkbooks. In 2000, WCW had to pay out nearly \$62 million to fulfill contracts to those older wrestlers, bringing the company near financial ruin. Everything was going wrong for WCW, and redemption was beginning to appear impossible.

Financial devastation forced the new CEO of Turner Broadcasting, Jamie Kellner, to remove WCW programming from TNT network. With no fans, no money, and no network to air, Bishoff had no choice but to sell WCW to Vince McMahon for a mere \$3 million. A fraction of a fraction of WCW's once massive worth. The war was over. WWF had won. The final results of the war are - 154 wins for Monday Night Raw, 112 wins for Monday Nitro, and 4 ties. With the purchase and the migration of WCW talent to WWF, the most iconic era in wrestling history, came to a close. And the wrestling monolith known today as WWE was born.



GOING INTO COMMITTEE

Committee will begin on September 5, 1995. One day after the premiere episode of WCW Monday Nitro. The committee will be the wrestlers, announcers, writers, and executives of WCW managing the week to week activities of the company. Professional wrestling is an industry where experience is everything, but nothing matters more than results. Veteran wrestlers often take the roles of creative writers, but individuals like Bishoff and Sting who are relatively new to the sport but know how to draw an audience are given considerable freedom as long as they are making money. The creation of characters, factions, storylines, crowning of champions, signing of new talent, and expansion of the product are entirely in the hands of the body. The formation of pay-per-view events, long term storylines, and major expansions to the product are expected to be addressed in directives.

Delegates will have to balance creating a functional touring live TV show with advertising the product, forming popular and financially lucrative partnerships, and sabotaging WWF all at once.

Additionally, as part of the agreement to host a traveling live show, Ted Turner expects a **MINIMUM of 4 Live Pay Per View Events Per Year** which he is confident will be extremely profitable due to the incredible array of talented individuals assembled here trusted to run this company. It should also be noted that since Ted Turner owns this network and this company, you all are at his behest and must accommodate any changes he asks of you in regards to the content of the product. So please do your best not to sour this relationship as it could be the difference between a multi million dollar expansion or a trip to the unemployment line.

REACTING TO THE WWF

Vince McMahon and the WWF are the enemy. The body will consistently be updated with the ratings and happenings of Monday Night Raw so that all delegates are well aware of what the competition is up to. It is important to note that WWF will sometimes pre-tape their Monday Night Raw shows instead of airing them live from an arena to save money. This means that attempts to uncover the tapes and spoil Raw results are not only very possible, but highly encouraged. Sabotage is one of the most important aspects of the Monday Night Wars. Spoiling results, stealing successful wrestlers / writers, purposefully installing bad wrestlers / writers, and buying ad space on the competition's network are all strategies that Vince McMahon will most certainly be using to kill WCW. Delegates should be ready to do anything and everything to beat out WWF in the ratings, because rest assured, Vince McMahon has crafty sabotage plans for all of you in his quest to become the world's sole wrestling empire.

RATINGS RATINGS RATINGS

Ultimately, the goal of this committee is to make the most money, and create the best entertainment product. As in real life, these two promotions are beholden to the fans in our committee. Delegates will know at all times what the ratings standings are, and will be updated regularly as to what the fans are feeling and thinking in regards to all decisions made by the body. As fun as it may be to pursue a personal agenda and craft a fun arc for yourself, it will all be for



naught if WCW gets acquired by WWF and you all lose your jobs. Every decision must be made to PLEASE THE FANS. If they aren't happy, they won't watch, then it's goodbye to WCW.

RESOURCES

All characters at the Congress will have private resources to some extent. These resources can include but are not limited to money, familial estates, private forces, diplomatic contacts, A-level celebrities, and more. While each delegate will start with a short list of starting resources, it is expected that the possessions of each character will be in constant flux through transactions, deals, consumption, etc. Thus, resources will be tracked on each character's private spreadsheets.

CHARACTER GUIDES TO BE POSTED ON SSICSIM.CA