

The Drink Tank

Star Wars Analysis Comedy Special



The following article combines my love of wrestling with my love of science fiction with my love for over-analysis of Popular Culture. Take it as seriously as you like. Warning: This article is Nothing but SPOILERS

SithMania: What George Lucas could have learned from Professional Wrestling

The most impressive thing about Revenge of the Sith has to be all the light-sabering going on all around. As my Dad once said, while we were rewatching the original trilogy, “A lightsaber fight is a wrestling match.” Once again, my Dad is a genius. If a lightsaber duel is a wrestling match, than a movie full of them is a wrestling card. Which got me thinking about what Lucas did with his sixth (or third, smartass!) Star Wars film.

I should start by giving those of you who have no idea about wrestling a brief lesson. You see, there’s a thing called booking, ie. laying out the matches. The Booker is the guy who determines who wins and who loses and what the story the guys tell. Contrary to popular myth, it is not choreographed, but it is planned and the stories are written for maximum effect. Now, in wrestling there are three

types of characters, Faces (Good Guys), Heels (Bad Guys) and Tweeners (Those who are neither). Your face has to overcome the heel within the rules (or at least with a sense of honour to his actions) while the heel has to cheat, or at least be unfair, to gain his victories. Tweeners are basically there when they need to have someone who faces everyone because they are light on one of the two sides and the limits of character interactions make it a requirement. That’s the basic method. You’ll pick up the rest while I go forward.

The type of storyline we are involved with here is group warfare. The most famous wrestling example of this is when World Championship Wrestling (WCW) feuded with The New World Order (nWo) in the mid-1990s. The faces are the Jedis, men who fight hard and work within a set of rules. The heels are the Sith, evil men who are working every angle to get their way. This is the basic set-up.

To start off, we get a battle between Count Dooku (who I believe would be seated closer to the head of the table than Lord Vader, though I may have my hierarchical standings mixed up) and Jedis Anakin Skywalker and Obi-Wan Kenobi. Dooku has been the main heel representing the Sith. He’s managed by Darth Sideous, who doesn’t show himself much, and he’s a mega-tough guy. And he’s old. Anakin is a star on the rise with more potential than any other star on the roster. Obi-Wan is another star, a long-time face who has fought great battles against many different powerful foes. He also brought up Anakin and has tried to teach him, though in many ways Anakin is above him. The three of them battle and when the two Jedis are fighting the Sith Master, The Count is able to fend them both off. This is called killing faces, as they are showing that the heel is strong enough to cleanly deal with two faces. In wrestling, this would be a handicapped match and there’s no way you would ever book one with two faces taking on one heel unless you got that heel destroyed right quick. This isn’t what happened. Dooku manages to take Obi-Wan out of the equation leaving him heads up with Anakin. They fight and Anakin gets the upper-hand and dehands and then beheads the Count. This is reminiscent of Magnum TA and Tully Blanchard’s I Quit match from 1985. After Magnum managed to take a piece of a wooden chair that Tully had tried to jab into his eye, Magnum went and did just that to Tully. Classic face gone

too far.

What's wrong with that? Well, Dooku went out like a chump. There was money in keeping him alive and having a rematch, but Lucas can't be blamed for that. The Count's protégé, General Grievous, is still alive, and Anakin brings the Chancellor and a lifeless Obi-Wan to the control area to confront Grievous. Grievous manages to escape both the combined Jedi and force them to make a crash landing. This is how you make your faces look weak, by having the heel outsmart them. This happens a lot in wrestling, usually when WWE owner Vince McMahon's son-in-law, Hunter Hearst Helmsley, is being chased by a face challenger who is a threat to his power structure.

The next segment is all about the turn of Anakin. In wrestling, a turn usually happens when a young wrestler decides, almost always wrongly, that he is being held back. This is exactly what Anakin does, claiming that he has a lower position than he deserves in the face group. Mace Windu, the powerful bad man of the faces, is the toughest of them, and he's one of the guys who is certainly holding Anakin back by not making him an official Jedi master. Obi-Wan is still treated as the top good guy, which makes sense as it's the way that Anakin comes to be the heel. Anakin is getting his head filled with wicked ideas from the undercover manager of the heel group, Palpatine. He's the only one cutting promos, building up excitement in the coming matches through his powerful method of delivering info. This segment drags, as they spend so much time developing what we already know is true. One of the rules of booking: simple is (almost) always better, but it always brings in more money.

Anakin learns of Palpatine's secret, that he's actually Darth Sideous, the evil Sith Lord. This is very reminiscent of Vince McMahon's role as the leader behind The Undertaker's evil crew. Once he learns, and doesn't kill Palpatine, he effectively becomes a tweener. He knows which way he should go, but Palpatine has gotten into his head. The same angle was recently worked by Chavo Guerrero Jr. as a way to turn his cousin, Eddie Guerrero, against face Rey Mysterio. Anakin does inform the Jedi Council of this fact, which shows that he's at least partly face, but you can tell he's not in it fully.

Obi-Wan, in his role as top face, is sent to defeat a large rank of droids and defeat the escaped Grievous. This is the classic scenario for a face. The heel that outsmarted him is then faced in a match where it seems that the chips are down and there's a show down. Obi-Wan runs through the little competition, and he and Grievous have a great battle. This is a match with great consequences and after they finish up (in a match with amazing workrate) this leaves the faces with a decided advantage.

Once the Jedi find out about Palpatine as the evil Sith Lord, this leads to the final part of the turn for Anakin. A quartet of Jedi go to face Palpatine, led by the tough guy Mace. Palpatine then goes buck wild and kills all but Mace on a whim. This is a great way to build up Palpatine for the final battle with Obi-Wan. This is the smart match-up, though he ends up paired with the Jedi manager, Yoda. This is a good match-up, but far from perfect.

Anakin disrupts Mace as he is about to kill Palpatine, and here he decides that Palpatine is his new master and he's a full-fledged hell after chopping off Windu's hand and allowing Palpatine to murder him. This leads to a change in Anakin's gimmick, from the Padwan Jedi to Sith Lord in one simple move. He's already turned, but the faces don't know this. That's overly complex booking, but it works to build towards three battles that should happen: Palpatine (the old manager of the Heels) against Obi-Wan (who should be ready to beat Palpatine when Vader saves him and sets up the Vader vs. Obi-Wan match), Yoda vs. Vader (which Vader should decisively win, though with the way they wrote the first ones, it couldn't happen) and that leads to Vader vs. Obi-Wan, which Vader should have won as well, building him as the top stud that no one could ever beat...at least not until someone new rose up and took him down. This is basic booking logic and would have made for better drama, but Lucas had painted himself into a corner by making the middle third of the movies before





making the first.

Vader goes about his betrayal, murdering Younglings and helping kill Jedi. If you were looking at smart booking, you would have let one Youngling survive and had him rise through the ranks, facing Vader and then taking control. They didn't really have that option, but still, middle third first got them to this point. The murder made him the top heel, not just a heel. He's the one who did the Youngling murdering, and even though Palpatine ordered it, he's still the one who did it. Top heel is Vader, easily.

This leads to the defeat of the Jedi by lesser workers. It's basically minions doing the bidding of

the stars. They used to do this in the old NWA, where they'd have a star arrange for a match between a star face and a nobody and a heel causes the face to lose the match, humiliating them. The two remaining faces, Yoda and Obi-Wan, plan to face off not with the ones they should be matches with, but with the ones that pairing them with will make the faces look weak and make us less interested in a rematch. Yoda takes on Palpatine and loses. Not entirely, as he has the upperhand but blows it. He never gets his rematch, either, meaning this is another blown angle. Obi-Wan and Anakin/Vader meet in the main event.

Here's a huge mistake. They have an incredible match, you can't really argue that. They fight and brawl all over the place and in the end, Vader stupidly tries a foolish aerial maneuver and ends up with only one limb. He then ends up catching fire. And what does the top face do to his former student?

He walks away.

Where's the heat for the rematch? The face has proven that he's better than the heel. When they meet again, no one will buy a ticket because they know that Vader is no match for Obi-Wan because he destroyed him once. Now, Lucas' plan was OK because he made it so that there was no match until after Obi-Wan was a reliable competitor. Still, this makes no sense from a wrestling booking stand point.

George Lucas would have killed his territory if he had presented this. He killed off all of his faces save for two. He killed off all of his potential stars, which is what ended up killing WCW back in 2000. He made almost everyone look like a chump: Anakin by having him sliced up by Obi-Wan so easily, Obi-Wan by having him not finish the job, everyone from Grievous to Dooku to Mace by having them so easily kilt. The only one who looks at all strong coming out of it is Palpatine, and he's really in a manager's position and can't finish off Yoda. Again, shades of HHH in the WWE.

The first three movies are a brilliant piece of booking. The young jobber, or prelim wrestler, rises

through the ranks and becomes the top of the regular guys. An over the hill Obi-Wan, the face who had been out of action, does reasonably well with the guy who had been the top Heel and champion since Obi-Wan took to the hill, but then he lies down, choosing a better path and sending Luke to Yoda. Yoda then builds up Luke and the first time he faces the top heel, he loses. This leads to Luke training harder and then taking on Vader one last time. Luke has the total upper-hand, but once Palpatine interferes, Vader decides he wants to go out like a face with cheers and turns on the Emperor, helping the face win it all.

That's the type of booking that sells seats.

The Drink Tank Star Wars Comedy Analysis Special is all Chris Garcia and posted to eFanzines.com by Master Bill Burns. It's not a regular Drink Tank and it is really something to make BayCon seem even more special. Hope you enjoy. Kisses!

